

The Impossible, Powerful Spaces of BBC Radio Adaptation

BBC Radio's construction of Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater
Manchester through adapted drama since 1985

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Summary

The thesis considers the BBC's historic commitment to represent both the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, and then examines how this is achieved through the means of dramatic radio adaptation between the years 1985 and 2009. The thesis also describes and briefly analyses a catalogue of radio adaptations created for the project detailing every work adapted by the BBC for national radio between 1985 and 2009. The works considered in this study emanate from Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester, and the thesis examines the way in which these works imagine identity for the region in question, and interrogates what happens to these acts of imagination in the process of adapting and producing them for the radio. The thesis works with a range of theoretical frameworks from a mixture of academic disciplines: including histories of the BBC; theories of adaptation and the text; and work on the construction of national and regional identities. The thesis aims to address the historic under-representation of academic work both in the field of radio and of regional identity, and to contribute to new thinking in these areas.

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Introduction

The BBC stands at the heart of Britain's cultural life and identity: a lightning rod for this nation's self-examination, self-mythologisation and self-criticism. This publicly-funded body has for 94 years attempted to reflect Britain's character, crises and history, while inevitably shaping the narrative of national identity through the choice of voices, experiences and opinions allowed onto its airwaves. At the heart of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) endeavour to reflect the British experience lies drama, a form in which the values of information and entertainment meet and correspond in a fluid and sometimes opaque fashion. Unlike news and documentary, dramatic writing is unquestionably subjective, and is typically commissioned and broadcast without recourse to the strict journalistic checks and balances upon which other BBC departments insist. Drama often escapes the meticulous criticism levelled towards factual output by forces both inside and outside the corporation, yet in its universalisation of subjective experience it has the ability to promote – persuasively and covertly – ideological viewpoints and politically-motivated narratives.

The BBC has, from its very beginning, been a key component in the shared pursuit of imagining the British character for the British people and those outside its shores. By dint of Britain's size, and because of the logistical problems inherent in attempting to broadcast nationwide in the early twentieth century, the BBC has always been a body of many parts, many offices, many schedules and creative bodies. Region has spoken unto region, but all, ostensibly, under a single British banner, a single British project. Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, the imagining of a Welsh identity is not identical to the imagining of a Northern Irish identity, nor, yet again, to the imagining of a Northern English identity in Greater Manchester. In spreading its limbs through the United Kingdom, BBC Radio

became a means to represent and reflect diversity of experience and diversity of culture, even during the years when the BBC's stated aim was to promote national unity.

This thesis was inspired by the cultural and political context within which it was undertaken. When the research project was nine months old, the 2016 referendum on Britain's place within the European Union returned a decision to leave, if only by a slim margin. In the reams of analysis which followed, one aspect which stood out starkly, to those of us who wish to understand the mechanics of national identity, was the divide between those parts of the country at ease with their sense of British identity and those parts of the country who felt that their British identity had been eroded over the previous years and decades. Never had it been more clear that 'our country' was not a simple idea; but that there were many different Britains, possibly as many Britains as there were British citizens. It had always been the intent of the author to write about national identity, but the political upheaval of June 2016 and the many social, cultural and political consequences which followed, gave a new urgency and focus to the act of trying to understand how British identity has been constructed, curated and imagined by its most prominent broadcaster. In a time of national turbulence and reimagining, this thesis will look at the problematic ideas around space and geographic identities. It will look at the way in which ideas about the space which British people inhabit are shaped by history, culture and politics to construct overlapping identities of belonging. It will also look at the way in which regional and national British spaces are transformed in the movement on to radio: a medium which cannot depict space in any conventional sense. The thesis aims to explore the following research question: How has BBC Radio – through its commissioning and production of radio adaptations – chosen to interpret the Royal Charter commitment to “[represent] the UK, its nations, regions and communities”? (1) The research question contains within it many ideas which are hard to define: not least the nature and meaning of the United Kingdom, its nations, regions and communities. This is a thesis of spaces

which are impossible to define, imagined by a medium which cannot create space. It is a thesis of impossible spaces. These impossible spaces – nations, regions, the BBC and radio – nonetheless remain, paradoxically, very powerful. It will examine the way in which slippery, cultural notions of place are transformed, imagined and narrated through the medium of radio.

In addition to the creation of this thesis, the terms of this collaborative PhD, which drew on funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, institutional support from the BBC and academic support from Cardiff University, required that a catalogue of radio adaptations be created. (2) This catalogue will allow future students, academics and BBC Radio listeners to appreciate and explore the diversity of BBC Radio's considerable archive of adapted works. The creation of this catalogue speaks to the pressing need to document and archive the many thousands of dramas produced by BBC Radio. Due to the financial constraints of acting as a public service broadcaster; the sheer volume of programmes produced; and the historic limitations of technology, the BBC's adaptive dramatic output for radio is only partially archived. Almost no audio material survives from the first three decades of the BBC's work, with only small archives remaining for the 1950s – 1980s, most of which concentrate on the most popular programmes, appearances of famous or notable people and dramatic works seen as important due to their canonical nature. Although there is much which can be learnt from the study of dramatic scripts, to understand the unique qualities of audio drama and to appreciate fully the adaptive act therein, it is necessary to access the audio material itself and it is for that reason that this thesis will turn its attention to 25 years from the BBC's recent history: 1985 to 2009. These years, as will be reflected later in the chapter, represent a portion of the archive from where many dramas are still available and they cover a period in Britain's history where much attention was given to the need for stronger regional representation. In building the catalogue, the aim was to understand how the BBC was choosing to represent itself – and the British

nation – through its commissioning of adaptive material, and, to this end, both the author’s country of birth and the original language of the source material were noted. (2) But the catalogue also exists as a starting point for further research, and to create a resource which could be built upon by other scholars in the coming years.

The introduction which follows aims to lay out the history and theoretical background of the thesis. It starts with a brief history of radio – specifically BBC Radio – and its place within the British cultural scene, both national and regional. Following that is a short history of archiving within BBC Radio and an explanation of the rationale for the catalogue. From there the chapter moves on to think about adaptation, giving a brief history of dramatic adaptation within BBC Radio. Lastly, the introduction turns to the subject of national and regional identities, discussing historical and cultural writing around British, English and regional identities. The chapter ends by introducing the three case studies and highlighting the themes which will guide the examination of the dramatic works.

The Place of British Radio

Radio is – in academic terms and in the popular imagination – a somewhat unloved medium. In the annals of mass communication, it squats rather drably between the well-documented history of newsprint and the arrival of television, having neither the long pedigree of the former nor the visual flair and glamour of the latter. It is – quite literally – unseen. Radio is the familiar voice in the kitchen, emitting from the innards of clock radios and car dashboards; it provides the half-heard music on the counter in the chip shop, a background rumble to acts of hairdressing or car maintenance; it speaks to us when we must look at other things, when we are in motion. We do not ritualise the art of radio listening in the same way that we do the great black box television on its special stand in the corner of the living room or the cinema which exists to be visited on special evenings or when we long for a treat. And yet – despite its lowly reputation

– there is little doubt about the importance of radio in Britain’s cultural history.

By the time of the British Broadcasting Company’s first birthday in December 1923, 80,000 radio licences had been sold, half a million radio sets had been purchased and 80% of the British population had access to BBC Radio either in their own home or a place where they spent their leisure hours. (3) By the end of 1927 combined sales of currently-available radio listings magazines topped 900,000 (by the mid-thirties these sales were just shy of three million and by 1955 they would stand at nearly nine million). (4) Though initially a middle-class entertainment, due to the expense of sets and licenses, radios quickly became popular in pubs, working mens’ clubs and other social settings – meaning that a wide demographic could access BBC content in their leisure time. And the idea of radio as a form of entertainment for everyone has remained true. Unlike theatre, opera and ballet (middle- and upper-class activities) or music hall and live sporting events (which, with notable exceptions, are seen as working class), radio – like television – is not seen as being attached to any single class, gender, ethnicity or region. Radiophonic material is near ubiquitous within our domestic and commercial spaces. As such, radio has a key role as part of a social and cultural network for building or ‘imagining’ national or regional identities.

For any company of the early twentieth century to attempt to imagine themselves as a national broadcaster, able to reach the majority of the population of Great Britain, a great deal of logistical discussion and planning was required. The place of the regions was a much-discussed dilemma. The early managers of the BBC wished to project “the unity of the British nation” but were well aware that Britain was in fact a geographically- and socially-diverse entity. (5) The eventual decision to put regional broadcasting at the heart of the company’s business model was inspired by factors which went beyond an egalitarian desire to put all regions on an equal footing. Firstly, the limitations in the range of radio transmitters in the 1920s meant that the British Broadcasting Company

was forced to build a selection of regional broadcasting centres and masts across the UK in London, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Belfast. (4) Secondly, as Asa Briggs notes, regional broadcasting developed as an early response from within the company to a need to provide more than one kind of programme at any given hour. (4) Early broadcasting relied upon live performance, the BBC's centres spread across the UK were reliant on musicians, actors and speakers who could travel to the studios – often late into the evening – to perform. Because of this, each centre quickly developed a local network of cultural and journalistic freelancers who could provide the BBC with their content, thereby cultivating nine broadcasting communities. The BBC's first chief engineer, Peter Eckersley, devised a regional strategy in 1924 to address the need for minority programming to complement the more mainstream fare that London was planning to transmit. (4) Both Eckersley and John Reith – the man who was to become the first director general of the BBC and define many of its lasting core values – wished to avoid any early rejection of the medium through lack of choice. (4) Regional stations, broadcasting a range of content on separate wavelengths, allowed many listeners across the UK to experience more than one BBC schedule at any given time. Apparent, in these very first discussions, is the pull between homogeneity and diversity – a challenge not just for a nation trying to imagine itself, but a corporation as well.

The tension between the institutional centre and the regional offices continued through the 1920s and 1930s. Though Briggs downplays, somewhat, the relative success of the regional stations, (4, 7) Thomas Hajkowski has gone some way towards attempting to repair their image. (6) Hajkowski's narrative of BBC history focuses on the way in which diverse regional voices made themselves heard within the early decades of the corporation's history. He points to the way in which Regional Programme Directors were appointed in 1932 to "safeguard justifiable regional interests". (6) Hajkowski suggests that Reith's commitment to regional broadcasting was strengthened in 1935, when the staffing levels of

offices producing regional content doubled. (6) Hajkowski also points to shifting attitudes within the corporation itself. (6) In 1932, when it had been suggested that programming be decentralised, both Val Gielgud, in charge of radio drama, and Charles Siepmann, in charge of talks, pushed against the possibility of any drama or talks moving outside London on the grounds that there would be a fall in standards. (4, 6) As will become apparent later in this introduction, Val Gielgud was not easy to sway in his opinion that London was the locus of all British talent. Siepmann, however, was appointed Director of Regional Relations in 1935 and, after touring the country to visit the regional stations, he changed his position on the importance of these offices. (4, 6) He declared that they were “the seed ground of talent and the ultimate source of supply for the London programmes” and recommended that the stations be encouraged to form closer relationships with the communities they served. (6) The BBC’s views on diversity and representation, and its relationship with the British government, were to develop and shift over the years of the Second World War. Hajkowski points to the way in which, because of the suspension of regional programming during the war, regional presenters and actors were broadcast through the centralised (national) channels in a way which had never happened previously. (6) For some British citizens this was the first time that they heard a Welsh, a Northern Irish or a Mancunian accent, and the tacit showcasing of British diversity fostered a less homogenous imagining of British identity between 1939 and 1945. (6) Hajkowski’s view of the BBC in these years, (6) balanced with Briggs’s more centralised and centralising perspective, (4, 7, 17) combine to form a picture of the BBC and its relationship to the regions which highlights the diversity of views within the corporation and the way in which the BBC’s attitude to and funding of the regional stations could change from year to year.

The years which followed the war were to force the BBC to recalibrate its offering and its pitch, first by the arrival of television and then by the loss of its radio monopoly. The BBC at once had to maintain popularity by providing a strong and singular identity but also appeal to

millions of listeners, who shared little in common. The proliferation of radio stations and the arrival of commercial competitors forced the BBC, not simply to grapple with imagining Britain, but to think constantly about how it imagined itself. In the late 1940s, the BBC undertook a programme of developing more strands and features for their various post-war radio stations, designed to satisfy a large and socially-diverse audience. Indeed, the advent of television can be seen as part of a larger trend within the corporation to offer a wider range of innovative programming to the licence-fee payers of the UK. Widespread transmission of television was rolled out across the country between 1949 and 1952 and although the take up of television sets was reasonably brisk (more than 2.2 million television licences were issued by the end of 1951) there were distinctive class and educational markers to those who wished to own a television as well as a radio. (7) Though initially the greatest numbers of sets were sold to those in the highest economic class, those in the second highest class were much less likely to buy a television than those further down the economic scale or with a similar income but lower level of education. (7) This view of social division between the different mediums was taken on so completely by the BBC that the three radio stations (Home, Light and Third) rushed to reposition themselves for the highbrow listener, provoking a flood of complaints and unhappy feedback to the Audience Research Department calling for more popular primetime entertainment. (7) This rejection of radio's positioning led to a certain amount of soul searching amongst BBC management, many of whom finally concluded that the problem lay with looking inward for points of comparison when, in fact, BBC Radio's main competitor was not BBC television at all but independent stations such as Radio Luxemburg which were redefining what the modern listener wanted from audio entertainment. By the time that the BBC finally lost its radio monopoly in 1973, it had already repositioned itself to entertain a broad market, one which had been redefined by offshore rivals. The competition from commercial radio which followed the launch of LBC in 1973 crowded the market with rival stations, forcing the BBC into

creating ever more delineated content and an expansion of the regional and national stations offered. Thus the modern BBC might be seen as a corporation holding itself together by splitting itself ever more into pieces, an analogy that has some bearing on matters of British national identity in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.

Radio has survived successive revolutions in mass media and its availability; and the popularity of radio across the regions of the United Kingdom has remained strong. The proliferation of commercial radio stations; the unstoppable popularity of television; the success of videos and DVDs; and the rise of internet content as a rival form of home entertainment would all suggest that radio might have found itself squeezed and diminished at this point in the early-twenty-first century. Yet Rajar's listening figures for the last quarter of 2017 show radio being consumed by 90% of all UK citizens 15 years and older, with an average listening period of just over 21 hours per week, and BBC Radio stations reaching a total of 35,019,000 or 64% of the adult population on a weekly basis. (8) Add to this the fact that radio continues to be transformed by technological innovation, much of which, rather than burying radio, has reimagined the way in which the general public can consume it, and it becomes clear that radio continues to enjoy a large and diverse audience. The forms in which listeners can receive radio and radiogenic content (auditory electronic mass media communication) have increased dramatically in the past two decades. The availability of audio content which can be streamed – in live and recorded form – across thousands of websites, alongside the extraordinary popularity of podcasts, are providing a new listening audience with a fresh sense of the possibility of aural entertainment. (9) The brief history given here demonstrates that after nearly a century of innovation and change, radio remains, in its familiar and unglamorous way, a constant within our national cultural life: transcending regional and social boundaries, permeating diverse spaces, and speaking across county boundaries and national borders. One might expect such a crucial, democratic and pervasive cultural object to be extensively

catalogued, archived and researched but, as will become clear in the next section, the truth is rather different.

Finally, the question of how the BBC talks about its commitment to representation needs briefly to be addressed. As will have become clear, the BBC is a vast institution which is constantly evolving and being redesigned – often changing the nature of its policy decisions, budgets and staffing policies from year to year. The commitment quoted in the research question of this thesis is, in fact, a floating question, an unstable space: whose wording and place within published documents changes and drifts between 1985 and 2009. The 2007 wording of the commitment was chosen, in part, for its brevity and its simplicity. It aimed to encapsulate a range of commitments which had – in previous years – been scattered across Royal Charters, Handbooks, Annual Reports and internal policy documents. For instance, in 2003, Ofcom defined public service broadcasting for all public service broadcasters. Points 3 and 4 of Ofcom’s definition, which it gave to the BBC, were:

(2) Reflecting UK cultural identity—to reflect and strengthen our cultural identity through original programming at UK, national and regional level; on occasion, bringing audiences together for shared experiences and (3) Representing diversity and alternative viewpoints—to make us aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints[...] (10)

In earlier years, the BBC’s Royal Charters (specifically those written in 1997 and 1981) ignore philosophical models of what broadcasting should be and instead set up councils to oversee the provision of programmes in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and English regions (though the term region is not defined). The success or otherwise of this programming and its representation are delivered through the Annual Reports. So, for instance, the *BBC Annual Report and Accounts 96 - 97* makes the following statement:

BBC Regional Broadcasting will continue to respond to the changing sense of regional identity, particularly as the new political landscape takes shape. The election of the new government in May has brought devolution to Scotland and Wales to the top of the political agenda. Regional Broadcasting will have a major responsibility to its audiences to explain and analyse the issues that are raised. (11)

Thus, to the many unstable spaces in this thesis should be added the wording of the BBC's commitment to regional representation: a commitment which contracts, changes and moves from year to year.

The Catalogue: Archiving the BBC

The BBC's historic relationship with archiving is a complex one, marked by an absence of clear policy and intent. No recordings were made of any BBC material in the first ten years of its existence, since the technology did not yet exist to record the content they were creating. After this, the BBC did own a single recording device but there was a reluctance from the listening public to accept recorded programmes, preferring the authenticity of live performance in music, drama and current affairs. (12) Extraordinarily, the advent of a BBC sound archive was down to the work of one woman: a secretary called Marie Slocombe. From the 1930s onwards, portions of programmes would be recorded, especially interviews given outside BBC studios and some of these would be kept if the interviewee was felt to be sufficiently important. (12) In 1937, Slocombe was asked to dispose of recordings of Winston Churchill, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw but she felt that these were too important to destroy, so she chose instead to store them. (13) By 1939, she had collected more than 2,000 discs in her personal archive and in 1941 she was appointed the BBC's Sound Recordings Librarian. What was to become the BBC sound archive

continued to amass, but the work of archiving was subjective and dependent upon the philosophies and whims of BBC personnel. No theory or policy of archiving audio or visual recordings existed in any meaningful corporation-wide sense until the mid-1970s when an archive of recordings first started to be built. (14) The relatively limited budget of the BBC – with its commitment to spend wisely the money contributed by listeners, viewers and central government – meant that archiving has never been seen as a priority and, even when an archive was instituted, the need to preserve space and save money was seen as a priority. Even today only 66% of radio programmes are archived to save money on digital storage. (15) Working papers, correspondence and scripts have historically been archived in the BBC Written Archive but even this is far from complete, being dependent on the documents seen as most valuable by individual producers at any given time. And while there is a written archive, very little of its contents are catalogued and those partial catalogues that may have been assembled by academics and BBC staff over the years are not generally available to the public. There is a tension here, one which has coloured so much of the corporation's decision making, between the need for the BBC to be seen to be spending public money wisely and the public's desire for comprehensive access to what is then produced.

Historically, there has undoubtedly been a gap between the BBC's desire to salvage its legacy and its ability to do so, and into this gap stepped the British public. Until the advent of affordable home taping in the late 1970s the public had no way of collecting the programmes produced by the BBC; programmed repeats were plentiful (particularly in times of budgetary cuts) but the public themselves had little control over what was shown, stored or re-broadcast. All this changed around 1979 when the popularity of tape recorders (and the falling cost of cassettes) gave the listening public a chance to record and archive the programmes that interested them. Home taping of audio and, later, television was widespread and in the absence of an open archive provided by the BBC, the British public have themselves collected and archived programmes. Although – for obvious

reasons – this informal archive is neither catalogued nor searchable. By the end of the twentieth century the tension between financial imperatives and access to programming had worsened. The BBC was under more pressure than ever to justify its spending; the British public had access to taping equipment which meant they were – in an entirely haphazard fashion – archiving more content than the BBC itself. Caught between these two factors were the writers, actors and producers whose intellectual copyright and reliance upon income from repeat fees was suffering both from the BBC's need to save money and from the general public's widespread pirating of copyrighted content.

In the early twenty-first century, the need to secure intellectual copyright in an age of piracy, and new technological possibilities in the realm of cataloguing and archiving, led the BBC to start to rethink how it might create a searchable archive. In 2006, the BBC provided public, online access to a 40-year-old internal database called Infax which contained a large but not exhaustive list of 900,000 programmes. This was withdrawn in 2008 in anticipation of the launch of the ill-fated Digital Media Initiative (DMI) which would attempt to put the entire BBC archive into one tapeless and searchable database. DMI cost the corporation £98 million and was finally abandoned in 2012 after the costs and logistical problems of its development proved far larger than first imagined. In the same year the BBC completed the Genome Project which digitised one set (4,500 copies) of the *Radio Times* for London and the South East between 1923 and 2009. Genome was made available to the public in 2014, though the brand, magazines and database itself were sold to a private media company (Immediate Media) to recoup some of the expenses. The BBC Genome Project contains details of more than five million television and radio programmes and is searchable to a degree. However, the digitizing process was somewhat flawed and so the programme details are in places

unreliable.¹ In addition to this, the programmes themselves are not tagged in any way, so users cannot run searches for, for example, plays or readings or concerts. Even more problematic, after September 1939 the archive shows only what was broadcast in the south east of England (before this there was only one edition of the *Radio Times* showing all regional schedules) thus excluding a great deal of regional diversity and failing to convey the scope of what was being broadcast from the many regional centres of production. There is at least one major ongoing project to catalogue the entire BBC Radio drama list, Nigel Deacon's *Diversity Website*, (16) where a number of radio enthusiasts and academics are attempting to draw together lists of plays from the past century. However, the lists on the *Diversity Website* are not searchable and the team building it are cataloguing plays in a piecemeal fashion, meaning that few of its lists are complete for any given period of time. As viewers and listeners of a state-owned and publicly-financed media corporation, there is a desire amongst the British public to take ownership of, not simply new content, but the BBC archive itself. The complex and somewhat erratic history of archiving within the corporation means that the records and recordings of the corporation are hard to access or discover.

This project has sought to provide a detailed, searchable and – at its conclusion – open source catalogue of 25 years of BBC Radio's adaptive output, everything created and broadcast between 1985 and 2009. (2) The years 1985 to 2009 were chosen carefully: firstly, to offer those using the catalogue the best possible chance of locating archived audio copies of the work listed. Secondly, the years 1985 to 2009 were a period of great turbulence in British broadcasting when the corporation found itself set against the government over a host of intellectual and political issues ranging from the reporting of the Northern Irish troubles to the ideological

¹ The digitising process found it difficult to deal with the lists of credits beneath the descriptions of the programmes and transposed actors, producers and character names in such a way that this part of the database is highly unreliable.

status of state-owned corporations. Thirdly, and crucially, the years 1985 to 2009 offer a period in British history where awareness of regional diversity and representation was more keenly felt within the world of broadcast media than at any time prior to this. The completed catalogue provides the groundwork for more data to be added at a later point and will allow students, researchers and listeners insight into the BBC's adaptive practices. (2) Further details regarding the creation of the catalogue and its findings can be found in the chapter dedicated to this subject.

Having discussed the problematic history of the BBC's archive and the importance of creating open source catalogues, both for the corporation and the wider public, this chapter now turns to the history of adaptation for radio.

Dramatic Adaptation on BBC Radio

When the possibilities of radio first entered the consciousness of those who would shape its early years, its form and tone had to be imagined. The early creators of radio looked for inspiration to other media and accepted artistic forms: literature, music and theatre. The appeal of dramatic adaptation came from the way in which it showed radio reaching backwards to create cultural connections with both books and theatre. As Briggs notes in his history of the corporation, staff who flocked to the BBC in the early years brought with them an almost evangelical approach to broadcasting; a belief that the introduction and popularity of radio amounted to a kind of "social and cultural crusade" which might reshape public opinion and forever alter the listening public's cultural tastes. (4) When, on 8th November 1923, regional radio stations in London, Manchester, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow and Aberdeen came together to present an evening of Shakespeare, BBC producers were beginning to establish a role for their new medium. They saw in radio's extraordinary reach a medium which could liberate high art from the theatre and the bookshop and – for the cost of a single, yearly

licence fee – bring what had historically been the cultural preserve of the upper-middle classes to every household in Britain. In the early 1920s, British theatre saw radio as a direct competitor and was largely unwilling to allow broadcasts from the stage, so, following the Shakespeare evening of November 1923, the BBC employed the actress Cathleen Nesbitt to adapt a series of Shakespeare plays for performance on radio. (17) While these fledgling productions aimed to present an evening of theatre as close to the original as possible (including a musical overture and music between the acts), as early as 1924 original plays for radio were being commissioned from Richard Hughes and L. du Garde Peach. Between the adaptation of theatrical works and the cultivation of new dramatic forms, the technical and artistic possibilities of radio drama were being examined from the earliest moments of the company's history.

The attraction of adaptation (as opposed to original drama commissioning) is clear: firstly, the BBC had dozens – later hundreds – of hours to program each week and it was simpler for producers to find a set of novels and plays to adapt than it was to develop, commission and edit a programme of original drama. Secondly, the cultural aspirations of the company meant that an association between itself and all aspects of high art (theatre, classical music, opera, literary fiction) reflected well upon the tastes and standards of the BBC itself. Thirdly, the BBC under Reith had made it its mission to educate and elevate the nation and so it drew upon the model of a classical education in programming heavily around the Western literary canon. Fourthly, written prose lends itself extremely well to aural adaptation since neither books nor radio are a visual medium. In novels, the writer has almost invariably done the work of the adapter in describing the visual elements of the novel. In addition to this, novels typically work towards a sense of intimacy – peering inside the head of their protagonist, laying bare the minutiae of their life – and one of the great virtues of radio is that, it too, is an intimate medium. The voices which appeared unbodied in the living rooms and parlours of radio set owners were a new kind of domestic caller: friendly, immediate and

conversational. The shared confidences and interiority of novel writing – or the fourth-wall-breaking soliloquies of theatre – slipped easily into the voices of these parlour-room radio visitors.

The changed priorities of wartime Britain led to a sharpening of the ideological focus of dramatic adaptation. In the late autumn of 1939 the BBC decided that it would cut drama commissioning by 75% to allow for greater news coverage in wartime. Anticipating the bombing of London, the drama department had been relocated to Evesham – before being relocated again to Manchester – and found itself depleted of staff and funds. (18) In October 1939 the department produced the extremely popular satiric adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland, Adolf in Blunderland* (which would be much repeated). Nonetheless, the Head of BBC Drama Val Gielgud had been warned to expect a quiet period while the war raged. By the end of 1940, the BBC had reversed its thinking. The advent of the black out; restrictions on transportation; and financial limitations meant that the vast majority of the British people were finding themselves confined to the home in their leisure hours. (18) Instructions came from London to increase drama production to levels greater than those seen before the war. There was, unsurprisingly, an ideological and political bent to the commissioning of adaptations which followed this decision. Alongside pieces of British escapism – such as the BBC's first adaptation of the *Just So* stories of Rudyard Kipling – playwright Clemence Dane was commissioned to write seven plays stemming from the mythological prophesy written into Lawman's epic thirteenth-century poem *Brut*: 'that an Arthur would yet come to help the English'. In her series of plays *The Saviours*, Dane wove a narrative history which drew both on adaptations of popular myth and also on factual sources including the retelling of the Merlin legend; the Robin Hood ballads; the reign of Elizabeth I; the wartime brilliance of Nelson; and the burial of the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey. (18) In this ambitious project we can see strands of BBC practice and belief being combined. There is, firstly, the transmission of the English canon. Secondly, there is the ideological promotion of an idea of Englishness that is imbued

with valour, resilience, natural leadership and strength. Thirdly, this is an example of a strategy based around the idea that national political goals may be furthered through non-factual content.

The popularity of radio drama as a form of domestic entertainment continued through the wartime years and beyond. Increased demand for radio drama saw the introduction into the weekly schedule of the first drama slots in 1943, amongst them the popular Saturday-Night Theatre (with listening figures of 12 million in 1948) which was to remain a fixture until 1998. (7) And when the drama department returned to London, in the latter stages of the war, they found their reputation within the BBC considerably improved. (18) Through the late 1940s and 50s, the listening audiences for plays and drama serials continued to grow. The audience for drama was, if anything, made wider by the introduction of the Third Programme in 1946, which aimed to appeal to the highbrow, educated listener with adaptations of classic plays by Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov and new versions of Greek and Roman texts in adaptation. Even the introduction of television and television plays did not dent the profile of radio drama as some might have feared. Audiences for the BBC's most popular evening radio drama slots remained at around 7 million through the first decade of television, demonstrating that though radio might lose some of its audience to the new medium, many people would choose either to stick with radio or consume both television and radio at different times. (7)

Yet even as radio was reaching a vast, socially- and geographically-diverse audience, the diversity of its dramatic adaptations was strikingly limited. While the Third Programme – and later Radio Three – was ambitious in its commissioning and unafraid of looking beyond the more obvious canonical works (producing, for example, Luigi Pirandello's *Henry IV* in 1954), the BBC continued in its programming to define British as English. Val Gielgud's remarks on the dramatic output of the regions are telling:

In Scotland, in Wales, and in Northern Ireland [there was] the undeniable existence of an endemic national drama. By metropolitan standards [it was] limited both by quality and importance. But it had its own audience. [...] Its claim to reasonable representation in the broadcasting field was unarguable. (18)

But he goes on to justify the reason why the best of regional writing should be adapted and produced in London:

For the Head of Drama in London it was [...] harsh to envisage productions of *The Linden Tree* and *Mr Bolfry* from the North and Scottish Regions [...] because their authors had been engendered in Bradford and Glasgow. Such authors were thought of as National, not Regional [...] The actors who could best interpret their work were to be found in London. (18)

So, according to the then BBC's Head of Radio Drama not only was the dramatic output of the regions substandard and lacking in weight, but those writers who had attained any level of importance ceased to belong to their region and instead belonged to the nation which was centred – naturally – in London. This rendered anyone of importance southern English by default. One of the most striking aspects of Gielgud's words remains the way in which he chooses to define regional and national, claiming that authors can either be regional or they can be national and that these are accepted and recognised binary categories. He goes on to suggest that this construction (in which national suggests a level of quality to which regional cannot aspire) is universally accepted. Even his idea of actors and interpretation plays with the relationship between art and space. Gielgud believes that the important part of an actor's ability to interpret a play lies not in any understanding of place, of cultural and social context, but in the actor's membership of a centralised community of

artistic talent. What is particularly fascinating in this point of view is that it suggests that both place and the understanding of place are not important. To Gielgud, ideas of space and place drop away in the interpretation of the works. This is key because, regardless of Gielgud's motivations and prejudices, as this thesis will demonstrate, space and place do drop away in the transfer of work to radio. But national and regional are not – as he suggests – accepted binary definitions: their place within the lexicon of British life is forever adapting, changing and becoming blurred.

The BBC's historic attitude to adaptation has been culturally ambitious, showcasing an obvious desire to bring diverse artistic strands to radio. Indeed, the work examined later in the case studies includes adaptations of novels, poetry, theatrical plays, radio plays, photographs, court and historical documents. There is an artistic ambition evident in the history of dramatic adaptation at the BBC which belies a dismissive cultural view that radio drama is unadventurous and timid. But the overarching trends in adaptation: the multiple adaptations of the same nineteenth-century novels; the preponderance of male writers; the almost complete excision of source material from black and Asian writers (certainly within the period this thesis covers); points to a highly canonical view of British artistry. Individual productions will tend to be expressive of the tastes and interests of its producing staff, who are fairly junior within the structure of the corporation; while trends in commissioning fall to the strategy of more senior staff members. And perhaps it is inevitable that the BBC, like all very large institutions, has a tendency to present a complex and sometimes contradictory picture of itself and its views to the outside world. This complexity should never be denied or oversimplified for the sake of brevity or ease, but it makes the work of understanding and explaining the BBC as an entity a challenging one. Like the country which it serves and interprets, the BBC is a deeply complex series of bodies, frequently interpreted as a single entity – an imagined community adapting an imagined community.

Thus, in this thesis of impossible spaces, four large, impossible but nonetheless famous spaces come together in the field of BBC Radio

adaptation: the nation of the United Kingdom; the institution of the BBC; the world of radio drama; and the world of British culture. These places and spaces refuse to be fixed; but they are constantly imagined. They hold an enormous amount of potential meaning: they are controversial, powerful, potent and redolent ideas. The work of this thesis is to look at some of the ways in which two of these impossible and powerful spaces – radio drama and the BBC – have imagined two other impossible spaces – British culture and the United Kingdom, its nations, regions and communities.

The Case Studies

The diverse nations and regions of the United Kingdom in this thesis – Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester – were chosen to complement a full and varied examination of the issues around the imagining of regional identity. Each case study follows the same period of twenty five years, the years 1985 to 2009 representing a period in British history when the importance of regional diversity was brought to the fore both in cultural and political discourse. The late 1990s saw the devolution of power to the newly-formed National Assembly for Wales and the reinstatement of a localised parliament for Northern Ireland in the form of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Though Greater Manchester did not win the same kind of political independence as the two nations in this study, 1985 to 2009 was a period in which Manchester was also re-imagined. The exceptionally successful 1990s music scene helped to rebrand the city as a centre for artistic excellence and innovation; and, following the devastating IRA bombing of the city centre in 1996, parts of Manchester were ambitiously rebuilt. In the following short introductions, the adaptations to be examined are listed and introduced, and the historic background and themes of the case studies are briefly described.

Case Study 1: Wales

Dramatic Adaptations

A Kind of Hallowe'en

Inspired by *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas (19)

Play written by Gerry Jones

Radio 3 – 1985

The Shadow of the Sickle

Based on the novel by Islwyn Ffowc Elis (20)

Adapted by Sion Eirian

Classic Serial – Radio 4 – 2000

Letter from a Far Country

From the poem by Gillian Clarke (21)

Adapted for radio by Gillian Clarke

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2004

Hiraeth in Hughesovka

Based on an historic archive of letters, diaries and photographs (22)

Play written by Colin Thomas

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2007

The adaptations in the Welsh case study were chosen to reflect a similar balance to that observed when looking at the 25-year history of adaptation from the region between 1985 and 2009. The works examined represent both a range of dates across the 25-year period and a selection of diverse source material: including a novel, a radio play, a poem and an historic archive of documents. Of the 52 dramas adapted from works by Welsh authors over the 25-year period only eight came from the pens of women. (2) This balance has been represented here, with only one female work of imagination out of the four. The vast majority of the works from

Welsh authors which imagined Wales did so in an historic setting, with periods imagined ranging from the twelfth to the early-twentieth century. This, again, has been represented, with two of the four adaptations entirely set in an historic Wales, and the other two moving between modern and historic versions of Wales. Almost all of the adapted work which imagined Welsh citizens, imagined working-class Welsh experience, although there was a small seam of aristocratic Welsh experience which looked back to the Middle Ages. The adaptations chosen for this study include two which depict working-class communities, and two which include a mixture of working- and middle-class experiences.

The adaptations in this study were all commissioned and produced during years that saw large social, cultural and political shifts occurring in Wales. There is no direct reflection of the events of the period included in the adaptations. However, the historical context is apparent in the commissioning and production of the adaptations: from the emphasis on a lost industrial past to the gradual privileging of the Welsh language as the period goes on. The recession of the early 1980s had hit the Welsh economy disproportionately hard and, following the collapse of the coal industry, unemployment in Wales, especially among working-class men, ran high. The independence movement, which had been active since the 1920s, was bolstered by the sense that successive governments in Westminster were unwilling to care for the Welsh people on an economic level. The devolution movement of the late 1990s was designed to address regional disquiet and 1998 saw the first election to assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales and the parliament in Scotland. Alongside a growing movement towards independence there ran a political strengthening of support for the Welsh language. 1993 saw the Welsh Language Act put the Welsh language on an equal footing with English throughout the public sector; and between the years 2000 and 2009 the number of Welsh schoolchildren in Welsh-medium education rose from 49,422 to 60,318 signalling a growing desire amongst Welsh- and English-speaking parents to raise bilingual children. (23) Throughout this period, the BBC provided

radio content for Wales in both its languages, but suffered – as attested by numerous senior BBC employees of the time – from a reluctance on the part of the BBC in London properly to fund Welsh productions or to broadcast them to a wider British community. (24) One of the things which emerges strongly from the case study is the powerful relationship between the institutional experiences of the BBC in this region and the way in which it commissioned and adapted. The BBC in Wales has, throughout its history, juggled the needs of two linguistic communities and struggled to represent a national identity for Welshness without aligning itself with the independence movement. These tensions ripple through the works of imagination, giving the listener a Wales which is both Welsh- and English-speaking, a Wales which struggles to know where its boundaries really lie. As the radio dramas struggle with definitions of Welshness, language, sound and song come to the fore to present a locus for national identity.

Case Study 2: Northern Ireland

Dramatic Adaptations

A Man Flourishing

From the 1972 novel by Sam Hanna Bell (25)

Adapted by Trevor Royle

Saturday Night Theatre – Radio 4 – 1988

Silver's City

From the 1981 novel by Maurice Leitch (26)

Adapted by Maurice Leitch

Monday Play – Radio 4 – 1995

An Enemy of the People

Loosely adapted from the 1882 play *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen (27)

Adapted by Martin Lynch

Drama on 3 – Radio 3 – 2006

Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Enquiry

Based on the 2005 stage play by Richard Norton Taylor (which is, itself, an adaptation of court documents from the Saville Enquiry) (28)

Adapted by Richard Norton Taylor

The Friday Play – Radio 4 – 2008

The adaptations in the case study of Northern Ireland have been chosen to explore a chronological path through the period. Female writers are barely represented in the commissioning and adaptation of work from the province and that is also represented in the only all-male selection of adaptations in the thesis. As ever, the adaptations represent a varied selection of source material: two novels and two plays, one of which is Norwegian in its original incarnation and the other one of which is adapted from courtroom transcripts. Unusually for the thesis, three of the four adaptations depict a modern rather than a historicised version of identity. This is indicative of the extent to which BBC Radio has adapted the Northern Irish conflict in place of Northern Ireland in its geographic spread. Representing commissioning policy over the period, every one of the adaptations deals in some way with the conflict and three of the dramas take place in Belfast.

The BBC, from its arrival in the province in 1923, was subject to intense political scrutiny and surveillance, initially by the Unionist establishment and later by the British government as well; and the corporation's history in the province has been characterised by its varying reactions to the political tensions of the nation. Political surveillance and censorship heavily influenced the way in which Northern Ireland could be imagined: without reference to the border; or to the conflict; or, later, to the fact that the British Army were on the streets of their own country. The BBC's treatment of the political tensions in the province lurched between

an occasional determination to record the facts of the situation for the wider British public and an institutionalised fear of the censorship, intimidation and threats which radiated from each side of the sectarian divide and the British Government as well. Following the bombing of the 1984 Conservative Party Conference in Brighton, the BBC found itself caught between Margaret Thatcher's British government and the Northern Irish political class. Between 1988 and 1994, the government banned the BBC from broadcasting the voice of Irish loyalist and republican representatives, an act which increased levels of censorship and self-censorship within the corporation. After lengthy negotiations, the IRA declared a ceasefire in 1994. This first attempt at peace was shattered by the Docklands and Manchester bombings of 1996, but a second ceasefire followed hard on the heels of the first and in 1998 new Prime Minister Tony Blair helped to draw up the Good Friday Agreement. A power-sharing government was established the following year and direct rule began for the first time since the suspension of the Northern Irish parliament in 1972. The peace that followed ushered in a period of tentative reconciliation and unprecedented prosperity which would see unsustainable economic growth change the social and political landscape of the region between the early 2000s and the global financial crisis of 2008. Looking at the adaptations, the treatment of the conflict over time reflects both the institution's timidity and its occasional acts of political defiance and frankness. The diversity of approaches to representing the conflict helps to foreground the fact that the BBC is a conglomeration of as many viewpoints as there are programme makers – and that the BBC does not speak or imagine with one voice or one mind.

The chapter itself looks at the way in which silence dominates the adaptations coming out of Northern Ireland and the diverse strands which this silence represents. The silence in these works is representative of censorship and self-censorship; it stands for the trauma of a nation suffering and then trying to reflect on civil war; and it demonstrates the hollowing out of the cultural and social narratives in any region which

undergoes a prolonged period of violence. Silence may seem to be a counter-intuitive aspect of any act of imagination on which to focus. But all of radio is made up of a pattern of sound and silence and – as can be seen in disciplines such as conversational analysis – the silence within human discourse is capable of having as much meaning as the sound. The voice made silent also forms a group with the audible voice (Wales) and constructions of the body (Manchester), demonstrating the way in which radio translates regional identity through facets of the human body.

Case Study 3: Greater Manchester

Dramatic Adaptations

The Secret Garden

From the 1911 novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (29)

Adapted by Judy Allen

Children's Serial (5 parts) – Radio 5 – 1991

Mary Barton

From the 1848 novel *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* by Elizabeth Gaskell (30)

Adapted by Lavinia Murray

Woman's Hour Serial (20 parts) – Radio 4 – 2001

Worktown

From the Mass Observation photographs (1937 - 1940) of Humphrey Spender

Play written by Michael Symmons Roberts

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2008

Ruth

From the 1853 novel *Ruth* by Elizabeth Gaskell (31)

Adapted by Ellen Dryden

Classic Serial (3 parts) – Radio 4 – 2009

Greater Manchester's adaptations were chosen, as ever, with an eye to balancing the adaptations surveyed so as to represent the works commissioned over the 25 years. In this case, the list of adaptations was skewed heavily towards the work of just one writer: Elizabeth Gaskell. More than a third of all Manchester-based adaptations over the period were adapted from her written works and this is why she had been given two places in the works surveyed here. Manchester is also unusual for the number of women writers adapted over the period, a fact reflected in the balance of three works by women against one work by a man. The source texts range from those published in the 1850s to Spender's photographs of Bolton, taken in the 1930s. Represented here are novels for adults, one novel for children and a set of Mass Observation photographs, demonstrating – as ever – the diversity of sources from which works may be adapted. In addition, the work has been chosen to represent a geographic spread. *Mary Barton* is set in Manchester and, briefly, in Liverpool. *Ruth* is set in the suburbs and towns around Manchester and, briefly, in North Wales. *The Secret Garden* shows a Salford manor house and garden, adapted by a Manchester writer and re-imagined onto the Yorkshire Moors. Finally, *Worktown* is entirely set in Bolton.

The adaptations show some aspects of Manchester life being more fully and diversely imagined than other parts. Greater Manchester's industrial past dominates three of the four adaptations and the periods depicted in each of the adaptations sit between the boom of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester and the bust of depression-era North England. Thus, Manchester – unlike Wales and Northern Ireland – is heavily imagined in terms of its economic activity. The regional name Greater Manchester – the idea of a combined identity for the towns around the cities of Manchester and Salford – is a modern designation. Though the adaptations reflect the relationship between these towns, from Gaskell's

writing onwards, the idea of this as a single region belongs to the era in which the works were adapted, not the time in which they were originally created. This is one of the many blurred boundaries which are explored in the chapter itself. Greater Manchester is a region in conversation with the idea of North England; and one which the BBC often used as a mouthpiece for North England. Thus, the chapter looks at narratives of Northerness alongside narratives of Greater Manchester and narratives of working-class identity. The complex interplay of narratives which can be found, in different measure, within each of the adaptations forms the background to the chapter. At the foreground, is radio treatment of the Manchester experience – and this proves to coalesce around vulnerable bodily experiences. Narratives of poverty, of ill health, of working-class occupation and of female experience come together in an act of imagining that takes geography and transforms it into physiology. In the bodily suffering and vulnerability of Greater Manchester's protagonists can be found an expression of Northern experience which is biological, physiological and very human.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to look at the way in which ideas of national and regional identity are filtered through the adaptation of works from Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester. It aims to understand what it means to 'represent' a nation or a region; how regions and nations are remembered or constructed for the listener. While the creation of the catalogue seeks to open up the BBC's archive to the wider community, this thesis aims to place the study of radio adaptation within a social, cultural and geographic context. Add to this the very particular structure, practices and political motivations of the BBC over time and you have a complex picture within which to fit both the decision to commission particular works and the acts of adaptation themselves. To return to where this introduction began, the BBC is a lightning rod for this nation's self-

examination, self-mythologization and self-criticism. But the BBC is not one thing or one person alone. The BBC is a loose conglomerate of many creative (and non-creative) employees, each of whom bring their own sense of national and regional identity to the act of creating works for television and radio. Work for radio is never the act of any single person; rather, the viewpoints of many people and, often, the values of the institution which employs them will filter into the creation of a single programme. To imagine this multiplicity contained within the idea of a single whole (the BBC) is to imagine a country within a country. The BBC as a corporate nation – both homogenous and diverse, often but not always sovereign, its borders all but invisible – is working 365 days a year in its mission to reflect Britain. And Britain is a single nation which is also four nations and is also more than a dozen regions and tens of thousands of communities. That any overriding signifiers of national and regional identity should emerge from this extremely complex system of cultural filtration is rather remarkable. The fact that signifiers do emerge – that a character for the regions and the nations is discernible, echoing through production after production – is testament to a powerful drive, political, institutional and cultural in nature, to create the character of a nation.

Literature Review

Introduction

This thesis sits at the intersection of a diverse group of theoretical narratives, many of which have been kept apart in the field of academic writing. Historical writing on the role of the BBC in the regions, for example, tends to exclude any detailed examination of the artistic products of that institution. Likewise, adaptation theory – though a large and fast-developing field – is still mainly focused on the adaptation of page to screen and tends not to engage with ideas around geographic identities. Meanwhile, the work done in the last forty years around constructions of national identity tends to favour nations over regions. And, while theories of national and regional identity do sometimes engage with the written word, and, less often, the screen, they have virtually nothing to say about radio as a medium for imagining a political space. Therefore, the work of this thesis is to draw together these disparate but complementary fields and to examine whether the critical framing of individual narratives may have insights to offer in these other areas. For example, a study of the development of the BBC as an institution can illuminate issues around narratives of regional identity; and the study of how radio adapts the page can speak to ideas of the relationship between space and identity. With this in mind, this literature review aims to examine the critical gaps which lie between three areas of study – BBC history; adaptation theory and the treatment of the text; and theories of national and regional identity – and draw out the issues relevant to the study at hand.

BBC History

The field of BBC history has long been dominated by Asa Briggs, a historian who spent decades carefully detailing the institutional evolution of the BBC. Briggs's work on radio mostly concentrates on the period between the founding of the companies that would later merge to become the British Broadcasting Company and the end of the Second World War, meaning that little is written of radio's development in the late twentieth century. In addition to this, Briggs's work on the regions is important but limited. In the vast, five-volume work that is *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, Briggs devotes only 45 pages to a consideration of regional broadcasting on BBC Radio: in *Volume II: The Golden Age of Wireless* and *Volume I: The Birth of Broadcasting*. (4, 17) Furthermore, Briggs does not seek in his work to analyse or describe in detail any of the audio productions which emerged from the BBC over the period he chronicles. The institution is brought into sharp focus, but the programmes the BBC created and broadcast remain, within his scholarship, unheard. The gaps left by Briggs in the examination of regional broadcasting have been filled – to some extent – by regionally-focussed historians who came after him. John Davies's *Broadcasting and the BBC in Wales*, (5) and Robert J. Savage's *The BBC's Irish Troubles: Television, Conflict and Northern Ireland*, (32) are both thorough investigations of the BBC's regional broadcasting operations in those nations. Works examining the history of BBC Manchester are in short supply and lack the same rigorous approach that Wales and Northern Ireland have enjoyed. Thus, the somewhat scant *2ZY to NBH: An Informal History of the BBC in Manchester & the North West* by Ian Hartley, has had to fill some of the same role as the more rigorously academic books quoted above. (33) It is interesting to note that, of the three regional histories mentioned here, only the more informal history takes an interest in describing in detail the content of the radio programmes made in that region. And even Ian Hartley is largely reliant upon other people's written descriptions of programme content. (33) As in the case of Briggs, the history of radio is written without analysis of the audio works produced. It is for this reason that the two aspects of radio

history which this thesis aims to shed light on are a consideration of the British regions (including the smaller nations) and the relationship between the history of the institution at regional level and the audio it produced.

Briggs can often seem to stand unchallenged in the history of writing about and analysing the BBC; but, in fact, there are historians who have questioned his focus and his arguments. Relevant to this thesis is the work of Thomas Hajkowski and his book *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922 – 53*. (6) Hajkowski examines the BBC's promotion of British institutions, such as the empire and monarchy and then balances these against the institution's considerable investment in regional broadcasting. (6) Hajkowski criticises Briggs for underestimating the importance and relevance of regional broadcasting. (6) His view is that Briggs wished to foreground a narrative of relentless centralisation and this led him to neglect the importance and diversity of regional broadcasting. (6) Furthermore, Hajkowski claims that there has been such a strong thread within historical writing arguing that the BBC harboured undemocratic instincts, and that historians such as Briggs or Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff have been led into underplaying the BBC's achievement in showcasing regional artistry and viewpoints. (6) Thus, just as there is a tension running through much of the work in this thesis between the idea of a homogenous and a diverse Britain: there is also a tension within historical writing in relation to the BBC as promulgator of homogeneity or champion of diversity.

The work cited here is interesting and important but limited in its reach. There is no agreement between the texts as to what the regions actually mean. In Briggs, (4, 7, 17) the BBC regions refer as much to the Manchester station or the Bristol station as they do to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Hajkowski, however, fits his study in to the narrative of the four nations and considers only the regional implications of imagining Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. (6) The absence of a defined meaning to the idea of the region – even within the terms of the United Kingdom – leads to a series of BBC histories which treat the idea in very

different terms. In addition, the BBC's varied histories take very different views as to the importance of the material being commissioned, produced and broadcast. As mentioned above, Briggs has little time for analysing the artistic output of the BBC. (4, 7, 17) Hajkowski, influenced by Benedict Anderson's view of constructed identities, (55) delves into some of the work being commissioned within his studies to look at acts of regional imagination. (6) However, Hajkowski's period of study precludes analysis of audio material so his brief programme-based analyses, though interesting, do not engage with the work as it was received. Davies and Savage, (5, 32) and, to a lesser extent, Hartley, (33) confine themselves to an analysis of the institution; its funding; hiring policies; and an examination of internal documents. Thus, the work of understanding the BBC as an institution – and its relationship to Britain's regions – becomes divorced from the work of seeing the ways in which the BBC was imagining those regions. This thesis aims to fill this critical gap, drawing lines between the BBC's commitment to represent the regions and nations of the UK; the development of the BBC as an institution in each of the three regions; and the way in which these regions have been adapted and constructed on BBC Radio.

Adaptation Theory and the Treatment of the Text

The field of adaptation studies is an evolving academic area, drawing in a wealth of disciplines including media studies, language studies, translation studies, history, sociology, anthropology and literature. Yet the material it focuses upon remains constrained by the initial pairing of its birth. The treatment of the journey from page to screen is still treated as the pre-eminent movement to be studied and catalogued: other kinds of adaptation, such as those involving radio, are barely mentioned. When George Bluestone started to examine the exchange between fictive prose and film, (35) he carved out a model for adaptation studies that focused upon this relationship to the exclusion of non-fiction, theatre and poetry as

sources, and theatre, radio and television as endpoints. In the last two decades, this imbalance has, to an extent, been recognised and confronted. Scholars such as Sarah Cardwell, J. P. Telotte and Gerald Duchovnay have opened up the field of television, (36-37) and academics such as Graham Ley, Freda Chapple and Frances Babbage are working on adaptation within the theatrical tradition. (38-40) But radio, that most popular and democratic of mediums, has seldom been considered in the light of its adaptive reach and ability. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Elke Huwiler, Kate Griffiths and Amanda Wrigley have written a number of chapters, articles, essays and books attempting to draw the academic world's attention to the field of radio adaptation. (41-43) But even the many journals dedicated to the subject of adaptation studies seem to have largely overlooked one of the most popular mediums of the modern age.

When radio adaptation has been discussed, as with the BBC histories, issues of institutional politics and process typically take centre stage. Katherine Echol's "Radio Adaptations of Robin Hood's Legend During the Golden Age of Radio" looks at the politics of production. (44) Matthew A. Killmeier's "The (Radio) Adventures of Mark Twain: Arch Oboler's adaptations of Warners' Picture" examines sponsorship and the radio industry's relationship to the film industry. (45) Very few theorists seem willing to listen to or analyse any of the existing recordings. There are occasional exceptions to the rule, for example, Lawrence Raw's article "Transcending noir – Claire Grove's BBC radio adaptations of Raymond Chandler", in which Raw examines the way in which the paranoia of Chandler's novels has been adapted into a fractured narrative style for radio. (46) Kate Griffiths's essay "Labyrinths of Voices: Emile Zola, *Germinal* and Radio" engages with the differing adaptive styles of two versions of Emile Zola's *Germinal* for BBC Radio. But these works are extremely rare in trying to describe and analyse audio content in relation to radio adaptation. Even Amanda Wrigley's book, *Greece on Air: Engagements with Ancient Greece on BBC Radio, 1920s – 1960s*, is notable for the fact that Wrigley works entirely from the written archive. Thus, radio adaptations

are most often considered without reference to the audio itself – a fact which, if it were transferred into the world of adaptation theory in any other medium, would seem unthinkable. The work which comes closest to championing the idea of an analytical approach to radio adaptation is Elke Huwiler's 2010 essay "Radio drama adaptations: An approach towards an analytical methodology". (47) Like Huwiler's earlier work, this essay champions radio drama as an art in its own right and points to the history of innovation in this form, focusing on work from Germany and the United Kingdom. Huwiler demonstrates the way in which the narrative framing of prose may be transformed in the movement to radio: using examples which include the way in which a single narrator in prose may become multiple narrators or viewpoints on radio, better to suit the multiple nature and voices of audio drama. (47) While applauding Huwiler's ongoing attempts to champion radio as an art form, this thesis would contend that Huwiler's framing of the translation of work onto radio does not go far enough. As this thesis will demonstrate, radio, as a medium, radically alters many of the boundaries found in other narrative forms: blurring the lines between time and space and between geography and physiology. This thesis has been written in an academic milieu in which frameworks of analysis tend to be based on printed or visual communications. Yet it aims to show that in establishing a language and framework for the study of radio adaptation, it is necessary to be bold and imaginative in pushing beyond language and frameworks designed for the study of visual media and text.

While many works of adaptation theory cleave too closely to the original print to screen model to benefit thoughts on radio, there are works within the wider field of literary theory and media studies which offer a sufficiently imaginative and abstract approach to artistic analysis to provide a starting point for a language and theory for radio. One such author is the theorist Roland Barthes. Barthes did not write about audio drama and he wrote only loosely around ideas of adaptation, nevertheless his thoughts on the transfer and locus of meaning offer fertile ground for the

development of a framework for the study of radio adaptation. This thesis does not aim to offer a strict Barthesian analysis of radio. Rather, this thesis contends that Barthes's open, subtle and multiple readings of the relationship between text and meaning offer inspiration for a project which wishes to engage with the multiplicity of the listening experience. The following paragraphs underline Barthes's contribution to thinking around the multiplicity of the text and the peculiar challenges of talking about meaning when analysing audio. It is worth noting at this juncture that Barthes's position and affiliation to various schools of thought varied throughout his writing career and the texts presented here could, in another context, be separated by their adherence to differing viewpoints. However, Barthes's many works frequently exist in conversation with each other and – in keeping with Barthes's own view of all texts as a meeting place for multitudinous discourses – this thesis will work with and between a selection of his essays and theoretical viewpoints.

In the first instance, Barthes's work matters to this thesis because Barthes moved away from identifying a single version of a text as pre-eminent, giving equal weight and meaning to multiple versions of a text, whether source material, adaptive work or companion piece. Following this same attitude to text, the audio dramas analysed in this project are not servants to the printed page, nor weaker copies of them, but separate, interconnected works – worthy of attention and analysis on their own merits. Barthes's 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" played a significant role in revolutionising the way that theorists approached the analysis of text. (47) Working alongside other deconstructionist thinkers – notably Julia Kristeva – Barthes re-imagined the way that the text might be understood. In 1966, Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in her essay "Word, Dialogue, Novel". (49) In this she argues that meaning is not handed directly from author to reader but that meaning is accrued by the reader using 'codes' which they have gleaned from reading other texts. (49) In "The Death of the Author" Barthes posited that the multiple meanings jostling within any given text, together with the hopeless

endeavour of understanding an author's intention, moved the creation of meaning out of the writer's study and into the mind of the reader. (48) This thesis aims to expand this definition to think about the listener. In the case studies which follow, analysis of the audio – as it was broadcast, as it was heard by the listener – is the primary route by which the newly-created text (the audio drama) is understood. At times this analysis is laid alongside a consideration of the text (or visual material) on which it is based, but in every case these works are considered as equally important locations of meaning.

Barthes's reimagining of meaning within and without the text has profound implications for the way in which the act of adaptation can be imagined. In "The Death of the Author" Barthes suggested that all texts were in effect acts of adaptation: "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture". (48) This new critical approach undermined the idea that the original text was a vessel full of meaning, with each new adaptation aiming to recreate something that resembled the substance of its source. (48) Instead, each adaptation was a new text; judged by its very existence to be as valid as its source – as rich with meaning and as worthy of study. (48) Barthes's approach rebelled against the hierarchy apparent in many pieces of writing on adaptation, which placed the author as the original fount of all meaning, with the book the author's first expression of it and every adaptation a reflective surface of greater or lesser clarity. (48) In its place, comes the idea that every version of *Mary Barton* or *Little Women* – every text, every film and play and radio adaptation – stands shoulder to shoulder. This thesis will not seek to judge the audio works on the grounds of their successful fidelity to the source material and nor will it judge the source material as a text superior in integrity and meaning. It embraces the idea that each audio production is a complex tissue of signs and unstable meanings and that it exists in relationship to many other texts, discourses and audio elements. Further, this thesis will champion a complex and nuanced investigation of signs, ideas and non-verbal sounds in the interpretation of works for radio. This

thesis does not go so far as to deny or reject the existence of a relationship between the source material and the audio linked to it. Rather, the thesis aims to privilege the scrutiny and analysis of the audio, while, at the same time, interrogating its relationship to other texts and modes of discourse, including the given source material.

Barthes's theory of meaning becomes more resonant and pertinent when brought into dialogue with the theories and concepts of other writers, such as Francesco Casetti. Where Barthes encourages the cultural theorist to expand their view of the text by investigating the meanings apparent in the inter-relationship of many different texts, Casetti looks still further outwards and asks the student of adaptation to think about multiple texts and their relationship to the time and place in which they were created. (50) Casetti – influenced by Michel Foucault – posited that adaptation is the reappearance of discourse, so that the second work does not so much repeat the first as offer the reappearance of themes, characters and settings that have previously appeared elsewhere. (50) In Casetti's formulation, adaptation should not merely focus on the relationship between two texts but on the relationship between each text and its historical, geographical or social context. (50) Thus, where Barthes's ambition speaks to the possibilities of considering multiple texts alongside each other, Casetti's writing points to the potential importance of these texts and their relationship to place. This thesis aims to embrace these two narratives together. Inspired by Barthes's work on texts, the project proceeds in the belief that there are webs of meaning to be found in considering any work of audio drama alongside its sources, other audio dramas and inter-related works – whether visual, auditory or written. Inspired by Casetti's work on adaptation, this project aims to think about the historical, social and geographical circumstances of the creation of the source material, the audio drama and other interconnected works. Furthermore, this thesis asserts that looking outwards for connections and references – be they in the form of alternate texts or geographically- and historically-specific knowledge – can only benefit the development of a

nuanced, complex and sophisticated understanding of a work of adaptive audio art.

Through examining Barthes's thinking and approach, this thesis aims to make a leap away from the more paper-bound interrogations of audio drama: the institutional histories and script-based analyses. In their place this thesis will try to achieve a more complex and medium-specific approach to analysing radio drama. However, such an approach is not without its challenges, and Barthes himself addresses some of these problems in his 1972 essay "The Grain of the Voice" when he discusses the limitations of critical language when faced with an analysis of sound. (51) Barthes highlights the way in which language struggles to interpret music, pointing to the way in which music criticism tends to reduce all discussion of music to the use of adjectives to describe the mood of passages or performances. (51) Barthes acknowledges the problematic relationship between the language-rooted field of theory and the expression of ideas around non-textual sound. (51) In doing this, Barthes helps to illuminate one of the reasons that academic work on radio remains so limited: the tools at the theorist's disposal are not really up to the job. Language, as it is commonly used, struggles and fails – reducing, simplifying, avoiding – in the face of auditory analysis.

Although Barthes's writing on sound is minimal, there are aspects of his thinking on other media which offer examples of the ways in which a response to art can make room for non-textual meanings. The challenges of unpacking meaning within audio are many. In "The Third Meaning", Barthes identifies three levels on which he believes a scene from a film can communicate its message and meaning. (52) The first level is informational (the structure of the scene, the words spoken in dialogue); the second level is symbolic (the historical allusions the scene draws on, the ways in which the images interact with widely-known fables and tropes); and then there is a third level, which Barthes calls obtuse, which lies in aspects of image, pieces of juxtaposition and the actors' appearance that seem to reach beyond the most traditional signs and to communicate in a form which is

hard to summarise in language. (52) It is an argument which relates closely to that expressed in “The Grain of the Voice” and it is one which also speaks to the particular challenge of interpreting art made for radio. In each of the adaptations considered in this thesis, the impression made upon the listener will be communicated on a number of different levels. Adaptations will be seen to convey meaning which is informational (such as the historical and geographic setting or the interrelationship of characters); symbolic (such as the meaning of broadcasting words in the Welsh language on a national English-language radio station) and obtuse. For example, the chapter on Northern Ireland will explore multiple kinds of silence which add to the meaning of audio drama: in this case, some of those silences work on an informational level, while others work on a symbolic or obtuse level. Through the theoretical vantagepoints discussed here, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate a more ambitious and complex method for analysing audio drama, one which is sensitive to the existence of many layers of meaning and the peculiarities of the medium itself. This thesis also aims to take the work which Roland Barthes did on image, music and text and to widen the field to which Barthes’s thinking might be applied by showing the ways in which his theory of meaning can be applied to non-musical audio works.

This thesis is motivated by a desire to explore and analyse audio adaptation in new ways. In the case of adaptation theory, this project harnesses aspects of both Barthes and Casetti to explore the meaning of radio in an imaginative and multiple way which is alive to obscure meaning, and to examine these works of art within their geographic and historical contexts. Casetti explicitly asks the student of adaptation to:

go beyond dry comparisons between film and literature in order to construct a corpus of discourses that comprise all kind of social discourses [...] This corpus must then be examined according to an explorative principle [...] in search of a system of inner relations

that does not necessarily privilege proximity over distance, nor coincidence over tensions [...] (50)

To put it plainly, both Barthes and Casetti are asking their readers to be more ambitious in their study of the text and to be willing to give voice to what is less obvious, be that through the analysis of obscure (obscure) meaning or the privileging of distance and tension. However, looking across the field of adaptation studies it seems that there is still a long road to travel before scholars reach a place where they have explored fully the interrelationship between the many possible discourses; investigated all manner of media equally; or described the many ways in which adaptive material can convey meaning. There is evidence within the field of adaptation theory that scholars are engaged – to some extent – by the idea of linking acts of adaptation to historical narratives. Ideas of historico-literary context have been examined in the work of Keith Cohen (53) ; and there is writing which weaves adaptation theory into discourse around new historicism, evident in the work of Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan and I. Q. Hunter. (54) However, while Cohen tries to insert both the literature and the films he analyses into their historical and cultural context, the latter work is more interested in how film and television adapt versions of history than the context within which the adaptation was created. Neither of these works engage with radio and neither of them are focused on issues of national or regional identity. But, then, very few works within the canon of adaptation studies engage with either of these subjects. This thesis explores both of these key critical gaps, looking to elucidate some of the complex mechanics of how meaning is communicated through audio, and to examine the relationship of audio drama to place and identity.

National and Regional Identities

This thesis is engaged in thinking about the ways in which BBC Radio has represented and imagined the regions of the United Kingdom. To

this end, this thesis builds its theoretical framework by interacting with key theorists who have worked on the subject of national and regional identity, as it relates to cultural output. The core text which this thesis builds its work upon is Benedict Anderson's 1982 study *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (55) Anderson brings together a consideration of history and of literature to form his thesis on the creation of national identity, bridging the gap between disciplines. Where Anderson looked to printed materials in imagining the way in which national identities are constructed, this thesis will look at the role of radio and its relationship to regional identities. Anderson describes the necessity of imagining large communities in order to create a state of social cohesion great enough to prevent the breakdown of order. (55) He theorises that aristocracies do not need to imagine themselves through cultural means, since most members of an aristocracy will know each other; or be connected through marriage; or hold joint financial interests. (55) Thus, the aristocracy of most countries can be judged a true community. (55) By contrast, the middle and working classes of most modern democracies are far too large to have any true sense of who their community might hold within it. (55) And, it is for this reason, that a group – normally coming from the middle class – will take it upon themselves to imagine a national identity through the production of cultural printed products (books and newspapers, in Anderson's formulation) which they will then make available both to the middle and to the working class. (55) Anderson's theory speaks powerfully to the idea that in representing the diverse nations, regions and communities of the United Kingdom, the BBC is not just representing those bodies but culturally constructing them as well. When the BBC adapts work from Wales or Greater Manchester it is engaged both in an act of making that region visible but also in an act of describing and imagining that region both for those who live there and those who do not.

Anderson does not deal with the subject of radio, his work is specifically about the influence of the printed page and its relationship to

the history of print capitalism. But, nonetheless, radio speaks to Anderson's work on a number of levels. Anderson wrote about a strain of printed media which acts in a very similar way to radio within British national life: newspapers. In *Imagined Communities* Anderson asks his reader to think of a newspaper – in his example *The New York Times* – as a long-running novel, a bestseller every day. (55) Within that novel there are many countries – or characters – and some of them have a more prominent role than others. (55) For example, the nation or 'character' of the United Kingdom might be mentioned and represented more often in a daily edition of *The Guardian* than France or Northern Ireland. Anderson's comparison of newspapers and novels frames a possible way of imagining how these adaptations work within a larger BBC Radio model of national construction. To adapt Anderson's model, BBC Radio – the output of all the BBC Radio stations – can be viewed as a never-ending narrative which members of the British public engage with in a sporadic fashion. The appearance or non-appearance of, for example, the nation of Wales across thousands of hours of programming, will tell the listener something about the relative importance of Wales. Listeners may – consciously or unconsciously – compare the number of times that Wales is mentioned with the number of times that the other nations of the United Kingdom are mentioned: and draw conclusions from this as to relative size, importance or cultural relevance. In addition, there is the question of the nature of the programme within which Wales has appeared. If Wales appears rarely within news programmes but more often within sporting programmes, listeners may infer something about the character of Wales: for example, that Wales has relatively little political power but is prominent in sporting circles. Thus, coming to the work at hand, the appearance or non-appearance of regions and nations within the dramatic output of BBC Radio can have multiple meanings and implications. Anderson's newspaper/novel metaphor offers a way in which the representation of the regions within BBC Radio's output can be understood to construct that region or nation in multiple ways, even before the details of that adaptation are taken into

account. Every one of the adaptations in this study was broadcast on a national station, and that fact has a resonance of its own. Moreover, adapting material from any named nation or region constructs, not just that nation or region, but the idea that that nation or region has its own cultural world. This thesis takes Anderson's framing for the meaning of the appearance of nations within printed material and applies this thinking to radio, the BBC, and its many stations and programmes.

Unlike Anderson's work, this thesis is not solely interested in the subject of nations but aims to speak directly to the imagining of Britain as a collection of inter-related, geographic regions. This introduces one of the foremost challenges faced by this thesis – indeed, by any work which wishes to speak to the idea of regions – and that is the problem of what the word region actually means. The BBC's Royal Charter asserts a commitment to represent the United Kingdom's nations, regions and communities but none of these concepts has a clear definition. Thus, the obvious question arises: how can an institution represent a set of diffuse concepts? How will it know when it is succeeding and how will it know when it is failing? This thesis grapples with a highly-challenging proposition: that the BBC's Royal Charter commitment refers to a series of ideas about space – and their meaning – which lack all clear definition. As has been demonstrated in the section on BBC history, historians do not agree on the idea of what constitutes a region. Furthermore, there are particular challenges in the politics of referring to Northern Ireland and Wales as regions at all. Many texts devoted to Welsh or Northern Irish expressions of cultural identity focus upon the idea of national rather than regional identity. The political (often pejorative) nature of region as a framing device means that the idea of the region itself is often overlooked. While no single academic work attempts to address the problematic idea of the term region in quite the way in which Anderson attempted to dissect the term nation, there exist, within the many schools of the humanities and social sciences, works which recognise the problematic nature of the region and attempt to frame aspects of regional construction. It is not within the

scope of this review to cover all the narratives of region which exist within the many areas of academic study. However, it is worth elucidating pertinent examples of work from diverse studies which speak to the central question of this thesis. In opening out this question of geographic identity to a variety of academic fields and theorists, this thesis aims to enact Casetti's entreaty to stay alive to the potential of multiple social discourses. (50) There follows three examples of work, from modern languages, sociology and political science, which offer constructive readings regarding the idea of the region.

In the first example, a study of local languages and mass media in China offers a fresh perspective on the disruptive power of the idea of local representation. Edward M. Gunn's book *Rendering the Regional: Local Language in Contemporary Chinese Media* considers a range of linguistically-differentiated regions clustering around the south-eastern corner of China. (56) Just as in the United Kingdom, where the non-Anglophone languages cluster along the western edge, far north and within the various islands which lie to the west of Great Britain, so, in China, areas whose spoken language deviates from the official versions of Mandarin lie together, taking in Hong Kong, Taiwan and various neighbouring provinces on the south-eastern fringes of the country. Gunn details the way in which local languages, despite having no place in education or bureaucracy, continue to assert themselves in local newspapers, literature and even within locally-made television programmes. (56) Gunn spends a lot of time thinking about the meaning of the term local, which – while not synonymous with the term region – nonetheless is capable of interacting with many of the same ideas. (56) Gunn points to the multiple possibilities of employing local culture and languages within mass media, thereby signalling a commitment of representation to the local population while, simultaneously, constructing a national – or even global – identity for those outside the immediate region. (56) However, Gunn also posits that the use of local languages in mass media can serve to disrupt narratives of homogenous identity and accepted concepts of modernity. (56) Like

Anderson, (55) Gunn demonstrates the way in which the commissioning of the regional can work in concert with the cultural construction of the national while also acting as a motor for disruption. (56) As such, this study will remain conscious of the idea that the regional may be a means to construct the idea of the BBC as a national broadcaster; a tool for engaging the relevant local community; and – simultaneously – a disruptive element which challenges extant narratives of national identity.

In the second example, sociologist Gershon Shafir's *Immigrants and Nationalists: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Latvia, and Estonia* explores the social history and development of a variety of Spanish regions and, in so doing, speaks to the notable prominence of the regions considered in this thesis. (57) Shafir's study attempts to identify reasons why some regions of Spain have developed stronger regional identities than others and lands upon the influence of religion and language, with language being the more influential of the two. (57) In addition, Shafir offers distinct or unusual patterns in industrial development as a reason why a region may develop a separate narrative of identity when compared to its host country. (57) Shafir's work speaks to the varying prominence of different British regions, reflected in the location of the centres of BBC Radio production and the narratives of cultural identity which developed around them. All three centres of BBC Radio production covered by this thesis can be seen to cultivate a separate identity around one or more of the following: language (primarily Wales, and, to a lesser extent, Belfast); religion (primarily Belfast, but Wales and Greater Manchester share historical narratives of nonconformity); and unique, localised industrial development (all three to some extent, but most notably Manchester). Anderson's work on the evolution of the idea of a nation tends to highlight colonial history; the advent of printing and the rise of a middle class (or bourgeoisie) who wish to curate a narrative of national belonging. (55) All these factors may well be crucial to the establishment of the idea of nationhood, but they go only part way to explaining the rise of regional narratives of identity. Thus, in this context,

Shafir's work can be seen to fill a critical gap in terms of thinking about reasons why certain regions may become more prominent than others within a wider narrative of the construction of a national story. Like Gunn before him, Shafir's work exists in some tension with Anderson's since Anderson's work tends to cleave to the construction of cohesive narratives of geographic identity and both Shafir and Gunn see regions as sites of disruption.

In the final example, the political scientist Perti Joenniemi, who points to the influence of Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* in his work, (59) deals with the way in which regions can be sited within temporal, as well as spatial, narratives. (58) In his work, Joenniemi details the way in which Donald Rumsfeld used political rhetoric to reimagine Europe – moving away from the idea of a Europe centred on its largest- and most-economically-powerful countries and towards a conception of Europe centred on countries closely allied to the United States. (58) Joenniemi shows the way in which Rumsfeld, through his public proclamations, attempted to establish a narrative of European evolution based on the idea that the traditionally-powerful, Western European countries form an old and outdated region, while the newer, ex-Soviet states form a new, ambitious and agile region. (58) Rumsfeld's political artistry lies not in grouping nations into geographical regions but into a narrative of temporal significance, allowing him to dismiss traditionally-influential areas of Europe as the 'old Europe'. (58) While Joenniemi uses the term region to examine groups of nations rather than their constituent parts, (58) the idea that regions can be placed into a temporal narrative is important. Anderson touches on the idea of temporal narratives in his work on newspapers in *Imagined Communities*. (55) In Anderson's framing, newspapers give the impression to the reader that their country can be understood as a narrative which moves through time. (55) Introducing the institution of BBC Radio into this set of ideas, it is clear that it has the means to operate both as Anderson's newspaper and Joenniemi's politician. Firstly, both local and national radio are frequently consumed as newspapers were in

Anderson's example: on a regular basis – often daily or more frequently – as their newsrooms and presenters create unfolding narratives out of disparate events. Simultaneously, BBC Radio's books and drama departments commission, adapt and curate narratives of region and nation from other parts of the cultural landscape. Thus, BBC Radio may be creating and broadcasting multiple narratives of national and regional identity at once, simultaneously framing narratives of identity within spatial and temporal boundaries. This thesis will remain mindful of the multiplicity of national and regional narratives; to the variant actions and framing of different parts of BBC Radio; and to the singular or collective framing of regions as new or old.

So far, Anderson has offered inspiration in his work on cultural construction and Gunn, Shafir and Joenniemi have offered perspectives on the meaning, history and temporal positioning of regions. What remains is a précis of prevalent historical narratives of British national identity, before this section concludes with a word about post-colonial thinking. The historian Linda Colley has offered an influential reading of early acts of British construction, one with which the main theoretical works on regional imagining frequently interact. In *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837*, Colley identifies the 1707 Acts of Union between Scotland and England as the birth point of the development of a British national identity. (60) In Colley's opinion, the creation of such an identity was helpful to a country engaged in ongoing conflict with France and was a necessary tool to cement the Acts of 1707, given the antipathetic feelings of many Scottish and English citizens after centuries of conflict. (60) Colley identifies the three main mechanisms for the creation of a British identity as a prolonged cultural promulgation of anti-Catholic feeling; an emotive call to shared patriotism in a time of war; and a political and cultural focus on the shared benefits and achievements of empire. (60) Colley's work is important to this thesis because it highlights the degree to which the constructions of regional identity in this study run counter to the constructions of Britishness outlined in her work. The discrepancy between the construction

of national and regional identities chimes with the work of Shafir and Gunn, both of whom see regional narratives as acts of disruption. (56–57) The earliest source text in this thesis was published just eleven years after the period which Colley's work covers, and yet *Mary Barton*, in common with many other of the source texts adapted by the BBC, does not reflect a British identity built upon any of mechanisms which Colley outlines. Anti-Catholic feeling; patriotism in a time of war; and pride in the benefits of empire: none of these aspects is apparent in the main threads of Welsh, Northern Irish or Greater Manchester identity. Protestantism as a defining characteristic of belonging is apparent in many of the works, so there is not a sense here of a complete separation between this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century framing of Britishness and the regional works. But specifically anti-Catholic feeling is only reflected in the work on Northern Ireland, where it is generally framed as a problematic trait within communities: one more likely to fracture than to construct a sense of regional or national belonging. Colley's work makes many strong arguments but, taking constructions of Northerness as an example, running alongside Colley's narrative of Britishness is a separate narrative of Northerness, which can be dated back many centuries and which imagines the north of England as wild, dissenting and often criminal. The argument could be made that Colley's construction of Britishness is in a fact a construction primarily created by and speaking to the south of England. This thesis does not aim to unpack Colley's work in detail, because it is not focused on narratives of national construction. But the very fact that it will describe three distinct narratives of regional identity challenges the idea that a national narrative of identity can exist equally for all British people.

Focusing, now, on the relationship between constructions of British identity and Britain's cultural output, this section turns to Andrew Higson's *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. (61) Higson examined the way in which British cinema of the early twentieth century shaped a sense of national homogeneity: "narrating the nation as a stable entity [and] securing an image of the nation as a knowable, organic

community”. (61) In his work on British cinema, Higson draws on Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, discussing Anderson’s identification of the: “mythic experience of nationhood [...], the inherently limited nature of that community [... and] the sense of territorial boundaries to the cultural space of the nation.” (55, 61) Higson’s work on tracing the way in which diverse cultural products are capable of building a narrative of national unity, (61) speaks loudly to the combined effect of the many adaptations considered in this work. Higson argued that it was possible to highlight the diversity of a people and still to project a sense of unity: “The films I have analysed achieve this image precisely by foregrounding some form of community, often the community of the family.” (61) This thesis stands apart from Higson’s work in a number of ways – examining radio instead of film, and regional identity instead of national identity – but Higson’s methodology and findings nonetheless have relevance in this work. Higson stresses the problematic task of imagining national homogeneity and identifies narrative devices which can be used to work around some of these problems. (61) In a similar way, this thesis will explore the ways in which BBC Radio constructions of the regions find unusual, and often medium-specific, ways in which the existence and cohesion of a region can be imagined.

In examining the idea of regional identity and its relationship to cultural output, the issue of regions and their unstable definitions creates many problems for theorists wishing to engage with ideas of regional construction. It is, perhaps, for this reason, that the field of work which examines the construction of the regions is relatively small. Chapter by chapter, this thesis will interact with a variety of works which address media in Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester, but there are only two surveys which focus on a range of national and regional constructions alongside cultural artefacts. The first of these, Hajkowski’s *The BBC and National Identity in Britain 1922 – 1953*, has been discussed above in the section on BBC history. Hajkowski’s study focuses on the three smaller nations, to the exclusion of England and the English regions, and it

deals only briefly with works created in the period of study. (6) Hajkowski's period of research finishes 32 years before the period of this thesis begins – so there is no overlap in the cultural products examined. Hajkowski's primary interest lies in the BBC's institutional history and internal BBC attitudes to representing the regions and, as such, he has much to contribute to work on historical BBC attitudes to regional and national representation, (6) but less to contribute to the study of regional and national construction.

Therefore, the primary work on regional and national construction, and its relationship to British cultural products, which this thesis will engage with is Jeffrey Richards's *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army*. (62) Though Richards's work might seem to cover the same area as Higson's, Richards's work is as concerned with ideas of region and nation, as it is with acts of British construction. Richards is also unusual in drawing lines between the regions which are also nations – Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – and the regions which are not – in this case, the English county of Lancashire. (62) This thesis examines the BBC, a body whose fluid interpretation of region sees the countries of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland reclassified from document to document, sometimes as regions and sometimes as nations; and whose structure of representation (at the level of transmitters and radio stations) makes no delineation between nations and regions. Therefore, Richards's work stands as one of the few in this field to address both regions and nations as equal and constructed concepts. Richards's work is concerned with film rather than radio, so is working in another medium to this thesis. However, Richards's commitment to drawing lines between historical narratives of belonging and cultural products, and, thus, attempting to bridge the gap between history and media studies, (62) is an endeavour which this thesis applauds and looks to emulate. Richards's view, influenced both by the writings of Gerald Newman and by Colley's work, (60) is that the modern development of regional identities takes root in the eighteenth century, at the time of the Enlightenment in France. (62)

Owners of anti-French sentiment in Britain, fostered by many years of war and anti-Catholic writing and art, reacted to the flowering of science and philosophy across the channel by attempting to create a rival English Enlightenment. (62) Doctor Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1755 was published alongside the first histories of the English arts, and the search for England's literary heroes began. (62) Richards attempts to demonstrate how an intellectual, rational, powerful English identity – the England of John Bull and Shakespeare – was imagined alongside a romantic, mystical, faux-Celtic identity for the smaller nations of the islands. (62) These divergent, imagined identities benefited both imperially-focused England and the smaller, independently-minded nations of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, which wished to maintain a sense of difference from their larger neighbour. (62) Richards also looks to Lancashire, a county whose national prominence, echoing Shafir's work on the asymmetric rise of regions, (57) was secured by its key structural role within Britain's industrial revolution. (62) Richards identifies a host of cities (including Manchester, Bolton and Rochdale, all of which have now been drawn into the metropolitan county of Greater Manchester) whose identities were imagined through a lens of nineteenth-century Victorian values: an act of imagining which stressed the importance of work, self-improvement, and moral and religious rectitude. (62) Thus, the act of imagining Britain and its regions can be seen stretching over a period of three hundred years. (62) Richards argues that this history of imagining identity should be viewed, not as a homogenous, single-minded enterprise – but rather as a conglomeration of acts of construction: some politically motivated, others not; some conscious of their act of construction, others not. (62) Richards's decision to treat all constructed entities, from nations through to communities, as equally valid sites of enquiry speaks to the work of this thesis. (62) In addition, Richards's work on the construction of regional identities – particularly his work on the construction of Wales – will emerge as relevant to the imagining of these regions on BBC Radio. (62) Where this thesis departs from Richards's work, is in analysing radio rather than film, and in looking

at the ways in which work adapted from source texts emanating from the place in question is used to construct ideas of regional belonging through a chain of interlinked narratives.

To the blurred borders of Britain's nations, regions and their acts of imagination, is added one last ingredient. Postcolonial theory has contributed a great deal to the question of the way in which hybrid identities are formed and related. Almost all of the characters in these acts of imagination will be in possession of some kind of hybrid identity. The fact of being imagined both Welsh and British; both British and Northern Irish; or, indeed, Irish and Northern Irish; of being English and Northern English and British: each of these hybrid identities carries with it historical and political – sometimes even linguistic – tensions. And that is before other concerns – of class, ethnicity or gender – are taken into account. The imagined identity is rarely a simple thing. This thesis aims to deal thoughtfully with the hybridity of regional identity. In his book *Culture & Imperialism*, Edward W. Said speaks to the challenges involved in understanding the inherent complexity of cultures:

...there has been a gathering awareness nearly everywhere of the lines between cultures, the divisions and differences that not only allow us to discriminate one culture from another, but which also enable us to see the extent to which cultures are humanly made structures of both authority and participation, benevolent in what they include, incorporate, and validate, less benevolent in what they exclude and demote.

There is in all nationally defined cultures, I believe, an aspiration to sovereignty, to sway, and to dominance. [...] At the same time, paradoxically, we have never been as aware as we are now of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the police action of simple dogma and loud patriotism. (63)

Said's first paragraph speaks to the role of the BBC itself (63) ; a curator of national artefacts, an institutional adapter and archivist of British works, which may be benevolent in what it includes, incorporates and validates, less benevolent in what it excludes and demotes. BBC personnel's decision to commission work from the 'Celtic' nations; the works which they choose; and the way in which they adapt them: all of these things demonstrate the way in which the personnel of the BBC are unusually influential 'hands' in the human-made structure of Britain's culture. Turning to Said's second paragraph, (63) in the nod to "sovereignty" and "dominance", there is the echo of Anderson's parameters for the idea of the nation. (55) Furthermore, in Said's recognition of the call of dogma and patriotism, (63) lie ideas at the heart of Colley's work on eighteenth-century concepts of Britishness. (60) Here are the hyper-traditional notions of nationhood and beside these Said is attempting to make room for the hybrid and the boundary-free. In similar fashion, this thesis must be conscious of traditional assertions of national and regional identity (naming conventions, the identification of boundaries, the othering of places not in the immediate vicinity) but it must also be open to the places where one identity flows into another, and where 'typical' boundaries break down. Chris Williams has argued that, in the case of Wales, a region or nation does not have to be post-colonial, for the discourse around it to benefit from the application of aspects of post-colonial theory. (64) Indeed, Williams quotes Bill Ashcroft in asserting that: "the term 'postcolonialism' has come to represent an increasingly indiscriminate attention to cultural difference and marginality of all kinds", before going on to make the case for viewing narratives of Welsh identity through the lens of ideas around hybridity, ambivalence and post-nationalism. (64) The work described here chimes with Gunn's and Shafir's framing of the regional as a wild card space (56-57) ; problematic, disruptive, and capable of reshaping accepted narratives. In addition, the reading of identity or space as colonial or post-colonial speaks to the way in which regional identities are temporal as well

as spatial. Therefore, this thesis remains open to using relevant aspects of post-colonial theory – especially as it pertains to hybrid identities – in the examination of the BBC’s construction of the British regions. Furthermore, it acknowledges that a complex but rich interrelationship exists between historical, sociological, political, linguistic, media-based and literary framings of nation and region – and that more connections exist between these fields than have traditionally been acknowledged in work on geographic identity.

Conclusion

Barthes and Casetti both point to the importance of expanding the ways in which we engage with the text (48, 50-52) ; and at the heart of this project is a commitment to fill critical gaps around the study of radio and regional identity and explore the ways in which diverse narratives can help to create a multi-layered reading of radio drama. There is a tension within this body of theorists between those who explore narratives of cohesion and homogeneity and those who explore narratives of disruption. In the narratives of cohesion camp are Briggs with his writing on the centralising tendencies of the BBC (4, 7, 17) ; Anderson with his writing on the creation of national narratives (55) ; Colley with her writing on the creation of a shared British identity (60) ; and Higson who looks at the way in which filmmakers were able to communicate British identity. (61) All the other major theorists described above are either detailing or recommending patterns of disruption: Barthes with his writing about the need to dissect and reinterpret the text (48) ; Casetti with his injunction to look outside literary and media theory (50) ; Gunn with his theory of the local as an engine for disruption (56) ; Shafir with his descriptions of asymmetric regional prominence (57) ; Joenniemi with his work on the political manipulation of temporal and spatial narratives (58) ; Richards with his exploration of the way in which the British regions were created by and for

a prominent South (62) ; and Said with his investigations into complex patterns of identity. (63) The nature of the disruption recommended or catalogued is not identical by any means, but the works by this second group are all engaged in the act of dismantling narratives which are seen as unnecessarily simplistic or reductive. By its nature, this study will tend to cleave more to the second than the first group, for it is impossible to write about a diverse selection of regions without identifying difference. However, there is one way in which this thesis will stand (in part) as a narrative of cohesion and that is in the investigation of radio as a medium. Since each region in this study employs the same means of communication – dramatic radio adaptation – there is work to be done in finding common threads in the way in which radio shapes the translation of identity and space. Thus, taken all together this thesis will form a narrative of both cohesion and tension.

There is also, and quite naturally, a tension between the focus of BBC historians, adaptive and textual theorists, and those looking at national or regional construction. Without wishing to oversimplify these fields, the first is largely engaged with the world of patrons and makers (commissioners and producers); the second tends to focus on interpreting the linguistic product of the makers; and the third hones in on the construction of identities which can be discerned within the finished product. This thesis contends that while these fields sometimes focus on different parts of the adaptive process, that a richer understanding of audio adaptation can be achieved by working between all three. However, this thesis will not try to over-synthesise the narratives of individual theorists or to obliterate the differences between these three fields. Barthes's work on the text is never going to offer the same insights as Anderson's work on national construction or Briggs's work on BBC patronage, but all three thinkers – and the many others discussed in this chapter – may help to draw from a single piece of audio a complex and nuanced response. For example, in thinking about the BBC Radio adaptation of Gillian Clarke's *Letters from a Far Country* (which is analysed

in the chapter on Wales), Briggs's and Hajkowski's focus on institutional evolution inspires analysis of the BBC's development of their Cardiff production office. (4, 6-7, 17) This particular centre of regional production nurtured generations of Welsh artists, many of whom it commissioned multiple times: as in the case of Clarke and this particular piece of writing. However, greater insights can be gained by placing this institutional analysis alongside a discussion of the resultant work. Thus, the commissioning of Welsh resident Clarke will be considered alongside the audio drama itself – an imagining of Wales told through both the Welsh and English language, a creative decision which reverberates through the text, the resultant soundscape, and in its construction of regional identity. This joint consideration of institutional and artistic decisions has resonance for Gunn's theory of the local, (56) showing how the BBC is constructing Wales on radio as local for its Welsh listeners, and constructing itself at the same time, as a patron of diverse British voices for its Welsh and non-Welsh listeners. Meanwhile, Barthes's work on multiplicity in the reading experience, (48) helps to inspire ideas around multiplicity in the listening experience: as will be seen in the exploration of meaning around both languages, their inter-relationship and their variant meanings for diverse listeners. At the same time, Anderson's work on national construction in literature, (55) suggests a partial framework by which the construction of Wales might be understood in audio art, from the multiple naming of the place itself; through accent; use of the Welsh language; and the citing of Welsh history. Casetti's entreaty to look at the text in the context of social discourses and its historical context, (50) inspires work on the meaning of commissioning an adaptation which includes the Welsh language in the year 2004, and how this context differs from the first time the work was produced for radio (without the inclusion of Welsh) in the 1970s. The diverse framings of Barthes, Gunn, Briggs, Hajkowski, Anderson and Casetti are not all performing the same function, but placing these frameworks alongside each other amplifies and adds complexity to the meaning which can be extracted from the work. Gunn's framing of the local offers a

powerful additional layer to the work that Briggs and Hajkowski have done on the BBC and their presence in the regions. (4, 6-7, 17, 56) Bringing Anderson together with Briggs allows a parsing of national construction in text to co-exist with an analysis of the institutional work of curating and commissioning artists from that nation. (4, 7, 17, 55) This thesis aims to exploit the powerful inter-relationship of these thinkers when applied to the project chosen here. Because if Anderson describes a common global cultural project (to imagine a nation) (55) ; and Briggs offers a narrative of a specific cultural project (the BBC) (4, 7, 17) ; then Barthes and Casetti offer different, imaginative and illuminating frameworks through which to read how the BBC has enacted the project of imagining Britain. (48, 50)

In summary, this thesis aims to draw forward the act of listening and rebalance the relationship between the 'author' of the BBC as an institution and the auditory 'texts' of the dramas themselves. In addition, this thesis aims to be imaginative and ambitious in the way in which it engages with audio, finding means to describe the unique ways in which audio drama creates or opens up possible meaning for its listeners. This thesis aims to take a range of narratives which have hitherto focused upon the printed word or visual communication and explore what light they lend to the study of radio as a medium. At the same time, this thesis will remain conscious of that which these narratives cannot describe – understanding that radio has been historically overlooked in part because its product does not fit well into conventional frames of analysis. Alongside this focus on radio, the thesis will explore the multiple ways in which the idea of the region can be constructed through drama and on radio – weaving together historical narratives of place and media institution with work on the problematic and destabilising idea of the region as subset of a larger whole. Lastly, mindful of the injunctions of Barthes, Casetti and Said, (48, 50-52, 63) this thesis will not attempt to erase complexity, or strive for too homogenous a theory of radio art, regional identity on radio or region itself. Rather, the work of this thesis is to allow the true complexity of its subject matter to emerge, and to elucidate aspects of this complexity.

The BBC Radio Adaptations Catalogue

The BBC Radio adaptations catalogue – created as part of this project to explore adaptation on radio – details 25 years of BBC Radio adaptations between the beginning of 1985 and the end of 2009. (2) One of the main aims of this thesis, and the larger research project around it, lies in opening up the BBC Radio archive to students, programme makers and researchers. As detailed in the previous section, the BBC Radio archive is incomplete and extremely hard to access; and the problems of access are compounded by the absence of a searchable catalogue. The Genome Project comes closest to offering a freely-available catalogue to listeners, viewers and researchers. However, while the Genome is both open access and searchable by date, channel and programme title, it does not have the facility to filter searches by genre or programme type. A researcher who, for example, wished to study all the drama programmes broadcast by the BBC in 1963 would have to read between 40,000 and 50,000 programme listings for the year and identify, from the descriptions of the programmes, which could be considered drama.² This time-consuming requirement in an age of digital catalogues, filters and tagging, provides an unnecessary additional barrier between the world of listeners and researchers and the publicly-owned, publicly-funded archives of the BBC. So, to begin the process of opening up access to the BBC Radio archive, one key task of the project was to create a catalogue of BBC Radio adaptations. Experiments in cataloguing conducted in year one quickly demonstrated that it would be impossible to catalogue all 93 years of BBC programmes within the time limits of the project; therefore, it became necessary to choose a time period to catalogue. As discussed in the previous section, the number of

² I arrived at this figure by examining the number of programmes listed on Genome for each day of one week in January 1963. On average, 127 BBC television and radio programmes are listed for each day. Applied over the year that gives an estimate of 46,355 programmes for the entire year.

programmes the BBC archived increased throughout the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, the decision was made to catalogue more recent decades in the hope that researchers using the catalogue would be more likely to find audio copies of the work extant in the BBC archives. Given the closed and uncatalogued nature of the physical archive, it was impossible to ascertain exactly what percentage of radio drama had been kept in any given year. However, multiple attempts to locate audio recordings of plays, suggested that by the late 1980s more than 50% of adaptations were still in existence in the archives and it is for this reason that a starting point of 1985 was chosen. This section will present some of the main findings and statistics from the creation of this catalogue with a view to forming a backdrop to the audio analysis which follows in the main chapters.

In creating the catalogue, thought was given to the kinds of questions which researchers might wish to ask of such a list, and the limitations of the catalogues which currently exist. To that end, the catalogue does not simply record the name of the adaptation and the date of transmission. Instead, the catalogue aims to give a range of details about the programme and the source text which will allow researchers from a variety of subject areas to identify groups of adaptations which may be of interest. Thought was given to the ways in which drama, in general, and adaptations in particular, are frequently broken down or grouped together for the purposes of study. Therefore, the finished catalogue gives details which pertain to questions of language, authorship, nationality, historical provenance, medium and production history. It is hoped that students and theorists of modern languages, English literature, history and media studies will find the detail offered by the catalogue helpful to their academic investigations. Each entry in the catalogue lists a date of first transmission; the radio station the programme first went out on; the name of the programme; the name of the source material; the author of the source material; the language of the source material; the date of publication or first performance; the country of birth of the author; the name of the

adapter (who is sometimes also the translator), the producer and director of the adaptation; and, lastly, the medium of the source material. With accessibility in mind, the catalogue has been made available as an Excel spreadsheet, but formatted so that it can be exported to an Access database. Excel spreadsheets are easily converted into formats which can be read by the majority of operating systems, but Access database files can only be opened by devices running both the Windows operating system and the Office package of software. Thus, the choice was made to privilege accessibility over flexibility, but to give scope for the catalogue to be converted into a true database by the end user. Throughout this thesis and the creation of the catalogue, the problem of nationality – its definition and its limits – has shaped every part of this endeavour. Thus, it is hardly surprising that of all the categories which made their way into the catalogue the one which offered the most challenges was the idea of nationality. The institution which this catalogue describes is built around an almost hopelessly undefinable idea of Britishness; an idea which is powerfully symbolic but defies easy definition. In an attempt to chart the places from where the staff of the BBC drew their sources for adaptation, the catalogue needed to include at least one category which would point towards a national identity or a geographic area, for either the sources or their authors. It was impossible to determine where each book and play was written; literature is often created over many years and in diverse locations; and works are not always first published or produced in the same country in which they were created. However, focusing on the creator of the work brought into play the unstable nature of national identity itself. The job of determining an author's nationality does not rest with any particular source. Sometimes an author will define their own nationality in an essay or an interview; though their self-described nationality may change over time or be hybrid in nature. Sometimes, the critical culture of a nation will claim an author as their own. Often, when dealing with authors from history, biographers or historians will assign a nationality to an author. At no point is there a fixed criteria around how nationality is assigned; some

authors and their critics and biographers will look to place of birth, while others will look at the nation of longest residence; and the nations in question may shift in shape and be renamed during the lifetime of the writer. In the case of this catalogue, a decision was made to offer a piece of information about the author's nationality which was verifiable, to draw this category into line with the other categories in the catalogue. Thus the author's place of birth is offered in place of any assigned nationality. The drawbacks and benefits of this arrangement are dealt with in a little more depth in the section on language and nationality which follows, but – for all its limitations – the cataloguing of author's country of birth adds value and flexibility to the catalogue as a whole.

Gender does not, at first glance, fall within the geographically-focused descriptions of British nationhood found in the Public Purposes of the BBC Charter. However, in all the research undertaken for this project it became impossible to ignore the fact that Britain was largely imagined on BBC Radio through the eyes and words of a single gender; and that, as an act of national representation, this was problematic. The finished catalogue does not represent gender in any specific category, but the author of this thesis determined that it was necessary to gather statistics to lay alongside more general observations around gender in the case studies. For this reason the author chose to run a small, separate study after the completion of the catalogue, whereby every writer, adapter, director and producer named was recorded by gender, thus allowing the catalogue to offer up statistics on gender ratios alongside the work on language, nationality, medium and period of publication. While it would be optimal to re-run this study for other categories, developing a set of statistics for factors such as age, ethnicity and country of birth/nationality, it is impossible to do so. Without access to confidential personnel records held by the BBC one cannot record each writer or director's ethnicity or age; and, since most writers and adapters are freelance, it would be challenging to attempt to accurately record ethnicity or age statistics for this group. Likewise, while country of birth can be traced for most writers notable enough to be

adapted, the same cannot be said for adapters, directors and producers. Therefore, gender is the only aspect of social identity which can be reliably discerned in a study such as this. The three short analyses which follow reference Tables 1 – 14 which can be found in the Appendix.

Gender

The findings reflected in Tables 1 – 7 reflect an institution which is both in sway to the male literary voice and – in the latter stages of the period – attempting to move to a place of greater gender equality. Over the 25-year period described by the catalogue, a little over one quarter of adaptations reflect the work of female writers, while just under three quarters of the adaptations take inspiration from the works of men (Table 1). This uneven balance of gender within the adapted canon is mirrored – to an extent – by male-dominated hiring practices within the institution itself. More than twice as many male scriptwriters as female were commissioned over the 25-year period, to adapt works for radio (Table 2). And yet, the hiring practices within the areas of production and direction suggest a greater commitment to gender balance, with the role of producer showing a relatively slight bias towards women and the role of director showing a relatively slight bias towards men (Tables 3 – 4). Therefore, there is a tension between the gender balance of the people in charge of the words and the original act of imagination and those who captain the creation of the adaptation. The catalogue overall demonstrates a varied picture, as one might expect for any series of works of art produced by a large number of people. However, the authorial words and the adaptive voices most often heard are male.

The statistics also demonstrate the way in which the imagining of the canon can evolve over time to pull against the historical trend of privileging the male voice. Tables 5 - 7 show the way in which the BBC commissioned and adapted works first published or performed in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. On the one hand, the continuing disparity

between the commissioning of male and female authors demonstrates the way in which the overall imbalance (Table 1) is not merely attributable to the historic gatekeeping which excluded women's voices from published works for so many centuries. Even given the wealth of female authors published and performed in the 1980s, BBC Radio still managed to commission just 36.14% of its adaptations from that decade from women writers. On the other hand, the shifting percentages for work adapted from the 1990s and 2000s show a marked trend towards greater equality (Tables 6 - 7). The change in percentages between these three decades may not solely be attributable to the sensibilities of the BBC's commissioning editors, but may also reflect the changing attention and opportunities afforded to female writers through this period. However, it is not within the power of this study to provide a guide as to the weighting of cultural versus institutional change. Nonetheless, it is evident that the managers and commissioners of BBC Radio are susceptible to some of the same prejudices found within wider society. It is also apparent that there is a will within the institution to move towards a place of greater equality, but that this process seems to have proceeded at a greater pace in the case of production staff than it has in the case of commissioned and adapted authors.

The statistics on gender are worthy of note, in part, because they describe the way in which the institution of the BBC can have a complex relationship with wider social prejudices and imbalances. They demonstrate the way in which the BBC sometimes struggles to curate British culture and society because the institution is – inevitably – formed of British culture and society. They also speak to the problematic terms of the BBC's Charter promise and the way in which the heads of the institution have chosen to imagine community in geographic terms, thus nullifying the many other ways in which the idea of community can be applied to British society. There is no explicit commitment to gender representation anywhere in the BBC Charter which this thesis quotes from, and yet it can certainly be argued that in privileging the male voice and the male experience in its acts

of adaptation the BBC is failing in its duty to represent its nations, regions and communities. However, even this view is open to some dispute: for nowhere is it specified that representation should equate to the social make up of the nation as it is. When commissioning and hiring practices create an adapted canon which heavily privileges the male voice, the institution is, to an extent, faithfully adapting the gender-biased society and culture that exists around it. To put it simply, there is a difference between representing the nation and the nation's culture. The Royal Charter would seem to commit to the former, but the evidence of the catalogue would seem to show representation cleaving to the latter.

Nationality and Language

Nationality and language have been grouped together to allow the BBC's approach to adapting work from different languages to be compared and contrasted with its approach to adapting work from different geographic regions. Tables 8 and 9 show a BBC which, in some ways, cleaves strongly to its remit to represent the UK and its nations. But they also demonstrate that, through these years, the BBC seems to embody Britishness more strongly in terms of the English language than geographic space (Tables 9 and 10). Furthermore, they show an institution which sometimes underrepresents its smaller nations (Table 9). As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the issue of country of birth and its relationship to nationality is problematic. Thus, while the study of country of birth yields interesting findings it is well to be alert to the ways in which Table 10 can be misleading. The principle aspect of this lies in something which can be discerned from the disparity between English as a language of source material in Table 11 (78.47%) and England as a country of birth for authors of source material in Table 9 (46.46%). The apparent diversity of authorial birth places in Table 9 hides the fact that many of these countries are only represented because British subjects were born there in or just after a period of British imperial rule. For example, India as a country of

birth is represented 49 times, but 11 of those instances refer to adaptations from works by William Makepeace Thackeray, 13 to works by Rudyard Kipling and three to works by George Orwell. This is not to say that country of birth is a category without merit. Since almost all of the work adapted from writers of Indian birth is written in the English language, without the country of birth category it would be extremely onerous for a researcher to find adaptations of work from Indian writers. Nevertheless, this fact, combined with the disparity between language and birthplace mentioned above, feeds into a wider picture of BBC Radio as an adapter and curator of works in the English language. So large is the percentage for adaptations taken from works in the English language (78.47%) that it is worth thinking about BBC Radio as the curator of a language as much as of a place. This, in turn, leads back to the problems of nation as a descriptor, a concept which is often interpreted as relating fundamentally to place, thus bypassing the need to think about social structure, culture or language. In fact, Tables 8 – 10 would appear to show BBC Radio interpreting the idea of Britishness in different ways at the same time: both drawing their works for adaptation from writers who come from the four nations and from a separate but overlapping constituency of writers who create works in the English language.

Despite the fluid imagining of nationhood discussed above, the fact remains that the BBC regularly makes a specific commitment to represent the United Kingdom to its audience, and looking at Tables 8 - 9 it is clear that the BBC's adaptive content stays broadly true to this ideal. However, the statistics also reveal areas of under representation which, within the context of the tables, may appear small but are nonetheless meaningful omissions. Broadly speaking, the level and ratios of British representation are impressive. One of the most striking statistics to emerge from Table 9 is how closely the breakdown of British authors' nations of birth adheres to the percentages of the most recent national UK census. The BBC, in this instance, seems to have achieved a startling adherence to representation which, given that BBC Radio does not require knowledge of an author's

nation of birth on their commissioning documents, must be, at least in part, unplanned. What is worth noting, however, is that – in terms of the ratio of populations – Scotland is over-represented; Northern Ireland and England are both slightly over-represented; and Wales is under-represented. While the numbers and percentages appear small at first glance, it is important to reflect that if Wales had been represented in adaptive terms in proportion to the country's share of population the number of adaptations from Welsh authors would rise from 52 to 74 over a 25-year period. For a nation relatively under-represented across UK-wide media, such a rise would be significant and could, potentially, increase the diversity both of Welsh voices and of imagined versions of Wales. In addition to this, the paucity of content from British writers writing in non-English languages is also notable: with just three adaptations from a source first written in Welsh and none from Gaelic³, Scots, Ulster-Scots, Cornish or Manx. Once again, as in the examples given above, the archive for this quarter century seems to assert a version of Britishness which is about the English language even more than it is about space.

Medium and Period of First Publication or Performance

The primacy of the novel within the culture of both Britain and the BBC has helped to shape not just the way in which material was commissioned according to medium but also the periods of time from which commissioners have drawn their source material. Table 11 illustrates the way in which the novel dominates the field of sources commissioned for adaptation. Short stories, which offer a form extremely well suited to adaptation into BBC Radio's many 15- to 60-minute slots, are nonetheless adapted at less than a third of the rate of novels. Stage plays, which in their scripted format require substantially less adaptation than most prose and

³ There is one adaptation in the catalogue from a source written in Irish/Gaelic but the writer is not British. (2)

poetry, are adapted just 25.56% of the time – a fairly modest percentage compared to the novel’s 46.14%. This weighting in favour of the novel and, for example, the very tiny number of film adaptations, suggests that commissioners in the period were as aware of sustaining a relationship between the BBC’s highbrow radio stations and the tastes of the British literary scene as the BBC personnel who originally envisioned the place of the wireless in middle-class cultural life. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the novel’s relatively short history within the English language, the adaptation of various time periods cleaves to the rise and supremacy of the novel itself (Tables 12 and 13). If, for instance, BBC Radio commissioners were as interested in adapting plays and poetry as they are in adapting novels the listener might hear a greater range of adaptations drawing on the period before the nineteenth century, which – but for the very large number of Shakespeare adaptations – is only lightly represented throughout the period covered by this thesis. This is not to say that the range of adaptations lacks imagination or ambition: within the archive can be found many examples of adaptations drawing on lesser-known sources such as Icelandic sagas, English medieval diarists or Armenian short story writers. But in a thesis concerned with the way in which the BBC has imagined Britain for the British, it is important to note that BBC Radio has helped to construct a version of British culture within which the novel is judged pre-eminent over all other forms of writing. Finally, in thinking about the version of Britain which the BBC constructs for its listeners, it is worth looking at the heavy preference given to adapting the twentieth century as opposed to adapting the nineteenth. Table 13 shows that twentieth-century texts were adapted more than four times as often as texts from the nineteenth century, while Table 14 shows that 1980 - 1989 was the most often adapted decade in the period 1985 to 2009, followed by 1990 - 1999. This weighting suggests that the BBC, in part, imagines its role to be that of a rolling, real-time curator of cultural content; and that it is possible that elements of the institution’s role as a news-gathering organisation may spill into its conception of itself as a cultural adapter and creator. This idea, that

the BBC acts as a kind of real-time cultural curator, is particularly interesting in light of the three case studies which follow – one of which reflects this trend for adapting contemporary texts, while the other two chapters find the BBC interpreting the idea of regions through a heavily-historicised lens.

Summary

One of the themes which will reverberate through this thesis is that of the nature of representation, for representation can mean different things. The BBC Charter in its Public Purposes makes a commitment to representation but does not define the nature of that representation. Then it commits to represent a trio of ideas (nation, region and community) each more abstract in definition than the last. Thus it is clear that there is a problem with the commitment, and that problem lies in the fluid nature of the terms used: the nonspecific nature of the promise, as it were. The catalogue of adaptations exists, in part, as an object to set alongside these abstract problems and to interrogate the question: how does BBC Radio represent nations, regions and communities for its audience. The answer, as laid out in the sections above, is sometimes complex. There are examples of BBC Radio working to fulfil the most basic outline of its Public Purposes: for example, in the way in which it has adapted a very large number of works both from and about Britain. In addition to this, the country of birth category demonstrates that the work which is adapted comes from a mixture of the four nations and that, in some cases, the proportion of the work adapted cleaves closely to the proportion of the population living in that nation. Then there are other statistics which indicate a failure of representation, albeit not in the area of geography or nationality: these include the pronounced ongoing preference for adapting work by male authors and commissioning male scriptwriters. There is, perhaps, a relationship between this marked imbalance and the fact that reflecting the gender balance of the United Kingdom was not a stated purpose of the BBC in the period of the catalogue. It is interesting to contrast the BBC's relative

success in balancing the representation of the United Kingdom's four nations (an achievement which has a relationship to one of the BBC's stated commitments) and the imbalance of representation between the genders (an issue of representation where there is no stated commitment). This finding would suggest that the wording of the BBC's commitments is meaningful to institutional practice. Thinking back to the discussion of narratives of national construction versus narratives of regional disruption, mentioned in the literature review, it is instructive to think about the ways in which there are multiple narratives of normative culture running through the catalogue. For example, when Val Gielgud conflated the idea of the national with the mainstream or the important, (17) he illustrated something vital about the way in which the idea of the regional can be interpreted to describe many things which lie outside a perceived standard. Thinking about gender, it is possible to see the construction of a narrative of Britishness which offers up male visions of experience as a norm. This thesis is not suggesting that BBC Radio has knowingly advanced a reading of the nation which is largely male. Rather, this thesis suggests that the cumulative effect of BBC Radio adaptations, when considered together, creates multiple narratives of nation and British cultural norms which co-exist and interact in complex ways.

In answering the question posed within the thesis, it is important to understand that it would be reductive to judge all trends in representation as either successes or failures. So, while representation of gender, or representation of the smaller nations, may sometimes be held against the national picture for comparison, there is a broader and more nuanced picture to be painted. This picture takes in representation on all its levels, thinking about space and gender, but also about the type and period of work being adapted and what that means for the construction of an imagined Britain. To that end, the primacy of the novel does not necessarily represent a failure of representation, but it does point to the idea that there is a certain kind of cultural product which BBC Radio is comfortable with curating and adapting. That, for example, BBC Radio has constructed

itself as a curator and adapter of the literary page rather than the cinema screen or gallery floor, despite the fact (as will be seen in the chapters on Wales and Manchester) that some of its most ambitious and imaginative adaptations arise when writers adapt from sources other than the novel. In addition, it is striking that an institution famous for its well-funded and star-studded adaptations of nineteenth-century novels (both on radio and television) has drawn so much of its adaptive content from the twentieth century, and that it is the late twentieth century which is favoured over the earlier part. This trend may be due to a number of factors, not least that producers and commissioning editors are more likely to be aware of works or authors reviewed and promoted within their lifetimes. But it also seems to speak to another famed aspect of BBC identity, that of the BBC as a news delivery service, an institution which can be relied upon to reflect current events to its audience as they happen. The catalogue described above offers an overview of representation, but what it cannot do is look inside the work of the adaptations themselves. Therefore, the chapters which follow aim to open up and dissect both the commissioning process and the audio, to ask what representation on BBC Radio means in the specific.

Welsh Voices

How language, voice and memory are imagined as the conduits
of Welsh identity

Introduction

Wales is unusual among the four nations of the United Kingdom in having a sizable community who continue to use a British language other than English. And it is the Welsh language, as this chapter will demonstrate, which has become a focus point for Welsh identity, offering a meaningful border between Wales and England; a cultural meeting point for its users; and a symbolic, auditory bridge to an historic Wales, both real and imagined. This imagining of Wales chimes, not co-incidentally, with one of radio's key strengths. For voice is identity on radio, and, in the imagined Wales of BBC Radio drama, the Welsh voice is the site of national identity. In the adaptations in this chapter, voice will be seen to carry a weight of national meaning and national imagination: through accent, through language and through song. Later in the chapter, the history of the BBC in Wales will demonstrate the extent to which the institution in the nation has had to negotiate operating in a land of two languages and multiple identities, taking on a hybrid identity of its own: by turns, Welsh and Anglo-Welsh and English. The dramatic pieces in this chapter examine a range of styles and source material, from historical documents and poetry, to conventional literary works and historic radio plays. Both Gerry Jones's *A Kind of Hallowe'en* and Gillian Clarke's *Letter from a Far Country* adapt aspects of one of the BBC's most famous original works for radio: Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*. And the chapter will reflect upon the way in which BBC Radio adapts its own history in the nation, as well as historic ideas about Welshness and identity. The works examined in this chapter include Colin Thomas's *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*, which uses archived diaries and letters to tell the story of a Welsh community in Ukraine; Clarke's *Letter from a Far Country*, which examines the place of Welsh women's experiences in social and literary narratives; Jones's award-winning play *A Kind of Hallowe'en*, a humorous psychological thriller which plays with the life and influence of Dylan Thomas; and Islwyn Ffowc

Elis's *The Shadow of the Sickle*, which adapts a much-studied work of Welsh-language literature set in a farming community in the 1940s.

In trying to conjure the idea of Wales in radio drama, the BBC are following in (or adapting) a long tradition of trying to imagine Wales as something and somewhere both essential and homogenous. In Jeffrey Richards's analysis of British culture, Wales, Scotland and Ireland were all invented or characterised by Romanticism. (62) Richards identifies an eighteenth-century movement in culture to imagine all three Celtic fringe nations as nations defined by wild landscapes; the importance of music, song and the bardic tradition; and the presence or belief in elements of the supernatural. (62) In examining the artificial nature of this construct, Richards goes on to point to Malcolm Chapman's work on the invention of the Celts as a distinct ethnic group, (65) and to Hugh Trevor Roper's work showing that the kilt, tartans and bagpipes of Scottish tradition were all invented in the eighteenth century. (62, 66) In the case of Wales in particular, Richards gives the reader examples of Welsh ballads falsely presented as Celtic or traditional; the importance of the Welsh scholar Edward Lhuyd in popularising Paul-Yves Pezron's idea that the Bretons and the Welsh were both descended from the Celts, and that the Celts were a race who had ruled Europe; and the role of Welsh societies in London in promoting St David's Day and reviving the Eisteddfodai. (62) In each of these diverse examples we can see the way in which the business of imagining Wales is often an act of adaptation. Nineteenth-century composers adapt modern songs and historicise them; Lhuyd adapts Pezron for a different geographic market; and the Welsh societies of London adapt relatively obscure Welsh celebrations to give them points of nationalised ritual within the calendar year. These acts of adaptation multiply as time goes on and cultural channels increase. In imagining Wales, the BBC not only adapts the source material it has purchased, it also adapts older ideas about Wales, ideas which have gained currency through repetition. Thus, this chapter will demonstrate the way in which the BBC adapts the eighteenth-century idea of a Wales defined by its relationship to song, and

the human voice. Crucially, apparent in every one of the adaptations, is the degree to which imagining Wales has come to mean historicising Wales. Both in the history of British culture and in the survey of adaptations here, the locus of essential Welshness is repeatedly imagined to reside within an historic past, carefully distanced – perhaps even alienated – from the realities of modern Welsh life. Thus, the work of this chapter is to try and unpick the subtleties of the way in which the BBC has chosen to imagine Wales.

The complex nature of Wales as a nation – with its two languages; its tangled relationship with its neighbour, England; and its long, porous land border – means that Edward Said's urge towards subtlety and hybridity is particularly relevant to this chapter. In the book *Postcolonial Wales*, a range of historians and theorists approach the idea of how Wales might be imagined. In the chapter "Problematising Wales", Chris Williams argues that Wales is not, strictly speaking, a postcolonial state because Wales was never colonised by England and, in fact, gained economically and politically from its role within the British Empire. (64) Williams argues that, nonetheless, postcolonial discourse is relevant to discussions of how Wales may be imagined; and he outlines three postcolonial approaches that seem most relevant to discussions of Wales. The first of these is ambivalence: an approach which, and here Williams looks towards Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*, (67) is characterised by the postcolonial nation having an ambivalent relationship with the perceived coloniser. (64) In the case of Wales, Wales is a country which has not only benefited at times from its relationship with England/Britain, but it is a country which participates in the English language and its attendant culture. At the same time, there are many views expressed within the Welsh arts scene which suggest resentment of perceived English interference and which mourn the effect that the widely-spoken English language has had on the evolution and medium of Welsh culture. The second approach noted is hybridity. Wales – and its porous borders – have seen large groups of people move across the border into Wales,

particularly from England. Williams makes the point that as of the year 1999, there were more English people living in Wales than there were Welsh speakers. (64) And that, while many social and cultural initiatives existed to support the Welsh language, culturally speaking, there was little effort made to embrace the idea that a quarter of all people living in Wales were not born 'Welsh'. (65) Williams makes the point that postcolonial thinking encourages the embrace of hybrid identities and multiple identities "(Anglo-Welsh, English-speaking Welsh, Irish-Welsh, Black-Welsh etc.)", but that this is a problematically-essentialised position, suggesting that membership of a group provides a true essence of the self. (64) The third approach Williams cites is post-national thinking. Post-national thinking sees traditional narratives of national identity as over reliant both on the othering of groups or nations, and on the need for borders. (64) Post-national thinking aims to move away from a forced pursuit of homogeneity and look instead towards shared global values of democracy, freedom of expression and human rights. Each of these approaches to nationhood will become apparent in the adaptations as the chapter progresses. Ambivalent and divergent feelings towards English rule during the First World War dominate the latter part of *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*. *A Kind of Hallowe'en* explores the hybrid identity of the central character, The Man: who is sometimes Welsh and sometimes English; sometimes Gerry Jones, sometimes Dylan Thomas, and sometimes nameless. The internationalism (and near utopianism) of *The Shadow of the Sickle* look towards a post-national identity for Wales. Lastly, *Letter from a Far Country* examines issues of ambivalence from the point of view of a Welsh woman who feels shut out of her own country and its culture; hybridity, in asking how Welsh identity intersects with female experience; and post-nationalism, in imagining a Welsh identity free of conventional borders, and residing instead in voice, sound and memory.

Finally, it is worth restating why these acts of imagination matter. The significance of an imagined Wales lies not just in the way that this act of imagining fulfils the BBC's commitment to represent the nations and

regions of the country; but in all that comes after that. This imagined Wales feeds into ideas of the country held by four groups: people who identify as Welsh and live in Wales; people who identify as Welsh and live in other parts of the UK; people who do not identify as Welsh and live in Wales; and people who do not identify as Welsh and live in other parts of the UK. Of these four groups, the largest by number is the last. And for this majority of Britons, who neither identify as Welsh nor live in Wales, the presentation of the country within mass media will often be their only experience of the nation. As the most listened to broadcaster in the UK for the period covered by this thesis, (68) the BBC's imagining of the country of Wales has profound reach and influence. The Wales of BBC Radio may not be a real entity, but it has the power to curate, amplify and promote the creation of an influential cultural identity.

The Problem of Welsh Borders

The Shadow of the Sickle

Based on the novel by Islwyn Ffowc Elis

Adapted by Sion Eirian

Classic Serial – Radio 4 – 2000

and

A Kind of Hallowe'en

Inspired by *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas

Play written by Gerry Jones

Radio 3 – 1985

If the existence of borders is key to defining a nation, then each of the dramas in this chapter illustrate the extent to which the borders of Wales can move, buckle and vanish. The solidity of Wales is always in question, in plays which look at the leaking edges of identity, language,

memory and global space. These are plays which seem to ask ‘Where is Wales?’ and ‘When is Wales?’ and ‘Who is Welsh?’ and rarely come back with a clear answer. The literature of Wales is that of a contested land, an annexed country; a space with two languages in which only one is shared with their larger and more politically-powerful neighbour, England. In the first of the two plays in this section, Jones’s *A Kind of Hallowe’en*, the boundaries between the real world and the imagined world; between Gerry Jones the playwright and Dylan Thomas the poet; between a semi-real England and a fictional Wales, are blurred and thrown into question. In the second, a serialised adaptation of Elis’s Welsh-language novel *The Shadow of the Sickle*, the boundaries of political philosophy, family tradition, and Welsh identity are tested and torn down in this mid-twentieth-century family saga. While *The Shadow of the Sickle* presents itself as a social realist study of rural Wales, *A Kind of Hallowe’en* works as both a psychological study and a work of fantasy. The boundaries of language and political affiliation in the former work are debated between its characters; while in the latter work, the fantasy element allows boundaries to melt away, presenting a Wales floating free of geographic and historic reality.

Yet the issue of Welsh borders, and their importance to Wales, lies in a troubled history of contested sovereignty. From the annexation of Wales, through the building of Edward I’s Iron Ring of castles, the passing of Henry VIII’s Laws in Wales Acts, and into the twentieth century, the existence of a country called Wales – the idea that there is a knowable, identifiable, geographic and cultural entity called Wales – has been less a matter of contest than many people might imagine. Ironically, the sustained efforts of the English establishment to annexe Welsh land; collect Welsh taxes; and to control the use of the Welsh language in the council chamber, the court and the schoolroom have served to highlight the fact that there is a country called Wales, albeit one which – in the past millennium – has been heavily defined by its relationship to its closest neighbour. The long porous border of the Welsh nation has moved and

shifted many times over the past eight hundred years. Travelling over this border, hundreds of thousands of English people have moved to live in Wales and hundreds of thousands of Welsh people have moved to live in England. And along this border there are no controls, nothing more visible than a sign to mark the place where land slips from Englishness to Welshness and back again. In fact, and Shafir's identification of the factors which construct notable regions is relevant here, (57) one of the few signs which has marked Wales out from England has been the possession of a distinct language. This is something which the traveller to Wales would historically have encountered aurally, but more recently would observe visually. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 put the Welsh language on an equal footing with English, turning every publicly-owned sign into a tacit, dual-language notification that the visitor was in Wales. The place of the language, and its many meanings, will come to the fore later in the chapter. This section of the chapter exists to explore what happens to the construction of space in the action of imagining a nation with ill-defined borders.

The Shadow of the Sickle – published originally in the Welsh language as *Cysgod y Cryman* – was Elis's first novel; and, like *A Kind of Hallowe'en*, it is a partially-autobiographical work which explores ideas of Welshness and Welsh identity. It tells the story of Harri Vaughan and his struggles to define his own identity in late-1940s Montgomeryshire. Like the author, Harri has been a conscientious objector and has been studying at Bangor and Aberystwyth through the war, living away from his land-owning father and their family. At the Eisteddfod, Harri meets the young communist student Gwylan Thomas, from whom he buys a socialist magazine, partly because he is attracted to her. Harri's relationship with communism and Gwylan bring him into conflict with his Liberal Party councillor and land-owner father, who expects him to marry a local girl, Lisabeth, from a neighbouring farm. Elis's novel presents the reader with a range of contested territories. Harri and his father wrestle throughout the novel over the rightful ownership of his father's farm; the marriage which

Harri rejects was to help settle a dispute between the two fathers over their farmland; and Harri, as a communist, wants to see all land turned over to state ownership. In addition to this, the bodies of the women in the novel are imagined as territory. Harri's political conversion is spurred, in part, by a desire to get close to Gwylan; yet, when Gwylan offers herself to Harri, he is repulsed by her forwardness in trying to kiss him. Instead, having rejected Lisabeth as too parochial and Gwylan as too forward and insufficiently committed to socialism, Harri finally proposes to a local woman who he sees as a fitting partner in his new life of rural communalism. The women in the book are often seen to be traded by the men – both by fathers and possible husbands – their own bodies reduced to the status of fields along a contested border; offered backwards and forwards in exchange for other favours. Harri's sister Greta meets with the same fate, traded into an unhappy marriage by parents who regret their decision within hours of the wedding, but who do not bother to find a way out for Greta. In Elis's world everything is property, and all property may be traded. The boundaries of the farms and the human hearts seem never to be fixed: and the resulting landscape – geographic, social and psychological – destabilises everyone with its constant flux.

Sion Eirian's adaptation alters two further boundaries, above and beyond the ones discussed above. Firstly, the literary work is moved into a world with sound, but no vision; and, secondly, the work moves from its native Welsh into the English-language space of Radio 4. The change in language is made invisible to the listener: not noted by the continuity announcer, or in the programme's credits; and not marked by any dialogue within the script itself. To listeners unaware of Elis and the original Welsh novel, here is a Classic Serial based upon a modern classic of Welsh literature, in which every character speaks English. Thus, the act of transfer – of BBC adaptation – may be seen (to borrow from Said, (63)) as "benevolent" in its promotion of a Welsh canon but "less benevolent" in its complete excision of any mention of the language to which the work belongs. The boundaries between the two languages are both erased and

ignored; negated in a space owned by the dominant and more-widely-spoken language. The move from page to radio stage is, by contrast, semi-visible: acknowledged by the name of the strand, Classic Serial, and the continuity announcer's noting of the literary basis of the work before the start of the drama. But once the drama starts, the world of Elis's novel is imagined for us in a rich tapestry of rural and semi-rural soundscapes and a plethora of accents. Harri's otherness is at once discernible to the listener in the difference between his and his father's accents. While Harri's accent wavers somewhere between Welsh and English, his father speaks in a broad mid-Walian accent, a sound which seems at times to heighten the tension between them as he berates Harri for his waywardness, his distance from the farm and his conscientious objection to the war. The soundscape of the adaptation only grows more intricate as the listener encounters the other workers on the farm; including the working-class, mid-Walian tones of the foreman Will; and the strong German accent of the ex-prisoner-of-war, farmworker Karl. The introduction of Karl brings a new and important aspect to the soundscape of this Wales:

internationalism. Here, in *The Shadow of the Sickle*, is a Wales less concerned with its relationship to England than its relationship to all of the rest of Europe. Like Rumsfeld in Joenniemi's analysis, (58) Elis redraws the map, showing Wales abutting the rest of Europe, England one more unnamed country amongst many. Wales as part of something larger than a region of the United Kingdom is a framing which will be echoed in other adaptations but it has the effect of amplifying the invisible space and suggesting that here, in this invisible BBC drama universe, you may encounter a very small or a very large part of the world. The boundaries of visual narrative have been removed and here is a space which can be anywhere and everywhere: a place the boundaries of which may never become apparent.

The Shadow of the Sickle is a piece of radio that takes us around Wales: through her countryside; to the edges of her university towns; and into what Elis in his narration suggests is the country's floating capital: the

yearly Eisteddfod. Travelling through unseen radio Wales, the listener comes to the idea of a nation within a nation:

HARRI (NARRATION): Every year, at the start of August, the National Eisteddfod becomes a magnet. English youngsters are drawn to London. French youngsters are drawn to Paris. For the Welsh, it's the Eisteddfod. For one week, the only capital we have.
(20)

Here, again, is Wales with its incoherent borders. Harri (and by extension Elis) are explicitly imagining Wales for the listener in a shape that many will find unfamiliar. They are imagining a Wales which cannot be drawn and described in detail on a map. This is the idea of Wales as a country convened around a language and its culture. This is a movable idea of a country: one which has traded (to deal in Anderson's terms) a sense of powerful "sovereignty" to focus instead on a "deep, horizontal comradeship" – something which the Eisteddfod exemplifies. Here, in the BBC Radio imagining of the Eisteddfod, the listener hears a choir singing in Welsh in the background (the only time the listener hears the language used in the adaptation); and, in a novel dominated by the politics of the Labour, Liberal and Communist parties, the listener hears a character tell us they have been working for Plaid Cymru. Whereas the novel, in its original, Welsh-language form, gave the reader a Wales imagined through the medium of Welsh; the adaptation gives the listener a snapshot of a Welsh-language Wales within an English-language Wales. The idea of the nation defined by its language is an amplification of Shafir's assertion that language creates notable and divergent regions, (57) and a corollary to Gunn's Chinese regions with their particular local languages. (56) The key difference between Gunn's Chinese regions and Elis's Wales on the BBC, is that Gunn's Chinese regions disrupt the narrative of nation by inserting their language into mass communications, (56) whereas in *The Shadow of the Sickle* BBC Radio adapts the construction of a country around a

language, while silencing the language itself. This is particularly interesting given the findings from the catalogue that BBC Radio is an adapter of the English language, even more than it is an adapter of British-born writers. BBC Radio is curating a cultural canon, perhaps even constructing an institutional vision of Britain, based largely on the use of language. To an extent it could even be argued that BBC Radio is the Eisteddfod of English. Thus, it is striking that BBC Radio – in adapting a cultural olympiad – silences the essence and the language of that event. In *The Shadow of the Sickle* Wales is a country within a country: both because it is one of the smaller nations of the United Kingdom; and because there is a concept of Wales that exists for Welsh-language users which nestles within a larger geographic and political imagining of Wales. The adaptation of *The Shadow of the Sickle* communicates this idea quietly, in a form which is probably more explicable to those within Wales than those without, the Eisteddfod being a fairly obscure concept outside Wales. Yet, almost every theme, within the novel and its adaptation, speaks to the problem of borders. When Edward warns his son, in the first scene of the first episode, that his behaviour risks the continuation of the family name and the family farm, Harri tells his dad: “Some things are immutable, indestructible...” But this statement is to take on a heavy weight of irony as events unfold. The family name is tied to the land and the land can be traded. Harri’s first betrothal is tied in part to the land, but Harri’s attitude to the land means that the marriage never happens. Throughout the piece, Harri is searching for an identity where he will not be defined by what he owns or what will be left to him. He is man trying to throw off borders and live free of them.

The Shadow of the Sickle, presents the listener with the idea of a Wales within Wales; it demonstrates the problem with borders and the way in which issues of land can control the personal lives of the characters; but it also places Wales in a different setting. In the early part of the novel and its adaptation, Wales and its relationship to England is shrugged off, to be replaced by Wales and its relationship to Europe. This concern will appear again in an adaptation later in the chapter, *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*,

where Thomas writes about a Welsh industrial community transported to the Ukraine. But the meaning of this piece of imagining is both striking and politically revolutionary. In neither Northern Ireland nor in Greater Manchester will citizens worry about their nation or their region's relationship to other European countries. Yet, in two of the four adaptations for Wales this is a subject of much discussion. The reason why this matters politically, is that in the act of bypassing England in favour of thoughts of Russia or Germany or Ukraine, the writers of these pieces are imagining Wales as its own European nation. And, in this act of imagination, lies a quiet claim to sovereignty. If Wales need not take regard of England, then the annexation – the entire history of England and its political and economic projects within Wales – becomes a kind of irrelevance. Here is Wales imagined free of England, and free therefore of Britain, holding itself up against Germany and Russia and Ukraine for comparison instead. And yet, there is an unspoken tension between this act of imagining and the one outlined above. If Wales is imagined as a sovereign European nation, then borders, political status and agency do matter. However, if it is imagined as a free floating state, existing within a language and its surrounding culture, then its lack of borders would appear to be part of its strength. Even within single adaptations, Wales may be imagined in diverse forms – forms which may strain against each other.

The next adaptation in this section looks at the radical removal of borders: borders between reality and fantasy; borders between individuals; borders between points in time; and borders between national identities. In Jones's *A Kind of Hallowe'en* a man wakes in a graveyard believing himself to be Dylan Thomas, born for a second time out of the remains of his first life. In the first part of the play the listener encounters a narrator – as in Thomas's famous radio play – who narrates the progress of this central protagonist as he descends from the graveyard into a town (which may be the Llareggub of *Under Milk Wood*) and confronts a variety of characters with the fact that he – 'Dylan Thomas' – created them. Slowly the listener begins to move in and out of this nameless man's

consciousness until the listener discovers that he is in fact detained in an institution after a stroke, having learned of an affair his wife had while he was directing her and her lover in a production of *Under Milk Wood*. Despite being confronted with this fact by his doctor, the man's mind continually returns to his alternative reality where he walks the streets of Thomas's creation and lives Thomas's New York existence in the final year of his life as the poet works on *Under Milk Wood*. A separate and distinct narrator in the first part of the play gives way to the nameless detained figure, The Man, who then becomes his own narrator. *A Kind of Hallowe'en* is a play which challenges borders but it is also a play about memory and influence, and the extent to which memory constructs our understanding of the world.

Jones said of the play in interview: "I think every Welshman walks a bit in the shadow of Dylan Thomas. I have directed *Under Milk Wood* both on radio and in the theatre so obviously I'm fascinated by his writing..." (16) In the world of *A Kind of Hallowe'en*, The Man is caught between two worlds, his accent Welsh when he is Thomas and English when he is in the institution (though the lead actor Ray Smith was, like the playwright, Welsh). Likewise, The Man's life is imagined as confined and limited inside the institution, but he takes on the powers of a kind of god within the world of Thomas's existence: irresistible to the women of New York and conferring life and death decisions on the inhabitants of Llareggub. To be Dylan Thomas is to be powerful, influential, authoritative: both Gerry Jones and The Man feel this to be true. The Thomas of the play is a literary giant bridging the divide between Wales and England, even bridging the divide across the Atlantic: he is a global figure, the ultimate Welsh icon of cultural power and possibility; and, in addition to all this, he is a BBC man and a man of the radio. In one of their meetings, The Man's doctor asks him about his life as Dylan Thomas:

DOCTOR: Do you remember directing *Under Milk Wood*?

THE MAN: I remember it all. I remember the people, the places, the BBC faces. And most of all the poems.

Where Harri in *The Shadow of the Sickle* is 'lost' to the utopian ideal of communism, The Man is in love with the idea of Dylan Thomas. Jones is imagining for (and with) the listener Thomas of the literary canon, Thomas of the radio, Thomas of the BBC: the weight of influence and the importance of authority. When Gerry Jones is commissioned to write a play heavily referencing Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, the BBC does this in the knowledge that they have helped to create a mythos around the play and around Thomas himself. In addition, Thomas's success on radio works as a powerful advertisement for the potential and authority of BBC Radio within the British literary and cultural sphere. Thus, *A Kind of Hallowe'en* shows the construction of identity through the act of remembering (or mis-remembering); but it also shows the BBC commissioning as an act of remembering its own history.

Employing a sophisticated level of structural fluidity, Jones asks his listeners to provide their own decisions about where the boundaries lie within the play: choosing which parts of The Man's experiences are real and which imagined and asking what it means to be a writer, a narrator or even an ordinary human being experiencing reality. The Man constantly challenges his doctors to prove to him that he is really mad and while the listener recognises the authority of the institution he is housed in, they also follow him outside, both in his imagination, and in an escape which seems really to happen within the world of the play. Neither Jones nor his protagonist respect traditional boundaries or definitions and the radio setting allows structural norms to melt away: all settings are invisible so each is only as real or unreal as the others, and Jones provides us with no rationale for the narrator figure who the listener has heard at the beginning of the play. His protagonist is in many ways as able a writer as Thomas – certainly he is lyrical, intelligent and imaginative – so the idea that there is a firm boundary between Dylan Thomas, the published writer,

and the delusional and vulnerable figure of The Man becomes less convincing. The listener is presented with a triumvirate of figures each of whom has imagined Wales; Thomas's imagined Wales (Llareggub) existing first in audio history and latterly in the memory and imagination of the title character, the playwright and the listener; Jones's imagined Wales being the one the listener is presented with in the form of this drama; and The Man's imagined Wales being a product both of Jones's writerly imagination and the influence of *Under Milk Wood*. Every world within the play is an act of remembering, either by a character within the play or by Jones; and the play itself, as stated above, is an act of remembering and reminding on the part of the BBC. The entire work suggests an extremely complex trail of memory, adaptation and storytelling: analogous, perhaps, to the complex way in which individual, national and regional identities may be constructed.

The power of imagined worlds is amplified by Jones's decision to reflect Thomas's interest in sight and blindness within the world of *A Kind of Hallowe'en*. Blindness is a recurring motif through the play, occurring both in the form of metaphors used often by the central character, but also in the person of an old man residing in the same institution as the protagonist, who The Man believes is the character of Captain Cat from *Under Milk Wood*. In the extracts that follow it is apparent that Jones is concerned with ideas of sight and blindness; the way in which the characters, style and themes of *Under Milk Wood* run through the dialogue; and the way in which the writer plays with the conceit of a central character who believes himself to be the creator of the 'reality' he is living. Having visited the town of Llareggub at the start of the play, The Man assaults a sailor who did not like being told that he was The Man's creation and then finds himself back in the drawing room of the institution where a friendly orderly tries to engage him in conversation:

ORDERLY: Bored of your magazine?

THE MAN: There's more to see when you keep your eyes shut.⁴

Jones follows this joke about the power of radio drama with an ambiguous speech in which The Man claims to see things which are neither in the 'real world' of the play nor in the *Under Milk Wood* reality of his mind, suggesting once again that Jones is constantly pushing at traditional boundaries, including narrative rules governing how worlds should work in audio drama.

THE MAN: I'll tell you what I see when I look out the window. I see concrete lawns and skyscraper trees. Nuts grow on the trees. Appropriate, wouldn't you say? America in a nutshell. Do you follow me? No? What you see, you always see. And it's always the same. Always a lie. But I see the sky golden and eagles on the wing. Well... This isn't the place for the famous. You won't keep me here. Away from here there are things to be done, to say, to write. I've only used up half my life. I've got a pocket full of pens and enough paper to change the world. See you in the dining room then.

Here, Jones shows The Man imagining a version of America for another person, while both of them sit thousands of miles away from the 'real' America. The Man is imagining somewhere he has never been, but that Thomas went. Thus, he is remembering, but remembering through his imagination. It is also, like many of the scenes and set ups in the play, a kind of analogy for the way in which radio drama works. When a group of people in a studio in a BBC building create an imaginary world for a group

⁴ Jones's lines here works as a sort of radio in-joke. In the early years of radio, listeners to plays were recommended to experience them with their eyes closed. Jones's joke is an adaptation, a memory, of this idea of radio drama, and a comment on the way in which the experience of listening overlaps with the experience of memory and of imagination.

of disparate British listeners, they too are entering into a shared, multiple act of construction, imagination and memory. In essence, the act is a kind of game; and the playfulness of Jones's work nods to this fact. The tenor and argument of the play – the interplay between real memories, false memories and imagination; and the ways in which narratives may be constructed from the interplay of all three – have a lot to say about the construction of personality. But these arguments also speak to the cultural, social and psychological construction of national and regional identity. In Jones's imagination, Wales is a place which has torn free of traditional boundaries; just as Elis imagined the Eistedfodd replacing the traditional capital with a meeting place for language. From both these pieces comes a wariness of traditional boundaries, a mistrust of land and its possession. Both of these pieces are more comfortable embracing the idea of Wales as an imaginary place; an idealised country; a floating space.

The Position of the Mam Iaith (Mother Tongue)

Hiraeth in Hughesovka

Based on an historic archive of letters, diaries and photographs

Play written by Colin Thomas

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2007

In *The Shadow of the Sickle*, the protagonist identified a Welsh capital located in language. Yet this thesis – and the BBC's national radio stations – are confined to adaptations in the English language. How then do the adaptations here communicate about a language that is almost never heard? In the case of *The Shadow of the Sickle*, its Welsh-language origins were made invisible. But the Welsh language is heard in the next two adaptations, *Letter from a Far Country* and the play discussed in this section: *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*. It is helpful at this point, embracing Casetti's injunction to look outside the text to historical and social discourses, (50) to think about the historic place of the language; its

relationship to the BBC in Wales; and its significance to the nation and the way it is imagined.

Many aspects of social and political life in Britain bind Wales to its neighbouring nations. Until the devolution of the late 1990s and early 2000s, Wales shared its political structure with the rest of Britain; in the period covered by the thesis, taxation had still not been devolved and the economies of England and Wales were still heavily integrated; one fifth or 600,000 of the people living in Wales were born in England and – neatly enough – there are just over 600,000 Welsh-born people resident in England. (69) In fact, Martin Johnes argues in *Wales since 1939*: “When Wales is dissected and deconstructed, beyond institutions, only the Welsh language makes the nation different to England.” (69) This is a bold statement and somewhat reductive; caveats to this statement might include: the influence of non-conformist churches on belief; social structures; multiple historical narratives; religious policy and ‘radical politics’; and the effect of Wales’s dramatic topography – the dominance of uplands and lack of navigable rivers – in forming separate social groupings to the north, the west, the borders and the south. However, it can certainly be argued that the Welsh language is the most distinctive aspect of Wales’s culture. Indeed, Shafir identified language as one of the three principle factors in regions developing a prominent and distinctive identity of their own, (57) and language has certainly played a large part in the history of Welsh prominence and difference. In fact, language can be both the motor for the construction of regional identity and the subsequent focus of that identity. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson argues that the advent of print allowed spoken vernaculars such as French and English to form “unified field[s] of exchange” below the level of politically-dominant Latin. (55) He goes on to say:

High German, the King’s English and, later, Central Thai were correspondingly elevated to a new politico-cultural eminence. (Hence the struggles in late-twentieth-century Europe by certain

‘sub-’ nationalities to change their subordinate status by breaking firmly into print – and radio.) (55)

To apply Anderson’s thinking to Wales, is to identify the way in which certain communities or cultures, particularly those who see themselves as marginalised, may locate the essence of their nationhood within the existence of a separate language.

The Welsh language is capable of standing for many things, a distinct cultural history, a lost past, self-expression and/or political nationalism, and its status has played an important part in the history of the BBC in Wales. Cardiff was seen as integral to the BBC from the earliest stages of planning in 1922, when engineers decided to cover the UK mainland as best they could with limited wavelengths, locating BBC stations in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Newcastle, Plymouth, Aberdeen and Glasgow. (5) In fact, the positioning of the BBC station in Cardiff (which in 1922 was not seen as the nation’s capital but rather a modern and culturally-uninteresting city) was to be instrumental in Cardiff gaining, not only its reputation as the nation’s capital, but also as a centre of media, broadcasting and journalism. (5) The Cardiff station’s second controller was a man from the English Midlands called Ernest Appleton, who, in common with Lord Reith, saw the wireless as a means to convey spirituality and improvement to the nation as a whole. (5) Appleton embraced the idea of promoting a kind of wholesome, religious Welshness of which he approved but which was also deeply interlinked with the culture of Welsh language and Welsh nationalism, even going so far as to attend Welsh lessons and to compose a dramatic saga on Owain Glyndwr which was broadcast in December 1925. (5) Appleton gathered about him a number of classical and folk music groupings as well as amateur actors from the Cardiff region who would perform without pay and in doing so he formed the beginnings of a South Walian BBC artists’ community. (5)

Just as the Cardiff station was gaining a staff, a culture and a personality of its own the BBC decided to reorganise the UK’s stations once

again, with the introduction of a regional scheme to cover Britain: the regions being London, West (based in Cardiff), Midland (based in Birmingham), North (based in Manchester), Scotland (based in Glasgow) and Northern Ireland (based in Belfast). (5) Cardiff (unlike Belfast and Glasgow) was about to lose its special home nation status, and its focus on broadcasting to the south-west of England meant that from now on North Wales would receive most of their programming from the North station in Manchester. (5) It was – as far as one can tell – an administrative and technical rather than an ideological decision, but it spoke to the fact that Wales could be viewed as a natural extension of England by those who lived and worked in London. The relatively organic creation of a Welsh BBC identity had been halted in its tracks at a moment when many Welsh-speaking nationalists were just beginning to become aware of the wireless's potential to cross distance and influence. Appleton himself wrote in a letter of 1935 that: "It is unfortunate that the BBC [came] into being at a time of such rapid development in Wales...when the leaders of Wales... were becoming nationally conscious" and as his attention turned to his new listenership in the south west he became increasingly convinced that the West station should not seem overly Welsh. (5) He continued to promote Welsh music on the station but he prohibited spoken Welsh from being broadcast with the exception of a number of Welsh lessons and a small number of poetry readings. Nonetheless, the Welsh intelligentsia and the Welsh nationalists (who were sometimes one and the same) continued to press for Welsh-language programming and, in the years that followed, a pattern would be set which would come to characterise many aspects of the BBC in Wales. BBC management would pull strongly towards English-language and Anglo-centric programming, using the defence that they needed to consider the largest number of its listeners, while at the same time attempting to curate Welsh arts coverage and drama which at once seemed essentially Welsh in tone but did not amount to an open call to Welsh independence. Indeed, it is possible that the BBC in Wales has never moved past this early and fundamental dilemma. Thinking of the English-

language Eisteddfod in *The Shadow of the Sickle*, much of the radio drama produced by the BBC in Wales in the period covered by this thesis seems to walk a similar line, constructing a BBC version of Wales which is Welsh but not too Welsh.

The balance of Welsh, Anglo-Welsh and English programming continued to be a matter of ongoing and sometimes bitter dispute through the middle decades of the twentieth century, though, from the mid-1930s onwards, the Welsh language was regularly (which here means weekly) represented, particularly in religious and arts coverage. The 1960s saw a resurgence in the cause of Welsh nationalism: Plaid Cymru achieved an unanticipated victory in the 1964 Camarthen by-election and thereafter the party associated with Welsh nationalism saw their membership double within a year. (69) Greater numbers of young people in Wales were going to university as wages and disposable income increased amongst the middle classes, and engagement with the Urdd and Eisteddfod movements and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society) benefited both from this development and from the mood of increased political engagement which was a feature of the later 1960s. (69) The stage was set for a series of dramatic changes to media provision in Wales through the 1970s. BBC Radio Cymru – the first dedicated Welsh-language radio station – launched in 1977, followed by its English-language sister station BBC Radio Wales in 1978. Meanwhile, Welsh-language activists continued to campaign for Welsh-language television provision and the 1979 election saw both the Conservative and the Labour Party make manifesto pledges to launch a Welsh-language television service for Wales. After the Conservatives won the election they swiftly announced that they had no plans to launch such a channel, leading to an organised campaign of people refusing to pay their licence fee, attacks on television transmitters and sit ins at television studios. The government eventually relented and S4C started broadcasting in November 1982. The fact that the British government was forced to follow through in their promise is indicative of the strength of feeling engendered by the Conservative Party's decision to

renege, and the intense political climate that existed, and still exists, around the provision of media in the Welsh language. In the provision of Welsh-language services for Wales the BBC has at times found itself in the uncomfortable position of being both a go-between and a bargaining chip between Westminster and the Welsh people. With one foot in London and another in Cardiff, the BBC as an institution can be imagined both as remote and as local: paid for by the people, sometimes even sounding like the people, but often aligned in the collective imagination with Englishness and, by extension, the power centres of London and Westminster. The BBC in Wales is, then, a hybrid BBC; sometimes Welsh-speaking Welsh, sometimes Anglo-Welsh, sometimes English and, thus, much like the nation itself.

The historical tensions for the BBC in Wales – particularly the need to serve multiple audiences – continued to affect policy development through the period which this thesis covers. In the mid-1980s, BBC Wales in Cardiff was the largest broadcasting centre outside London and enjoyed increased autonomy thanks to a devolution of accounting to regional centres. (5) The launch and early success of Welsh-language broadcaster S4C, whose programmes were produced and overseen by the head of the BBC in Wales, coupled with the large output of news and drama on both television and radio, led to a marked increase in Welsh-speaking graduates choosing broadcasting over teaching, academia or business. (5) Meanwhile, English-language programme makers in Wales struggled to justify any increase in budgets or productions. English regions, it was argued, already regarded the budget for Welsh-language programme making with envy and any sign that the BBC was favouring the Welsh in areas other than their minority language would be met by widespread resentment. (5) So, at the same time as the Welsh-language channels were broadcasting unique content within the Welsh region, English-language programme makers were being pressed to compete more fiercely within the cross-border market, producing drama which would appeal to the whole of the UK and justify the BBC's considerable spending within Wales. (5) While television

took the largest share of the budget, radio continued to produce far more original programming and many more weekly hours than its visual partner. In 1985, BBC Radio Wales was broadcasting 12 hours of programming every day and – following heavy investment in technology and programming, such as an expensive series of original English-language dramas by Welsh writers – the channel’s listenership would eventually reach nearly half a million over the following decade. (5) Radio Cymru, a daytime-only radio service which had been dominated by programming for Welsh-medium schools found its remit reimaged in the wake of S4C’s considerable success. Schools programming was gradually reduced to nothing and Radio Cymru reverted to being a news, arts, sport and documentary service for the home listener. Tying the scheduling of S4C and Radio Cymru together, by the mid 1990s the BBC managed to provide a continuous Welsh-language service throughout the day and evening and Radio Cymru saw its listener numbers rise to a daily reach of 122,000 – a vast number for any minority-language channel. (5)

The institutional history given here demonstrates the extent to which the BBC, in entering Wales, was forced to embrace a hybrid identity. The adaptation which follows speaks to the way in which communities may be reconfigured or reimaged when they move from one national space to another. Just as the BBC had to reimagine itself in the move to Wales, so the Welsh workers of *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* find themselves having to articulate and define their own sense of Welshness when they are transplanted to Ukraine. It is also the first of the adaptations in this chapter to have the Welsh language used in a prominent position within the script. And, like *The Shadow of the Sickle*, the piece suggests that a great deal of Welsh national identity is contained and cocooned within the language. Thomas’s *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* – set between 1912 and 1919 – is an unconventional adaptation. It is a play which draws on historical documents, letters and diaries to dramatise the life of the Welsh workers in a settlement largely created by the Welsh capitalist John Hughes and named in his honour. Though ostensibly a drama, the action of the play –

which involves a young man called David travelling to Ukraine to become a junior manager and his subsequent relationship with the Russian-Ukrainian Anna – is interspersed with readings of extracts from letters and diaries, voiced by Welsh descendants of the Ukrainian miners. Thus, the play acts partly as history and partly as drama, showing us working conditions in the Ukraine as well as the budding relationship between David and Anna. The drama contains within it many versions of Wales. It includes a hybrid imagining of language, using both Welsh and English, but also allowing space for Ukrainian and Russian. In its use of English it reaches out towards a majority-English-speaking radio audience. Yet, in its use of Welsh it tries to imagine aspects of national community for its Welsh-speaking and Wales-dwelling listeners. The use of Welsh is capable both of reaching out towards the listener and pushing the listener away, its meaning shifting depending on who is listening. And thus the play itself is an unstable space, much like the country which it tries to imagine.

Throughout the play, Thomas shows a keen interest in that which makes the Welsh Welsh as well as that which makes the Ukrainians Ukrainian. As David arrives in Ukraine for the first time he is encouraged to embrace the Welshness of the setting: its Welshness resident in the rural location and the smells and sounds of industry:

GWYN: Take a deep breath of air here and in an instant
 you're back home in Merthyr. Oh, I tell you, you won't need to
 feel any hiraeth in Hughesovka.

On arriving in the foundry itself, David exclaims at the running of the place.

DAVID: Twenty eight good conduct rules! It's like being back
 in chapel [...] But unlike back home, no trade unions allowed.

Romance between Anna and David is precipitated by their discovery that there are many meeting points in their comparison of particular national

traits. And the relationship is shown to blossom through the medium of music and the Welsh language. Anna has been introduced to David as a potential accompanist for him as he prepares to sing at a soiree thrown by the local Russian upper middle classes. The song David is singing is in Welsh and when Anna asks him about the words he answers:

DAVID: It's about a working man who falls for a woman who's above him in the class system of his day.

ANNA: Class. Class. Yes, we know about class here too. How many Russian Ukrainians are here this evening?

DAVID: How many?

ANNA: Only me.

David and Anna sing to each other in their native languages and the beauty of the unadorned melodies stands in sharp contrast to the industrial soundscape of many of the other scenes. In fact, thinking back to Barthes's writing in "The Grain of the Voice", (51) it is possible to see that a huge amount of meaning is carried within the musical interlude at the heart of the play, but that parts of this are hard to pin down in language. Certainly, the sung interlude carries within it ideas of romantic love; love of one's country; homesickness; and a reaching out for something essential which may be love or may be country, or may be a complex mixture of the two. Thomas offers the listener, both textually and non-textually, an idea of the purity of experience and the beauty that humans can feel when expressing themselves in their native language. The emotion of the moment transcends the lack of literal understanding and, instead, foregrounds the shared experience of coming from a minority-language community. Yet, at the same time, Thomas glosses for us the meaning of the words. Every time David explains to Anna the meaning of Welsh expressions, he is

reaching out towards not only her, but the audience as well. Lawrence Venuti has described the translator's choice in the following terms: the translator (or, in this case, adapter) can either bring the foreign language towards the listener, "domesticating" the language by translating everything; or they can foreignise that which is culturally other, leaving words or passages in their original language, and asking the reader to move towards the alternative culture in their understanding of the piece. (70) But Thomas does both, and in doing both communicates a series of interlinked ideas to the listener. Through a mixture of domesticating and foreignizing, Thomas presents the idea to the non-Welsh-speaking audience, that Welsh is other, but not as other (culturally-speaking) as Ukrainian; that Welsh can sound very beautiful in a state of otherness; and that Welsh is explicable, translatable, and appreciable. In this, somewhat complex, stance there is the suggestion that Thomas is embracing ideas of hybridity: proudly marking Welsh as other and not other, foreign and domestic. It is also possible to hear the BBC in Wales walking a line which it has walked for many decades, constructing a vision of Wales for their listeners which is Welsh, but not too Welsh.

In Wales, Voice is Memory – and Memory is Identity

Letter from a Far Country

From the poem by Gillian Clarke

Adapted for radio by Gillian Clarke

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2004

Hiraeth in Hughesovka placed the Welsh language at the centre of its imagining of Welsh identity; but it was also a play that looked backwards. The hiraeth of the title stood, not just for the primacy of Welsh language in these men's lives, but for the homesickness they felt living their lives away from Wales, and a melancholy that surrounded both the

idea of the language and the idea of a lost Wales. This sense of looking back, of nostalgia and of melancholy, pervades the adaptations which emanate from the BBC in Wales. The Welsh language often becomes emblematic of a country looking backwards, just as the BBC's pattern of commissioning from Wales suggests that the corporation feels most at home imagining Wales in the past. Of the adaptations analysed in this chapter, each one involves looking backwards: in *A Kind of Hallowe'en* The Man leaps backwards into Dylan Thomas's experiences; *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* and *The Shadow of the Sickle* are both historical dramas; and *Letter from a Far Country* is a journey into memory. Institutionally-speaking, BBC Radio tends to adapt Wales as a historical country. To use Venuti's terms, (70) in the central song of *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*, Thomas allows Welsh to be foreignised for the listener. And the historicisation of the country serves to further foreignise Wales to a late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century British listening public. Wales's problematic geographic borders dissolve on radio, to be replaced by the far less visible borders of language and time.

But, if it is clear that the BBC sees Wales as a substantially-historic identity, does the same hold true for Wales's authors? The final adaptation to be analysed is one in which the author, who is also the adapter, deals in great detail with the way in which the past is in conversation with the present. Furthermore, it is a drama acutely aware of boundaries – boundaries of gender, place, time and language – and one which is intent on exploring the tensions and the crossing points around those boundaries.

DAY. INTERIOR. HOUSE. FX: KETTLE BOILING. MUSIC.

SIÂN: I'll do it. I'll go today. Tidy up. Leave a note. [...] I'll do a runner. [...]

MAM: [VOICE OVER.] New towels. A nice lunch. It's a bit of spoiling you want, girl.

MAMGU⁵: [VOICE OVER.] Rubbish. You need to see the world. Let someone else do the housework. [...] And your mam wants you wasting your time on towels!

SIÂN: Dear, dear women. Mother, grandmother. Mam, Mamgu.
Am I living your lives or mine?

In *Letter from a Far Country*, the Anglo-Welsh poet Gillian Clarke explores the tensions of identity and activity felt in the life of one Welsh woman. Set over one day in the life of poet and family woman Siân, the listener moves through Siân's day, observing the way in which domestic duties distract her from her work. As the play goes on, we move further and further into Siân's mind, listening as her relatives – alive and dead – talk to her. We then move further backwards into a Wales built from memories – some of which belong to Siân and some to her other relatives. The drama moves from beach holidays of the past to political protests; from half-remembered tragedies in far off villages to dialogue-free soundscapes of sea, river and waterfall. Verse mixes with prose, dialogue and song in an adaptation as eager to challenge traditional boundaries as Gerry Jones was in *A Kind of Hallowe'en*. Clarke asks how people should feel about the past, whether they should be inspired by it or whether it is in fact a prison: a way of confining individuals in thought and memory, an enemy to action. In doing this, she opens up one of the key debates in the writing and adaptation of literature in Wales, a debate which exists both in the texts themselves and in questions around the way Welsh literature is commissioned and adapted by its national broadcaster. Throughout this exploration of radio adaptations, it has been apparent that writers and characters have dramatised diverse journeys back into an imagined past; and that the 'character' of Wales has been imagined in a guise far more

⁵ Trans: 'grandmother' in southern Wales.

suited to Wales of the nineteenth century than Wales of the twenty-first. Rural, working class, Welsh-speaking, living in a society dominated by men: Wales on the BBC dwells in another time, a historical past, where a nexus of 'true' Welsh identity can apparently be found. Yet here, in *Letter from a Far Country*, is another Wales, a female Wales, an imagined country which is at once modern and historic and which exists in both its languages, flowing seamlessly from one to the other. Clarke, as will be seen, appears confident in creating an imagined Wales – merging realistic geography and historical fact with imagined historical events and poetic works – constantly moving across boundaries to create a Wales that feels real to the listener but is in fact in Clarke's control.

Letter from a Far Country was first commissioned for BBC Radio in the early 1970s and broadcast as a read poem with sound effects and music. In 1982, the poem was collected into a printed edition of Clarke's poetry (called *Letter From a Far Country*) which was to become one of Clarke's best-known works and which has been set on many school and college syllabuses. In the early 2000s, BBC Wales drama producer Alison Hindell asked Clarke to dramatise her poem, this time using multiple actors and moving away from the single, uninterrupted perspective of the poem's first two incarnations. This version intersperses drama, new pieces of narrative poetry, flute music, song and the abridged text of the poem itself. The original text from the 1970s, having been through revisions, is now brought into conversation with another set of texts, music and non-textual sound effects. Poetry, within the field of the arts, is especially well suited to radio, since it offers lyrical colour with great brevity and BBC Radio has long devoted programmes, seasons and strands to the work of Britain's poets. However, poetry on radio tends to be presented as a text to be read rather than adapted and it should be noted, as shown in Table 13, that poetry still makes up just 2.17% of source material for adaptation. Clarke was a regular presence on BBC Radio in this period, the only Welsh female poet to stand out (within the period covered by this thesis) in a field of male poets who seem to make up the greater part of the BBC's conception of a

Welsh poetic canon. The subject matter of *Letter from a Far Country* seems to speak to this state of affairs, as her protagonist Siân struggles to write in her small window of daily opportunity.

Throughout the play, the past as identity and memory is held in tension with the past as distraction. Clarke dramatises the way in which, on both a personal and a national level, historical Wales (and historical Siân) are required to make sense of modern Wales (and modern Siân). But, at the same time, both historical Wales and historical Siân, hold those modern selves suspended: distracting them, trapping them, leading them away from action and progress. As the adaptation begins, Clarke gives us a domestic scene, children asking for help with their school bags, a mother gently chiding them towards their father's car. In the early sections of the adaptation the poem itself is hardly visible; dialogue and monologue predominate and the poem is only heard for a few sentences at any moment before another thought interrupts or the outside world intervenes. One of the central actions of the poem, the interruption of female thought by domestic duty, is dramatised in the shattering of Clarke's poem into pieces. The narrator – the poet Siân – attempts to settle to her work one morning but finds she is distracted first by domestic duties (washing and drying clothes), secondly by the conversation of her neighbour over the garden fence and, thirdly, by a phone call from her mother. As these other voices arrive into the play, the familial voices referred to in the poem are also dramatized: Siân's mother's voice moves from the end of a phone line to a repeating motif heard in voiceover; and the listener hears her grandmother Mamgu, enjoining her to political action, adventure and engagement. The three key interruptions of the play form a triumvirate of duty and distraction: firstly, family, secondly, society, and, thirdly, memory or – to put it another way – the past. As Siân's memories diversify and increase within the setting of the play, Clarke demonstrates the way in which that third distraction – memory or a conversation with the past – can become a way of filtering, remembering and understanding both family and society. As in *A Kind of Hallowe'en*,

Clarke is creating a psychologically-complex portrait of a mind in conversation with itself, and through this, the audio is demonstrating the level of fluidity which can be achieved on radio through the layering and patterning of text and voice.

Clarke has given the listener the character of Wales, through the character of Siân, trapped in multiple ways: by economic circumstance, by the confines of social structure, and by the beguiling memory of an unreachable past. As the middle section opens, the drama is still clearly located inside Siân's head, her memories distracting her from the job of writing poetry. But then the recording of Mamgu's voice shifts in its position, moving from voiceover to dramatised scene. Mamgu the memory – wholly owned by Siân – becomes Mamgu the central character in the next scene; and Clarke chooses to dramatised a moment in time which Siân cannot possibly remember because the listener knows from Mamgu's speeches that she is some distance away, playing in the waves as a small child.

MAMGU: [VOICE OVER.] [...] Before I married had such dreams. I envied them: my children. Their generation had wings. We women all want wings. Don't we, Siân?

**NEW SCENE. EXTERIOR. DAY. FX: SOUNDS OF THE SEA WAVES
BREAKING AGAINST A SHORE. MAMGU IS ON THE BEACH
WRITING A POSTCARD.**

MAMGU: 'Annwyl Phyllis. What do you think of this nice postcard of Aberfforest? Sitting on the beach doing needlework, watching Siân play in the sea. Rwy'n hapus iawn. Hapus iawn. I'm always happy by the sea with Siân. Today she asked me "Who made God?" I said "God made God, I suppose." Siân: "Has God got hands

then?" Come and see us soon. [...] Cariad, Mam.' [CALLING.] Siân!
Siân! Siân! Come out of that sea at once – it's getting cold!⁶

Clarke dissolves the boundary between the person remembering and the person remembered and offers up a scene for the listener at home which may not be part of Siân's train of thought and cannot (as we have established) be a direct and faithful memory. In making the leap away from a semi-realistic narrative, Clarke asserts her right to blur all the boundaries within her own story, just as Jones did before her in *A Kind of Hallowe'en*. More than this, Clarke transforms her own poem from its original form as a single person's stream of consciousness into a play about the relationship between different life experiences within one family, one country and one gender. Mamgu of memory becomes a Mamgu of the dramatic present; a character who moves comfortably between her two languages and invites both her postcard's reader and the listener to follow her. Meanwhile, Siân the narrator becomes a distant, voiceless figure in the sea – ironically taking up positions both of domestic encumbrance and distraction as her grandmother writes. In her adaptation of her own work – thirty years after its original composition – Clarke demonstrates her desire to present us with a wider picture of Welsh and British gendered culture and, in this dramatised form, the poet allows herself to roam freely outside the confines of her protagonist's mind: blurring boundaries created by time, distance, individual experience, language and texts.

While the play deals deftly and imaginatively with the problematic boundaries of the first two adaptations, it also has a lot to say about language and its relationship to identity. As has been demonstrated, Clarke uses the memory of voices, the memory of language, as a door into an exploration of self and identity for Siân. "Mam, Mamgu. Am I living your lives or mine?", Siân asks. And the play suggests that Siân is as much living out narratives, questions and language from past generations as she is the

⁶ Translation: Dear Phyllis. [...] I am very happy. Very happy. [...] Love, Mum.

narratives, questions and language of her present Welsh moment. Clarke constructs a series of devices to demonstrate the way in which voice provides a link to the past. The 'traditional shanty' which weaves its way through all versions of the poem nods towards Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* – in which children's rhymes and 'Polly Garter's song' move through Thomas's narrative – giving both the Wales of *Letter from a Far Country* and the Wales of *Under Milk Wood* a cultural verisimilitude. (19) This creation of a false Welsh past gives Thomas and Clarke an added layer of artistic control, as they fashion not only an imagined literary present but an imagined literary past as well. The shanty of *Letter from a Far Country* offers the listener, as David's song in *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* or the Welsh-language singing of the choir in *The Shadow of the Sickle*, an aural pathway to past identity. The fictive past inside these imagined Wales is presented as romantic and spiritual; it has a purity which transcends the scenes of dialogue. It embraces the idea that the voice in the medium of radio can be many things: the purveyor and translator of information, or the essence of a cultural, musical ideal which transcends mere facts. The voice is literal and the voice is romantic. But the tenor of these adaptations suggests that the voice in song; the voice in Welsh; the voice located in the past is romantic. Whereas the voice speaking; the voice in English; the voice located in the modern day is literal and English and uninspiring. The voice in Welsh remembers a time when identity was stronger. And thus, Wales is located in the voice; and in the language; and in the past. In constructing Welshness in this way, the adaptations are communicating through many levels of meaning. To refer back to Barthes's terminology, (52) they can be argued to include meaning which is informational, structural and obtuse. Or, to put it in terms more suited to audio, meaning goes beyond what is offered in the text, into both the voice performance of the actor and the relationship between key moments of non-textual sound and the listener.

In making the leap from the central consciousness of her earlier poem to the multiple consciousnesses of the dramatised version, Clarke is strengthening the argument of her original text that everyone is, in part,

the product of the historical and cultural circumstances of their birth. The Clarke of 2004 is translating and adapting the poet she was in 1972, just as Siân is translating and adapting her shared familial memories, and Alison Hindell is translating and adapting an institutional and cultural BBC past. All three actions are moments of remembering, and, therefore, moments key to adaptation. Clarke's work is, in a way, a piece of poetic rebellion.

Heeding the advice of Mamgu in the play, the listener senses that Clarke is having her own adventure with language and with sound. The use of the sea shanty motif, creating a bridge stretching back to an imagined past; the multiple voices and time perspectives; the blurred movement in and out of Siân's memory and imagination; all of these increase the sense within the play that the human experience of the subjective present is an illusion, and that the boundaries of time, space and individual consciousness are overstated. It is a poet's argument which chimes perfectly with the form in which it is presented and the sense of the present flowing, like the water the listener so often hears, back into the past. Here is Wales, the production tells us: highly social, dextrously verbal, caught between two languages, forever rural. Here is Wales: Wales of the imagination, Wales as a construct, Wales on BBC Radio.

Conclusion

Anderson identifies four key features of the nation: that the nation should be imagined; that the nation should be limited (possessing geographic and/or cultural borders); that the nation should be sovereign, being independent and possessing power over its own affairs; and that it should be comprised of a community, normally imagined in the form of "a deep, horizontal comradeship". (55) Only two of these four features is strongly identifiable in the works analysed above. Undoubtedly, Wales is a nation which has been imagined, the proof of this lies in many places, not least the adaptations cited in this chapter. But the Wales of BBC Radio adaptation lacks coherent borders. Where borders are apparent in the

plays they tend to lack solidity: from the delusional, corruptible borders of England and Wales inside the head of The Man in *A Kind of Hallowe'en*; through to Clarke's fluid borders of language and time in *Letter from a Far Country*. Where borders become more apparent it is because Wales has been lifted out of Wales; so the Wales of *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* exists more distinctly because it is being judged in comparison to Ukraine. When Wales is resident in its normal position, its borders immediately become less distinct, not least because it shares a common language with its nearest neighbour. Wales – politically speaking – was not a sovereign state at the time the adaptations were written and produced, and even with the advent of devolution, only a small degree of sovereign power devolved to the Welsh Government. So it is not surprising that the imagined Wales of BBC Radio gives no impression of being a sovereign entity. This aspect is made more complicated by the consistent decision from within the BBC to anchor Wales in its historical past, often siting it within a time in which it had even less political freedom than it did in the late-twentieth century. Finally, there is the idea of community. Here, there is more evidence of the BBC imagining Wales along Anderson's prescribed lines. Wales as a community is vividly described, albeit in a very partial way and following a set of criteria which are at least half a century out of date. Wales is communal, rural, Welsh-speaking and largely male. The Welsh share an affinity for conversation, song and the Welsh language. The Welsh yearn for a happier past; acts of memory and hiraeth reign. The locus of identity is always found through the voice. Song and the Welsh language represent moments and places of shared identity. In fact, moments and places may become interchangeable on radio. Since radio cannot do space or place, it gives its listeners moments instead. The moment when David sings in Welsh; the moment Harri arrives at the Eistedfodd; the moment Siân falls down the rabbit hole of Mamgu's memories: these are the radio equivalents of Welsh spaces. Moments of Welsh sound: some domesticated by translation, but – more often – allowed to be foreignised to prove that Wales is different and therefore that it exists.

As will be apparent throughout this thesis there is a strong relationship between institutional concerns and aesthetic ones. In the case of Wales, the BBC's relationship to the Welsh language has been evolving for nearly a century, taking in the rise of popularity in Welsh-language broadcasting and the political championing of the language in the period covered by this thesis. The shifting status of the language is evident, not simply in the creation and promotion of Radio Cymru, but in English-language BBC Radio's relationship to the language in its commissioning and production of drama. In *Under Milk Wood* (1946), the use of Welsh is mainly confined to place names and to the use of the term *eistefoddau* and in *A Kind of Hallowe'en* (1985) there is no use of the Welsh language beyond the occasional place name. In 2000's *The Shadow of the Sickle* (an adaptation from a Welsh-language text), there is the use of Welsh-language singing as background to the scenes at the *Eisteddfod*. In *Letter from a Far Country* (2004) – a dramatization written after devolution – Clarke uses Welsh in her dialogue and moves often between the two languages to signal her central characters' comfort with both languages and their attendant identities. In *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* (2007), the language becomes a key part of maintaining the Welsh community abroad – even though Thomas, or his producer, does not expect his English-speaking audience to understand much of it – with long passages sung in Welsh and Welsh words and phrases scattered through the predominantly-English dialogue. In the context of an imagining of Welsh national identity which locates said identity in the Welsh language itself, this gradual foregrounding of Welsh almost appears as a nationalist movement of its own. As Wales comes more to the fore on the political scene of the United Kingdom, so, too, does its historic language in the imagined Wales of radio drama.

In "The Death of the Author" Barthes writes that: "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning [...] but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash". (48) In a sense, the invisible world of audio is more easily

imagined as a multi-dimensional space than the world of text. Certainly it is true that, in these adaptations, a host of different texts collide and reform themselves into different shapes. *A Kind of Hallowe'en* is a play in conversation with many texts, most explicitly *Under Milk Wood*, but also biographies of Thomas and Thomas's own personal papers. The play loosely establishes different levels of 'reality', before weaving in narratives of memory and delusion. The resulting audio can be interpreted in many ways by the listener and Jones never offers a definitive reading which separates reality from the life of his characters' minds. In fact, Jones deliberately blurs those boundaries, allowing for the play to be understood in many different ways without breaking the thread of the narrative. Meanwhile, *Clarke's Letter from a Far Country* offers a similar narrative of intertextual conversation, with the difference that all of the texts in the play were created by Clarke herself. Thus, rather than seek to create the conversation in the mind of the listener, Clarke is dramatizing a conversation between texts occurring in the mind of her protagonist. In addition to this, *Letter from a Far Country* utilises a wide range of sound in its exchange of information and impression. Running water, seascapes, birdsong – each of these is a non-textual impression or memory which exists in conversation both with textual and non-textual elements. In addition, the Welsh language figures both as a site of information and as an impressionistic element of sound, also in conversation with the textual and non-textual elements with which it is surrounded. It would be reductive to attempt to identify all the meanings contained within the sounds of countryside and spoken Welsh, but it is possible to identify some of the possible meanings and impressions. These would include the non-textual communication of the idea of an essential Wales; the contrast (in the case of the rural sounds) of an open-air, non-verbal world with the enclosed and highly-verbal life of a domestically-confined poet; and the construction of a temporal narrative formed by the sound of Welsh and countryside giving way to the sound of English and the modern home. The possible meanings of these sounds and texts are multiple.

The imagining of Wales through voice and language represents a medium-specific response to the need for distinctive, national identifiers and the call of cultural independence. And the adaptive output of BBC Radio in the years 1985 to 2009 does represent a wide variety of literature and considerable aesthetic accomplishment. But the work of these years fails to engage with a conception of modern Wales; often refuses to imagine the hyphenated Welsh experience, which is now the reality of at least a quarter of Welsh citizens; and, in the majority of its adaptations, circumvents the experience of Welsh women. The embrace of porous and unstable borders suggests the acceptance of a kind of post-nationalist identity, but the focus on the voice – while seeming to venerate personal and subjective experience – seems often to tend towards the privileging of Welsh-speaking Welsh experience, and the ‘Celtic’ stereotype of the musical Welsh. There are, here, no urban Welsh experiences, no Black- or Asian-Welsh experiences. The imagining of Wales is uncomfortable with hyphenates. There is, even in the considerable nuance of unstable borders and borderless conditions, still a cleaving to a kind of essentialism. The voice represents the self, but it also represents memory. Memory represents identity. And identity lies in a lost, yearned for, imagined, rural and historical Welsh Wales: the Wales of the Eisteddfod and the Welsh language; farming culture, the chapel and the union. These are acts of imagining which are complex yet always, essentially, somewhat romantic. And they are acts of imagination which deny the now; deny modern hybrid Welsh experience; the rise of the cities and the diversity (in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity) of modern Welsh experience. This is hiraeth as poetry but also hiraeth as regression: leading the listener into a relationship with their own country that tells them that national identity is of the past, and in the past, and somehow lost.

Imagining Northern Ireland

How silence became the defining sound of BBC Radio's Northern
Ireland

Introduction

There is a particular kind of silence which suffuses the artistic output of the BBC from and about Northern Ireland during the years of the 'Troubles'. As this chapter will examine, it is a silence built from a long history of media censorship, much of it specifically directed towards the BBC; formed against a background of widespread social and political censorship; and nurtured by a culture of self-censorship both within the corporation and the wider Northern Irish artistic community. It is not a silence that remains static throughout the period. The political and sectarian silence of adaptations in the 1980s give way, through the faltering peace accords and greater openness of the 1990s, to a newfound boldness and air of political truth telling in the work of the 2000s. Throughout all this, there is also the sense that those at work on these adaptations, particularly the writers and producers, are aware of the censorship, the political and pragmatic silence that their work embodies. So much so, that in these adaptations the BBC appears to be actively adapting the censorship itself. This chapter will explore both the nuances of the relationship between the nation, its writers and its state broadcaster and the adaptive evolution of the work through an intense period of change.

This chapter will look at four adaptations from the period, the first two adapted from Northern Irish novels, the third a Northern Irish reimagining of a play from another country and the fourth a dramatic adaptation of court documents. It is worth considering the political and geographical context within which these four adaptations were written and produced. The 'Troubles' refers to the nationalist and sectarian conflict which took place in the nation of Northern Ireland for roughly 30 years between the end of the 1960s and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. It began with a wide-ranging series of campaigns in the 1960s aimed at ending the mistreatment of the minority Catholic population by the police force and by local government groups, such as local councils and housing

committees. Some of these protests led to violent clashes, both between protestors and the police, and between different factions within the community. In 1969, the British Government decided to deploy armed forces on the streets of Northern Ireland, a move which led to greater levels of retaliation from republican groups who already believed that Northern Ireland was a colonised outpost of British imperial expansion. In 1972, the Northern Irish government in Stormont was dissolved, marking the starting point for a long period of direct rule from Westminster. Over the course of the conflict 3,532 people were killed, of whom 1,841 were civilians and 1,114 were members of the British security services. (71)

From the time of its arrival in the province, the BBC in Northern Ireland found itself under a great deal of regionally-specific political scrutiny. In his book, *The BBC's 'Irish Troubles'*, the historian Robert J. Savage describes the lack of confidence that the BBC showed as a broadcaster and an employer in its initial ventures in Northern Ireland and the extent to which the institution was identified, from its earliest years, with the cause of unionism. (32) Unlike Wales, when the British Broadcasting Company chose Belfast as the site of one of its earliest radio stations in 1923, it did not imagine that this station would ever become a site of significant production. (32) Both Savage and Martin McCloone have written about the degree of pressure placed upon the BBC by the political unionist establishment, (32, 72) McCloone describing how “with the coming of the BBC in 1924, [the unionists were] particularly concerned to control the BBC in Belfast”. (72) Gerald Beadle, one of the first controllers of BBC Northern Ireland, was given a place as a member of the Ulster Reform Club and “quickly became part of the unionist establishment”. (32) Savage argues that the Catholic minority saw the BBC as a “mouthpiece of unionism” (32) ; and it is certainly true that the BBC’s presence and programming in the country tended to reflect a unionist bent. (6) Early examples of censorship from within the BBC include a ban on addressing or even mentioning the border with the Republic, a rule which lasted for twenty-four years and was finally lifted in 1948. When the Northern Irish

Prime Minister Lord Craigavon requested that the BBC cease from announcing the results of Gaelic Athletic Association games, the BBC agreed on the basis that such broadcasting was “hurting the feelings of the large majority of people in Northern Ireland”. (6) In the pre-Troubles era, BBC Northern Ireland pursued a policy of commissioning programmes which painted a picture of the region’s history without reference to religion, armed conflict or sectarian division.

As violent struggle in the province emerged, the BBC’s journalists were under pressure to temper and sanitise their reporting of the conflict. Savage quotes BBC Controller for Northern Ireland Waldo Maguire’s defence of this strategy to the BBC’s General Advisory Council in 1979. Waldo Maguire argued that there were two options:

[to produce] the same kind of uninhibited programme which would be made if the shooting, rioting, looting and arson were taking place in a foreign country: and then ensure it is not carried on Northern Ireland transmitters [or...] modify to some extent the presentation [...] in a way to avoid extreme provocation. (32)

And the journalist Keith Kyle has written about the tensions of reporting the Troubles:

It was a climate of anger, anguish, reproach and deputation in which every news bulletin and current affairs programme produced a minimum of 40 to 50 phone calls and each brought into the building its quota of overwrought citizens exercising their privilege of shouting at the BBC in person. People who had regarded the BBC all their lives as a reliable part of the Ulster establishment considered that our readiness to entertain a concept of impartiality as between the ‘loyal’ and the ‘disloyal’ was an odious betrayal. (73)

This atmosphere of political recrimination and pragmatic editorial judgement is apparent in the commissioning and production of artistic adaptations throughout the period the thesis covers. Each adaptation, while embodying some of the viewpoints of the source material, its adapter, and producer, also bears testament to what was seen to be politically possible in the year of its making, “to avoid extreme provocation”. (32) Thus, the BBC’s creation of fact-based narratives and fictive narratives can be seen as a complementary, even overlapping, process. One in which the dramas adapt, not just the work of one region, but the political climate, and the influence of news journalism.

As in Colley, (60) constructions of national identity, in as much as they ever deal with war, generally use war between one nation and another to appeal to a sense of unified patriotism. Civil conflict inevitably poses a problem for those trying to construct a cohesive national – or even regional – identity. Gunn’s divergent regions are sites of tension but not open or armed conflict. (56) Shafir is dealing with regions in conflict, but as a sociologist he does not delve into the way these conflicts are constructed within the media. (57) In a sense, Joenniemi’s work has the most resonance here, (58) since he focuses on the role of political rhetoric in influencing the optics of a set of states in flux. But where Rumsfeld is shown trying to redraw an imagined and temporal map of Europe, the BBC are not so much interpreting a region in conflict as silencing it. The project of reading BBC Radio’s narratives of representation is overturned by a notable absence where one might expect an act of representation. Here, more than perhaps anywhere else, Barthes’s thinking on the search for meaning in text comes into play. For, if meaning can be found outside the marks on the page, (48) so the construction of a region can be read in a failure of representation and the resultant, complex silences within the audio.

The Conflict is Unspeakable

A Man Flourishing

From the 1972 novel by Sam Hanna Bell

Adapted for radio by Martin Royle

Radio 4 - 1988.

A Man Flourishing was first broadcast in early October 1988, a year fraught with political tensions between the British government and UK broadcasters. Throughout the 1980s, representatives of Margaret Thatcher's government had challenged the BBC's filming of sectarian groups within Northern Ireland; mainly on the grounds that filming terrorists without reporting what the journalists and crew saw and heard was in contravention of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1979. (32) The unionist community continued to see the BBC as loyalist sympathisers and accused them of scaremongering and propaganda in their news coverage of the province. Meanwhile, a member of the Northern Ireland Broadcasting Council – complaining about the attempted censorship of a BBC documentary in 1985 – stated:

so far as people living in West Belfast (Catholic, working-class neighbourhoods) were concerned, the BBC has lost all credibility. The general view was that it was being run by Margaret Thatcher. (32)

In March 1988, SAS soldiers killed three unarmed members of the IRA on the island of Gibraltar. Within weeks, both the BBC and Thames Television had put into production documentaries about the killing and its aftermath. The Thames Television documentary *Death on the Rock* is the more famous of the two. The Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe demanded the programme be pulled from the schedules but it was aired in April 1988, criticising the actions and subsequent justification given by the security services. Howe intervened again to minimise the reach of the BBC's equally-critical coverage of the shootings, and this time, in part, succeeded.

The *Spotlight* programme had been made by the BBC news and current affairs department in Northern Ireland but, such was the level of national interest in the killings, the BBC hoped to broadcast it across all its regions. Howe's intervention led the BBC to climb down from this decision. *Spotlight* was broadcast, but only inside Northern Ireland. Howe was furious that the broadcast went ahead at all, labelling the BBC's decision "a tragedy". (32) As 1988 went on, the BBC continued to be pulled into the stories they were trying to report. A BBC camera crew was present as loyalist Michael Stone attacked and killed mourners at the funeral of those killed in Gibraltar, recording footage that was used around the world. And, just two days later, a separate camera crew caught the moment when two army officers mistakenly drove into a crowd of mourners before being pulled from their vehicles and shot dead. (32) Increasingly, members of the mass media in Northern Ireland were seen as participants in the conflict itself, with the constant threat of censure and prosecution hanging over their heads. It was in this context that the following adaptation was written and produced.

A Man Flourishing is based on the novel by Sam Hanna Bell – one of the leading lights of BBC Northern Ireland's artistic output in the 1950s and 60s – and it tells the story of James Gault, a young Protestant student from Revara, caught up in the Irish rebellion of 1798. Having evaded capture and execution, James tries to gain for himself passage to America or Canada. While he waits, he is hidden and later employed by a Belfast smuggler, Dr Bannon, who finally persuades James to stay and work for him in Belfast. Breaking free from the man's influence, James uses the knowledge he has gained to become a successful and wealthy businessman, avoiding political and religious affiliations in the cause of carving out a comfortable life for himself. James's sweetheart from his earliest and more politically-active days is a young woman called Kate Purdie. During the Irish rebellion, Kate and her family were abused by an army man called Captain Mullan. When Mullan recognises Kate at her wedding party, he proceeds to blackmail her.

Kate murders Mullan with a pistol given to her as a wedding present by Dr Bannon and then allows an innocent man to be executed for the crime.

The novel deals with many aspects of social and political thinking, addressing both the history of sectarian loyalties and beliefs and the influence of commerce and wealth creation in the evolution of the city of Belfast and its criminal underworld. Despite this, from the very first scene of the adaptation, the politics of the book are obscured and avoided. Though it begins with the aftermath of the rebellion – a rebellion in which both Protestants and Catholics took part to further the cause of an independent Ireland – the politics of the event are barely mentioned. All the audio trappings of the event are present: angry soldiers shouting and riding through the night and the breathless cries of the rebels trying to escape. But the history and details of the rebellion remain unexplained. In the very first scene of the drama, characters announce that: “Munroe and his rebels have been roundly bested at Ballinahinch” and that this is “damnable Catholic treachery [...] but there were Protestants there as well.” No other explanation is the listener given. It is as if the production itself is speaking in code, explicable to those who know their Irish history but mysterious to every other listener. This same opening is accompanied by a single, male, Irish voice singing two verses of ‘General Munroe’, one of the few songs written about the 1798 Irish Rebellion to have been set in print at the time. Through touches such as this one, the adaptation strives for a tone of historicity and authenticity. Complex scenes with multiple characters dramatize the hunt for the rebels and the scenes are often punctuated with the singing of contemporary ballads or tunes played on drums and pipes. But in amongst it all there is no explanation of the context of the rebellion, the make-up of its participants, or its aftermath. Martin Royle gives the listener a generalised civilian uprising and its suppression clothed in a generous amount of Irish soundscape: a variety of accents, music, rural scenes and contemporary colloquialisms. It is an adaptation which gives the impression of dramatizing a particular historical event while at the same time rendering it oddly generic and meaningless.

The obliteration of the political continues as the play moves through its first half. Hanna Bell's extensive political commentary in the prose version of the story is excised in its entirety in the dramatic adaptation. The main character, James Gault, takes refuge in the house of a smuggler and rebel sympathiser Dr Bannon and his stay in Bannon's house takes up nearly a third of both the novel and the play. Here, again, Royle strives to conjure the tone of the novel while excising the political content. The script in this section remains faithful to much of the dialogue of the original; but the character of Dr Bannon is substantially reimagined to remove his political speech making. Below is a heavily-edited version of a speech by Dr Bannon which takes up four pages of the novel. In its complete form, Bannon's speech offers a complex explanation of the history of the rebellion, a lengthy indictment of the inequalities of the province and, lastly, a justification for the violence which in 1798 was only imagined but in 1972, on publication of the novel, was only too real:

'The truth is that I am of a revolutionary temperament, a volatile spirit that can be shaken into fury by injustice, historical or of today [...]' He leaned forward, his head casting a monstrous shadow on the wall, his eyes intent on the two young men. 'I laid a plan before these parlour frondeurs. I proposed the assassination of every high official in the state, and the simultaneous firing of government buildings in Dublin and Belfast. I threw my own draft for five hundred guineas on the table before them. Do this, said I, and then by God you can cry "Insurrection!"' (25)

In Bannon's extensive argument lie the historic weaknesses of the United Irish movement; some of the economic reasons for division within the territory; and – simultaneously – the justification for and immorality of terrorist violence. Yet none of these elements of thought survive in the audio version. Dr Bannon becomes instead a kind of Scots-Ulster Fagin, characterised as ugly, dwarf-like and venal. Hanna Bell tells us that there

are complex economic, historical and political reasons behind the urge to violence; Royle tells us only: wealth corrupts. The precise geo-political writing of the novel does not survive its translation to radio.

This excision of political content sits alongside a text which (both in the novel and its audio form) plays with ideas of silence and invisibility. At times, Belfast and its backstreets are imagined as a grave. On James's first evening on Legg's Lane in Belfast, Bannon – speaking of Kate Purdie – tells him:

DR BANNON: Gault, so long as you're in this house you're dead to her. And to the world.

Bannon's house and the alleyways around it are devoid of ambient sound. When Bannon offers James music, James refuses. The only sound inside the house is the occasional conversation of its residents. And Belfast's streets have none of the soundscape of the rural scenes: the horse's hooves, birdsong and sound of wind in branches are all missing here. In James Gault's Belfast, silence is twinned with invisibility. James decides to stay in Belfast to grow wealthy but also to throw off the politics associated with rural poverty. Politics is noise and speech, the shouts and cries of the early scenes. The business of existing quietly while growing rich requires few words. As the play continues, noise comes to seem more and more uncouth. When James visits the countryside to court Kate, her lower-class household is filled with chatter. Kate, in her desire to lead a richer and more distinguished life, allows herself to be taken to the town and clothed in silence. The Gaults's household is far quieter than the one she has left and her key scenes are played out in the hush of Belfast criminality: first meeting with Mullan in an alleyway, where she is blackmailed in whispers, and later shooting dead her oppressor in a scene where neither she nor the man she will murder speak many words. The listener does not hear the shot, they barely hear Kate running away and the adaptation censors the execution of the innocent man who dies for her crime. It is as if not only

politics, but violence as well, must be silenced. The adaptation bends under the weight of all the things it cannot say: the lack of political exposition and the obfuscation of Kate's crime making both the narrative and the character's motivations stranger and less explicable than they are in the book.

It is clear, therefore, that *A Man Flourishing* is adapting not only the work of Northern Ireland but the censorship of its history and conflicts. The play itself embodies the multiple acts of silencing to which the BBC were subject. But, despite the evidence of the adaptation here, it should not be imagined that the censorship and silencing of the BBC was a single and overwhelming action. It would be more accurate to say that the political establishment's silencing of mass media was patchy and piecemeal in effect. In the same year that *A Man Flourishing* was broadcast, BBC Northern Ireland produced an adaptation of Brendan Behan's play *The Hostage*, involving the taking of a British soldier in Dublin. In the year following (1989), BBC Radio recorded a version of Ron Hutchinson's play *Rat in the Skull* about a man accused of sectarian terrorism. Both of these plays acknowledge and discuss the conflict. Thus, the complete excision of political thought from *A Man Flourishing* belongs to a larger and more complex picture of censorship and self-censorship within the BBC. Throughout the 1980s, the BBC was both losing and winning political fights to broadcast footage of the Northern Irish conflict. The de-politicisation of the adaptation here is part of a complicated pattern of boldness and caution by producers within the organisation.

The complexity of the historical and institutional background to the play does nothing to diminish the depth of the silence present in the adaptation. And the events, both political and artistic, which followed the broadcast of *A Man Flourishing*, restate the sensitivity of the BBC's political position at this time. Just eleven days after the play was broadcast Douglas Hurd announced the implementation of a government ban on broadcasting the voices of people associated with sectarian groups involved in the conflict, a ban which the BBC knew nothing about before it was

announced. (32) Between October 1988 and September 1994, the BBC was prevented from airing any interviews with representatives of these groups, resorting finally to employing actors to read out statements where applicable. The ban affected the entire culture of broadcasting at the time, extending its influence beyond news and current affairs and into works of drama, the writing of soap operas, and the airing of popular music on the radio. The Pogues's song 'Streets of Sorrow' was banned from airplay for protesting the innocence of the Birmingham Six and an episode of *Star Trek* was recut because it referred to Irish political violence. (32) Robert J. Savage makes the claim that "a degree of paranoia made its way into editorial policy", (32) and the example of radio adaptations surveyed for this thesis would seem to bear this out.

Silencing the Conflict

In a way, the silence of the late 1980s and early 1990s deserves its own section in this chapter. In the period between Hutchinson's *Rat in the Skull* in November 1989 and Maurice Leitch's *Silver's City* in April 1995, BBC Radio adapted nothing which reflected the conflict but they did adapt some content created by Northern Irish writers. As an institution they solved their political conundrum by jumping through time and space to find alternative versions of Northern Irish construction, constructions which, in most cases, were not closely related to Northern Ireland at all. It is worth thinking about Wales and the way that the idea of an essential and problematic identity (and alternate national language) was historicised in the commissioning and producing of adaptations. Like Rumsfeld in Joenniemi's study, (58) the BBC are seen playing with their own temporal re-ordering of regions. The adaptations of this period construct historical worlds; other countries; space adventures and realms of fantasy. 1990's *That Hideous Strength* is a work of science fiction; 1991's *Who Goes Here* is a work of science fiction and fantasy; 1991's *The Emperor of Ice Cream* is based on a novel set during the Second World War; 1992's *Lamb* adapts a

coming-of-age novel set in the Republic of Ireland and England; 1994's *Dancing at Lughnasa* adapts a play set during a harvest festival in 1936; and 1994's *Prisoners of Honour* is set in nineteenth-century France. Reflecting Casetti's entreaty to look outwards to wider social context, (50) the acts of Northern Irish representation in this five-year period take on a particular resonance when placed in their historical context. To reference Barthes and his theorisation of the multiplicity of meaning, (48) the failure to reflect the conflict will have been received differently by the diverse spread of BBC listeners. But it is not unreasonable to suppose that for some listeners (particularly those in or from Northern Ireland), part of the meaning of these adaptations will have lain in what these adaptations did not address.

In a sense, BBC Radio in this period is involved in a process of spatial and temporal misdirection; and once again the problem of the term representation, and how it is judged, comes into play. During this period, work from Northern Irish writers is being commissioned and adapted, and, thus, BBC Radio is – without a doubt – engaged in acts of representation. Indeed, if examples of Northern Irish representation in this period are held up beside examples of Welsh representation, then the list of adaptations looks less remarkable. Both regions are being represented in adaptations which focus on historical, rather than modern, constructions of identity. The Northern Irish examples from this period only become truly problematic when one compares them to what is adapted before and after this period, and to the wider political climate. In that sense, it is possible to see that the terms of representation are, in part, being set by the BBC's own historic practice. Because the BBC has historically represented the Northern Irish conflict (albeit in a piecemeal fashion), the subsequent failure of representation is made visible.

A City Emptied Out

Silver's City

From Maurice Leitch's 1981 novel

Adapted for radio by the author

Radio 4 – 1995

Just six months after the end of the government's broadcasting ban, BBC Radio returned to the streets of Belfast (in their imaginary form) for this adaptation of Maurice Leitch's *Silver's City*. If the de-politicisation of *A Man Flourishing* is BBC caution translated into drama, then *Silver's City* sounds like an organisation ready for an act of defiance. Even the decision to adapt Leitch feels like a rebuke to charges of political cowardice. While both Hanna Bell and Leitch are writers from a Northern Irish Protestant background, the response to their work in their home nation differed widely. Hanna Bell's gentle, quasi-romantic prose style won him much admiration over the years; *The Belfast Telegraph* – the biggest-selling Northern Irish daily newspaper – called *A Man Flourishing* "A fascinating novel, its people are real people caught up in events even more terrifying than those of today." (25) However, Leitch's first two novels were widely criticised in Northern Ireland and banned entirely in the Republic. *Silver's City* was one of the first Northern Irish novels to attempt a full portrayal of the loyalist paramilitary community and was later credited for helping to inspire the Northern Irish noir movement. Though it was warmly welcomed on the UK mainland, where it won the Whitbread Award for fiction, in Northern Ireland it received only one review (a wholly negative one) and quickly fell out of print. (74) Thus, the decision to adapt such a contentious book after so many years of government censorship, can be seen as a statement of rebellion on the part of its commissioners and producer. The particular kind of silence which wraps itself around *A Man Flourishing* is thrown off in favour of a drama which gives name and representation to the conflict, its groups and individual participants. At no point in the original novel does Leitch name any real loyalist organisations; nor does he name the city as Belfast (though it undoubtedly is that city); nor does he

name Silver's prison as Her Majesty's Prison Maze. Leitch's adaptation reinstates all these missing details. The city, the prison, the terrorist groups, and the political leaders, like Iain Paisley, are all made explicit in the drama. Thus, the silence of *Silver's City* is no longer the silence of censorship, instead this drama adapts a quite different kind of silence.

Leitch's Belfast, the Belfast of the novel and its dramatisation, is a city emptied of people, noise, culture and meaning. Where *A Man Flourishing* adapted the act of censorship and the mechanics of what the political establishment were doing to mass media, *Silver's City* adapts what has happened to Belfast after decades of colonial encroachment, occupation and war. The silence of the drama is a seeping away of community, happiness and cultural identity; it is the re-visitation of the city (by both Silver and the BBC) after a long absence and the realisation that the city has been profoundly damaged by what has happened in the meantime. *Silver's City* tells the story of Silver Steele, a legendary Scottish unionist paramilitary, who is broken out of prison hospital by a new generation of paramilitaries, led by Billy Bonner and his lieutenant Ned Galloway. Having become comfortable with his sense of the idealism of the movement, Silver is shocked to find the modern loyalists little more than violent Mafiosi, while Bonner and Galloway plan to assassinate Silver and neutralise his influence permanently. Silver is left for one night in the hands of brothel keeper Nan – whose brothel is 'looked after' by the local gang – and together Silver and Nan retreat to the quiet safety of the countryside where Silver starts to dream of retirement. Galloway has been tracking Silver in his attempts to escape and finally confronts him at his country hideaway. There Silver kills him, guaranteeing his return to the prison he has known for so long. It is a fatalistic narrative. Silver, though he does not know it, is dying. There will be no happy ending in rural retirement. The man who is broken out of prison is already wracked with doubt, his exposure to the 'new' loyalist movement only underlines how lost he is in the modern world. Silver, like the city he inhabits, is a wreck: drained of belief, joy, hope or any sense of national identity.

The audible Belfast of *Silver's City* is a bleak, mechanised soundscape; punctuated by the sounds of violence and threatened violence. The production opens inside a car being navigated towards a crime and the listener proceeds to hear the shooting of a Catholic doctor on his doorstep. The principle sounds of these scenes are revving engines, feet on gravel, slamming doors and breaking windows, in spaces whose echoes suggest streets empty and deserted. In the book, Silver Steele is only broken out of the Maze a third of the way through the story and the pages which precede this contain little dialogue or action. But the adaptation largely ignores this introduction, with its meditation on the personalities of the city and life in the prison, and focuses instead on Silver's release and its aftermath. The scenes at the start of the drama imagine Belfast as a city of roads, rather than domestic spaces; most conversations happening in cars, as helicopters fly above and trucks roll past the windows. Even when the drama does move inside, the interiors of the adaptation are largely commercial, with many scenes taking place inside the brothel or in unnamed establishments belonging to members of the Ulster Defence Force. There is no sense of domesticity here, characters seem to be devoid of family; there are no cooking scenes; no shared meals; no shared rituals beyond the acts of crime. The only marginally-social space in this imagined city is a Protestant working men's club where Silver is presented to the shouting crowd as they cry "No Surrender"; harassed in the men's toilet; serenaded with a tone-deaf rendition of Tammy Wynette's 'Stand By Your Man'; before fleeing the place during a police raid. The loss of domesticity and communality is rarely made explicit, but lies beneath the surface of a drama in which the isolated characters of Silver, Bonner, Nan and Galloway are forced to search – for themselves, for other people, for respect, for hope – in the echoing, depersonalised spaces of an unwelcoming city.

In the world of the book, Belfast is imagined somewhat differently, though no more invitingly. Galloway walks the streets of the city searching for Silver:

Bogs and bareness surrounded him. [...] The space and the emptiness made him feel like an ant, [...] He could see Scotland, the Mull – his namesake – a low navy stripe along the top of the paler sea. It should have been a foreign country across there, different habits, language, people of another colour even, but it wasn't, it was the same – faces, voices and this identical waste of rocks, whins, and wet muck wherever you set your foot. (26)

This quotation points to a key strangeness in the Belfast of the book and its adaptation. The Belfast of *Silver's City* in both narratives has become anywhere, featureless and indistinct. Over the passage of the Troubles, Belfast has ceased to be Belfast. The music of the piece is, in its way, as alienating as every other part of the soundscape: American rather than Irish or Scots Ulster. The song which plays under the titles of the drama is mid-century American rock and roll and the music of the play's interiors is muzak: easy-listening piped jazz which Silver grumbles at unhappily. This is a long way, historically and tonally, from the fiddles, drums and traditional folk tunes of *A Man Flourishing*. Irish and Scots music, both of these are gone, and replaced by an American populism so bland that its soundtrack places us anywhere in the Anglophone world and nowhere in particular. Silver's politics of nationalism and ideology have been swept away by balance sheets and an unglamorous world of small-time criminal enterprise.

This draining out of identity, perhaps, even, of soul, is repeatedly made explicit in the book. At one point Nan lies in bed in her flat and thinks about the house she lives in:

The house was old. Once it had been inhabited by a well-to-do family and its servants. Then the continuity had been broken for good with its conversion into "flats" [...] Outwardly the villa looked unchanged, red brick, sandstone facings, [...] but those tiny white

and luminous buttons, each with its owner's name beside it in smudged script, gave the game away. They always reminded her of what a cold, unnatural home life they all had of it, each in their partitioned-off existence, listening to one another's coughs and creaks. (26)

Leitch is writing about Nan's flats but he is also writing about Belfast, and, to an extent, he is writing about modern city living as it is experienced all over the western world. The failings of this Belfast are failings of many cities: it is impersonal; its darker spaces riven with organised crime, prostitution and gambling; a meeting place for a million unhappy, isolated lives. In the empty, echoing spaces of the audio Belfast, in its depersonalised music, Leitch's concerns are felt rather than spoken. And in that creation of the suggestive soundscape, the unhappiness of modern living becomes – to the listener, wherever they may be – more personal and universal for being imagined rather than spoken. Where the landscapes and vistas of the book are specific (Galloway's view of Mull or Nan's sense of her house) the spaces of the adaptation are everywhere and nowhere, invisible but also present in every space in which a radio is tuned in. Belfast in her identity-free plight moves one step closer to being every city, every unnamed modern space: Leitch's meaning amplified in its move to radio. Here, then, is silence as a metaphor for broken modernity: the silence of depersonalisation, loneliness and ennui. It is an imagining of place perfectly suited to radio, which, by its nature, strips away the visual and the material to offer the listener spaces built from silence and noise.

At times, as shown above, the silence of the source text and the silence of the adaptation diverge. The contemplative silences, the interiority of the novel, are sometimes expunged in the scripted drama. In part, this comes down to a question of institutional practice. Adaptations are divided, by strand, into semi-adapted and fully-adapted works depending on whether narration from the book is used as part of the script. This allows the BBC to differentiate artistically and tonally between

different dramatic strands and it also contributes to a structure of pay for adapters. At times this can be somewhat constricting for radio adapters, as being commissioned for Drama on 3 will generally preclude any use of narration, which sometimes extends to use of an inner voice; while being commissioned to adapt for Woman's Hour Serial Drama requires a certain percentage of narration to be used in every episode. All of this matters in the present context because *Silver's City* demonstrates the way in which an adapter – even of their own work – may end up substantially reimagining the way in which they deliver their narrative, in part, because of the restrictions of the strand for which they are adapting. Thus, it is not simply the medium which redefines the story, but institutional practice around adaptation.

Such concerns may well have influenced Leith in his decision not to adapt the first third of his novel – the most highly-interior section of the narrative – and also in his decision to remove the interiority of the final scenes of the book and to imagine Silver's last few days before re-arrest as a somewhat different journey. In the novel, Silver is haunted by the crime for which he has been jailed: he cannot always remember whether he meant to kill the man he murdered or not. Leitch suggests that all men carry around one key question that they must answer about themselves, and for Silver it is: am I a murderer? When Galloway turns up at his country hideout, Silver at first doubts whether he has the desire, the courage or the strength to kill him. Galloway has a watch that he claims he got from Nan when she betrayed Silver, and Silver is so incensed by the idea of her betrayal that he murders Galloway, thus answering his own question. In the aftermath of the murder Silver seems not horrified but resigned, there is quietness in the moment of resolution.

In a little while, [...], he would rise, dress and go out to find a phone-box. He would dial the number printed there, and tell them where he was, and they would come for him. Perhaps they would

lock him apart from the others this time. He would have plenty of time to go over the things that crammed his head. (26)

But, in adaptation, Leitch does away with all of that interiority: there are no voice overs, no inner monologues, no passages of thought rewritten as dialogue. Thus, Silver's journey becomes something else entirely, something heavily symbolic and tied to the nature of the places in which he finds himself. His horror at the world of brothels and muzak is relieved – psychologically and sexually – by Nan's decision to drive them both out to the seaside, a place where she is able to arouse him and consummate their relationship. Leitch reimagines Silver's journey, not as a man struggling with existential questions, but as a man searching for a physical and emotional place in the world. When Silver rings Nan, he asks to meet her near the Botanic Gardens, a lush, genteel place of tropical glasshouses. When they drive out to the Giant's Ring, Silver notices the thrushes by the side of the motorway, the listener hears crows caw in the distance, and Silver compares Belfast to "a group of hounds dragging down a stag", the nature images and sounds increasing in frequency the longer he spends in Nan's presence and the further he gets from the city. As in the book, Nan breaks a moment of tension by tickling Silver, surprising him with her childishness and silliness. Later, in the cottage by the sea, the listener can hear the gulls cry on the cliffs and the waves crash. Silver and Nan lie in bed after sex and he starts to cry, unable to stop himself or be comforted. The journey he has made is from a de-personalised Belfast of sterile, quiet interiors to an animalistic, emotional world of intimacy: rich in noises and connection. Leitch and the BBC editor, technician and producer show here an understanding of how to render meaning outside of the use of text. The use of silence; the use of echo (both inside rooms and in streets); the use of recreated interior spaces; and the use of muzak construct the world of Belfast non-verbally. Later, the technical recreation of sea, wind, animals and birds offer a different imaginary world for the listener. Stripped of textual cues, these elements of audio production are free to create

meaning, but are also open to individual interpretation. Which is another way of saying that the meaning of these sounds is not specified for the listener, and that they act in an almost impressionistic way, communicating meaning in a manner which exists somewhere between instrumental music and narrative storytelling. Silver's tragedy is that he knows none of this can last. The end comes sooner than anyone might imagine. Confronted with Galloway, Silver fights him with ferocious intent before making the call to the police (as seagulls shriek in the background) and surrendering himself back into a world of silence.

The layers of silence in *Silver's City* interact until they form a discourse of their own. The Americanisation of European cities – in this case Northern Irish cities – can be read as a silencing of historic constructions of identity. In *Silver's City*, this silencing of historic identities is shown sitting alongside the many acts of silencing which arise from a state at war. The question is posed as to how cultural colonialism relates to traditional modes of colonialism. If Belfast is a city of muzaked-brothels and Tammy Wynette sing-a-longs, then all the possible Irish and British cultures which seemed to underpin the conflict have been lost. There are no winners in the new Belfast, except perhaps the Billy Bonners who have thrown away their politics to become rich. Here, then, is a little echo of *A Man Flourishing*: the idea that idealism must be put away for wealth to enter in. In both these narratives, money as well as violence seems to propagate silence. A desire for wealth silences the idealism of James Gault, Kate Purdie and Billy Bonner. American cultural colonialism, which has historically worked in the service of American corporate enrichment, silences both the Irish and the Ulster Scots traditions of music. And while the various kinds of colonialism interact, so do the areas of violence and censorship. Bonner appears to give Silver a second-chance at political relevance only to silence him through imprisonment and attempted murder; and this attempt at murder sits alongside the political silencing of a former leader as a comment on the relationship between political relevance, volubility and life. At the time of production and broadcast, the

BBC's ability to speak was re-emerging from more than five years' of intense censorship by its own government. The treatment of Silver by Bonner seems to work – whether intentionally or not – as a commentary on the BBC's struggles to remain relevant and free in its work. In the adaptation, though not in the novel, Bonner discovers that Silver has been recording his political thoughts on cassette tapes in prison, an act that enrages him to the point where he feels Silver must be silenced. Here, explicitly, is Bonner as censor: censor and murderer brought together in the body of one man; multiple acts of silencing working hand in hand.

Finally, there is a profound relationship between the medium of radio and the idea of silence. The discourse of radio is formed by a pattern of sounds and silences. This pattern of silence and noise forms an alternative space – one defined without visual or material signs. The listener becomes, in turn, a sort of interpreter or adapter – invited to render the silence and sounds into a three-dimensional world using their imagination. Within this context, silence may have many meanings. Silence can be the space needed for the listener to process the sounds just heard. Silence can also invite the listener to inhabit the work of interpreting the drama. Silence may even act as a pathway into the meaning of the work. After all, when radio drama is filled with sound, the listener's job consists of identifying and comprehending the sounds provided. But silence in radio drama often goes unexplained, and, thus, invites interpretation. When a character falls silent on radio, we have no performative clues as to what they are thinking or where they are. When a radio scene descends into silence, there are no visual symbols to fill the void, or to suggest what the next action might be. In *Silver's City*, the silence of the city can be interpreted in a number of ways, but the job of interpretation is handed to the listener. In a way, this silence functions in a different way from the many acts of censorship present in the dramas of this chapter. The silences which leave room for interpretation, which intrigue and empower the listener, may be viewed as 'positive' silences. They are silences which aim to stretch the artistic meaning of the piece on radio. Or, in the case of

Silver's City, a silence which dramatizes a state of urban sadness, or urban lack. By contrast, the censoring of the conflict can be seen as a 'negative' silence, a process of excision and the closing down of possible meaning for the listener. These different kinds of silence interact throughout *Silver's City*, demonstrating that silence may be as multi-layered; complex in meaning; and worthy of analysis as sound.

Speaking the Truth is Always a Betrayal

An Enemy of the People

Adapted from the 1882 play by Henrik Ibsen

In a new version by Martin Lynch

Radio 4 - 2006.

If *A Man Flourishing* embodies and adapts political censorship and *Silver's City* examines and critiques the silencing power of violence, politics and greed, *An Enemy of the People* looks at what happens when communities, even families, act as their own censors. It is the only one of the adaptations in this chapter to present a view from a writer born into the Catholic community. Lynch's adaptation shines a light on the interactions of one working-class, Catholic community in the wake of the ceasefire and Good Friday Agreement. The drama starts with the opening of a youth club in a strongly republican area, a "symbol of rebirth". The mayor introduces Moya McGovern who names the committee room the 'David McGovern' room, after her social worker brother-in-law who was murdered at the age of 28. The information that Moya extracts over the course of the play is contradictory and often vague. People within the community claim the murderer was a loyalist terrorist, but then someone comes forward with the charge that the crime was committed by a group of republicans and Moya's faith in her own community is shaken. The Catholic newspaper which promises to champion her gets cold feet. Her own brother – a former member of the IRA – disowns her. Only Moya's

daughter believes in her mother's search for the truth and slowly the two women become isolated, from the press, their friends, their family and the version of community identity which they had relied upon their whole lives. Towards the end of the play, Moya tells Caroline that the community hung together through the years of the Troubles by never admitting any part of what happened might be immoral:

MOYA: I supported everything the organisation ever did. Everybody must play their role as part of the community. If they don't then there's a chink in the armour. And if there's a chink in the armour the community feels vulnerable, their survival is threatened. We're a chink in the armour, Caroline.

Like *Silver's City, An Enemy of the People* is, in part, about the breakdown of community relations among groups of people previously defined by sectarian loyalties. And, like the previous adaptation, Moya finds herself let down by a community she believed that she understood and represented. But, whereas Silver's community was one largely silenced by the loneliness of city living, the fragile ties of criminality and America's cultural colonisation, Moya's community is presented to the listener as the epitome of warm and integrated co-operation. The Catholic community of Lynch's play is resolutely, almost oppressively, convivial; with scenes taking place in a variety of pubs, in packed living rooms, in meetings and at social receptions. Multiple generations of families are represented and, unsurprisingly, for a play about the individual and their relationship to the group, Lynch writes about the collective in the home, the office, the social space and the political sphere. The power dynamics of Lynch's play contrast in interesting ways with Ibsen's original. In Ibsen's writing of middle-class Norwegian society, Dr Stockman is respected within his community because of his gender, his class, his affluence and his profession. In Lynch's Belfast, Moya does not have a reputation connected with money or profession. Instead she has a reputation based on her

family's long residence in the same community, her perceived loyalty to the republican cause and her brother's association with influential members of the IRA. In addition to this, there is a sense in Lynch's writing, though this is never spoken, that Moya's gender carries with it a certain status. Moya is a wife and mother, left without the protection of a husband, whose treatment at the hands of the local editor, property developer and solicitor (all male) suggest that they feel a woman such as Moya deserves a certain deference and gentleness, a deference and gentleness which is stripped away when she starts to question publicly the integrity of the men around her. Where Silver travels from a place of isolation to connection and then back again, Moya starts from a position where she seems to be fully connected with her community but is driven to a point where she must acknowledge the fragility or redundancy of those connections.

As in the world of *Silver's City*, American music dominates. The Pussycat Dolls play in the background of the local pub; Moya complains about country artist Garth Brooks on the radio while her friend Dominic asserts he is better than Irish artist Christy Moore; when Caroline is supporting her mum she insists she listens to Pink's song 'Trouble'; and Moya notes the fondness of the community for "murdering" American standards at karaoke. Here, in Lynch's writing, is the same sense of a culturally-colonised capital which was seen in Leitch's adaptation of his novel. And, while there is a notable act of silencing portrayed in the replacement of Irish culture for American, this representation also points to something that is missing. In none of these adaptations do characters bemoan the constant presence of the British Army on the streets of the city; nor does anyone voice their thoughts on the history of internment or direct rule from Westminster. Beneath the presentation of American musical colonialism lies a greater and more contentious act of colonisation – one about which these adaptations stay largely silent. Just as the passing mentions of the battle of Ballinahinch act as a kind of code in *A Man Flourishing* for those who know their Irish history, so too do these later

adaptations presuppose a level of knowledge on the part of the listener. For all that *Silver's City* represents a new beginning after years of intense censorship, the characters of that play do not discuss the rights and wrongs of Britain's place in Ireland or the relative political positions of the various communities. Instead, Leitch turns his focus on to the weaknesses of the loyalist community and their criminal acts. And here, in similar fashion, Lynch offers us the autopsy of a republican community, not the rights and wrongs of rule from another country. What looks at first glance to be frank and unafraid, is, in another light, still a semi-censored account of a nation's politics. None of these dramas directly address issues of British colonialism, the 600-year history of the British in Ireland or the history of economic apartheid and human rights abuses which ignited the armed conflict. Each one of the three adaptations lays blame at the door of human greed, and money is identified as the principal source of much of Northern Ireland's corruption and violence. While this is a perfectly valid argument it is also a partial one. Greed and the workings of modern capitalism alone did not create the conditions for the armed conflict in Northern Ireland; but to make such an argument is a stance profoundly helpful to a British national broadcaster and possibly the only stance which would allow such adaptations to be broadcast. By focusing on individuals, the commissioners and producers of BBC Radio avoid debating the politics of the conflict itself: and, thus, what looks like the end of silence is only a partial kind of noise.

There is, however, a sense of evolution here. Martin Lynch's commission – to adapt a play not designed to discuss Catholic or working-class experience to discuss those very things – reflects a championing of underrepresented communities. Even the fact that the protagonist is female represents a marked difference from the other modern-day depictions of the conflict noted in this chapter. Lynch himself, like Maurice Leitch, is for some a divisive figure. A former member of the IRA, Lynch has made a name for himself in Northern Irish theatre by writing about traditionally 'uncomfortable' subjects such as violence, poverty and inequality. There is a sense, then, of the BBC breaking free from the years

of censorship, making a stand for representation and giving voice to its smallest, and most historically-troubled, home nation. But that sense, though partially true, hides a complex relationship between the BBC and the country it seeks to imagine in these works. The politics of British colonialism remain untouchable. In these plays there are no English characters: no soldiers, no politicians, no Belfast-dwelling English citizens. England is a silent but hugely important presence in these works. And because England stays silent inside the works themselves, the only representative of non-Irish Britain to touch these plays becomes the BBC themselves. Here is a new kind of silence, a silence imbued with a huge amount of power and control, it is the silence of a country which is not represented but which, instead, is doing the representing.

The British Silence

Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry

Adapted by Richard Norton-Taylor from the 2005 stage play, also by Richard Norton-Taylor

Based on court transcripts from the Saville Inquiry

Radio 4 – 2008.

The events of 30th January 1972's Bloody Sunday atrocity, the chaotic and barely-sanctioned military slaughter of thirteen unarmed civilians on the streets of Derry, marked an extreme point in the silencing of the Northern Irish community. In the wake of negotiations towards the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed to set up an inquiry into the events of that day. Four years into that inquiry the English journalist and playwright Richard Norton-Taylor edited select transcripts from the first few years of hearings into a verbatim drama for the Tricycle Theatre in London. Richard Norton-Taylor had previously written two other verbatim dramas for the same theatre, detailing witness statements from the MacPherson Inquiry into the murder of Stephen

Lawrence and the Hutton Inquiry into the death of the warfare expert David Kelly in the wake of BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan's report that the evidence for going to war in Iraq had, in the infamous phrase, been "sexed up". Norton-Taylor's writing background is interesting here for two reasons. Firstly, verbatim theatre in general and Norton-Taylor's works in particular had a reputation for holding establishment bodies to account by adapting, restating and drawing attention to the findings of inquiries which took place in relatively private and select environments. For the BBC to adapt one of these plays meant that as an institution BBC Radio (and its chain of commissioners) made a choice to align themselves with this anti-establishment and highly-political strain of British theatre. Secondly, Norton-Taylor had been responsible for highlighting the findings of the Hutton Inquiry which had (somewhat controversially) exonerated the British government but blamed the BBC for their reporting of the possible failings for the case for war in Iraq. Not only Gilligan but the BBC chairman Gavyn Hewitt and the BBC Director General Greg Dyke had been forced to resign in the wake of Hutton's findings. So, Norton-Taylor's commission came despite the fact that he had recently written about a deeply damaging episode in the history of the BBC. However, Norton-Taylor's play is principally interesting, within the terms of this chapter, for the way in which it acknowledges, and gives voice to, the presence of the British Army on the streets of Northern Ireland.

Bloody Sunday forms a kind of trinity of plays with *Silver's City* and *An Enemy of the People*. Each of these commissions takes a writer from a perceived community (a community as defined by the language and discourse of the conflict, Irish Catholic and Ulster Protestant and British) and uses them to shed light on untold acts of silencing within their own community. So, after Leitch's criticism of the loyalist criminal community, and Lynch's criticism of the compromised republican neighbourhood, comes Norton-Taylor's writing on the poor management, violent crimes and subsequent cover up by the British Army in Northern Ireland. It starts with the testimony of Bishop Edward Daly, who on the day in question had

just finished mass and walked out with his congregation to encourage them to get home safely through the mass of protestors, paratroopers and armoured vehicles:

EDWARD DALY: That moment, the revving up of the engines is something I remember very clearly, because it alarmed me and um, it alarmed most of the people there [...] then they started moving in our direction and – [...] I think most of the people expected them to stop at the junction, I think, of Eden Place which would normally – there was almost a kind of choreography that everyone observed, and I think what caused the panic that day at the beginning was that the choreography was not followed and once the Saracens came past Eden Place, everyone there sensed that this was different than what had happened before. (28)

Bishop Daly goes on to describe how a boy running beside him was shot dead and how he, along with others and the dying boy, then sheltered in a courtyard for a long time listening to the firing of weapons and wondering what to do. Edward Daly's testimony here is striking for many reasons, but not least because the language he uses attests to the silence, the absence of language, in the actions of the British Army that day. He uses the word choreography as if the protestors and the armoured vehicles were involved in a ballet. And, in part, the description works because the soldiers tell the protestors and the pedestrians nothing about what they plan to do. The British Army at the start of the play is imagined, almost literally, as a machine or robot; incapable of thought or speech, only capable of action. It is an echo of the years of silence in which Northern Irish violence was found in images displayed constantly in news bulletins, but whose writers and thinkers fell almost silent across the output of the BBC. The listener is presented with violence without an explanation: a key feature not just of the conflict itself but of major aspects of its coverage.

The point of the Saville Inquiry was that the British Army should be held to account and as the listener enters the second half of the play they begin to hear from military personal who were present or on duty that day. They hear from General Sir Robert Ford, who in April 1971 became the Commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland. The General testifies that he was not in Derry on that day and has no first-hand knowledge of what happened but has always assumed that soldiers would not fire at civilians unless they were fired upon themselves. In the aftermath of the shooting, he claims that he tried to discover what had happened. In this extended extract, the listener meets a great variety of silences and sounds, connections and disconnections: all of them coming together in a complex expression of the conflict.

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: Did you keep any notes?

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD: No notes at all.

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: Why not?

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD: I may have kept notes, but they have been destroyed.

[...]

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: Why were the thirteen shot at by paratroopers?

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD: I don't know. [...] I am not in a position to explain why thirteen apparently unarmed civilians were shot by the paratroopers. It is obviously a long and complex problem.

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: [...] In the case of Mr McGuigan, he was a man in his early forties, he had six children [...] He held up a white handkerchief in order to go to the rescue of someone else and was shot through the back of the head. Did you know any of that?

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD: I did not know, no. I am very saddened to hear of that, of course I am.

[...]

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: Mr Nash, Alex Nash, fifty two at the time [...], going to the rescue of his son with his arm in the air, requesting the shooting to stop. Did you know that?

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD: I am greatly saddened by what you have just told me.

MICHAEL MANSFIELD: General Ford, what I put simply is: you have never taken the slightest interest in the victims, have you?

Here, in one sequence, multiple instances of silence and the breaking of silence are brought together. In the commissioning of the adaptation, there is the breaking of a silence on the role of the Army and criticism of their actions on the streets of Northern Ireland. In the reproduction of the courtroom – with actors playing senior establishment figures such as Michael Mansfield QC and General Sir Robert Ford – you have the BBC adapting the inner workings of the British Establishment and partially demystifying the working of inquiries. In the testimony that Norton-Taylor has selected and edited, there is the admission from a senior army officer of a lack of care in investigating a key disaster in the unfolding of the

conflict. And then in the naming of the victims and the General's incomprehension of their names, deaths or injuries, there is an acknowledgment of the suffering of these ordinary citizens and the Commander's ignorance of their existence. Over and over again in the play the General stonewalls. The silence of the soldiers and their Saracens from the first half of the play transmutes, in the second half of the play, into a British Army refusing culpability, disavowing knowledge. The lost or destroyed notes, the absence of an explanation for what has happened, the failure to offer up facts or apology: in the testimony of General Sir Michael Ford we have silence, censorship and diasavowal, each of them dramatised for a British audience. After three adaptations in which the British Army never appeared, spoke or were even acknowledged, they finally appear in auditory form and say nothing. But, this time, their silence is pointed to; this time their silence is made into sound.

One final silence emerges as key to this adaptation, and that is silence as an act of listening. Up to this point all the silences in this chapter have come from the rhythm of the adaptation itself, its pattern of sounds and silences: silences which denote trauma or censorship or which leave room for the listener to engage with the emotional resonance of the piece. But these silences simply deal with what is written, edited and broadcast, not with what happens when the piece is received. The silence of the listener can have more than one meaning as well. In most cases, the silence of the listener is imagined as a simple act of receiving communication: the listener listens, the reader reads, this is how they take in communications. But, as Barthes points out, reading is not a passive act:

the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; [...] (48)

This thesis would suggest that listening is as multiple an act as reading. The construction of regional identity is received, translated, and interpreted by

the listener; and within the act of listening can be found multiple meanings. The silence associated with listening, likewise, has many meanings. The silence of the listener is indicative of his or her receptiveness; and his or her act of hearing resonates on a number of levels. Within the context of the play *Bloody Sunday*, listening takes on other powerful meanings. The play is presented as if the listener is overhearing, or is present, at the inquiry itself and therefore it puts the listener in a similar position to the judge, or to one of the other officials who are permitted to attend all of the inquiry. The inquiry was set up – in part – to bear witness to the events of Bloody Sunday, given the colossal harm which had accrued from the British Army's and the British Government's failure to interrogate the crimes in the 1970s. This bearing witness – this accumulation of testimony – only becomes meaningful when it is heard. This is why, more explicitly in the case of *Bloody Sunday* than the other works in this chapter, the meaning of the play lies more in the moment of its reception – in the listener's act of hearing – than it does in the construction of the work itself. Thus, in the case of *Bloody Sunday*, the silence of the listener resonates: because it is a silence which speaks of reception, and it is a silence which represents an act of respect. Broadcast on a national radio station, profound and complex meaning accrues to the act of millions of British people listening to an admission of violent wrongdoing on the part of an army which exists to represent and defend their rights. There is unspoken meaning to be found in such an admission of wrongdoing being hosted by a broadcaster widely associated with the British state. And there are further, deeply complex and multiple, meanings to be found in the act of silent reception, of listening and of hearing, from the British listener, inside and outside of Northern Ireland.

Every act of listening is multiple and resonant with meaning. But the structure of the play itself, and the narrative of the play, foreground the meaningful nature of silent reception. The play dramatizes the idea that the British judicial and political establishment have 'heard' – after many years of denial – the injustice of the events of Bloody Sunday and

they have finally called an inquiry. The lawyers representing the families have asked hard questions of members of the British Army and those answers have been heard, not simply in the moment of them being spoken, but in their transcription. Both the inquiry and the transcription have been heard by the playwright Norton-Taylor and adapted for a theatrical setting, to be heard again by a paid audience. Finally, Norton-Taylor has been invited by BBC Radio to remake his play for radio so it might be heard by a larger British audience than could attend an inquiry or a theatrical run in a small theatre. The considerable political meaning of the play lies in the fact that it represents a chain of people listening – their silence denoting their act of reception. The meaning of the play, and the inquiry, lies as much in the silence of those who hear it, as the sounds of those who testify.

Bloody Sunday is an unusual adaptation, packed with meaning. It adapts the acts of silencing made common by the Northern Irish conflict, but it does so in a way which is different from the earlier adaptations. Where *A Man Flourishing* adapted the censorship of the historical conflict; *Silver's City* adapted the silencing of Scots and Irish cultural life in Belfast; and *An Enemy of the People* adapted the way in which the communities themselves acted as political censors; *Bloody Sunday* adapts multiple acts of silencing which run through the history of The Troubles. The commissioning and broadcast of the piece marked a tentative end to the historic silencing of the BBC over British Army atrocities in Northern Ireland. The play's characters bear witness to the violent silencing of peaceful dissent in Derry. The existence and explanation of the Inquiry bears witness to the silencing of facts around the event itself. And the silence of the radio listener, interacting with a court room setting, renders this act of domestic silence as an act of hearing. Silence – positive and negative, representing active hearing, denial, and censorship – rings through the play, amplifying and carrying the meaning of the narrative.

Conclusion

The history of Northern Ireland in the past half century involves a level of political complexity almost unique among Britain's regions and nations. For this reason, there is no simple way to judge the efficacy or success of BBC Radio's artistic representation of Northern Ireland. The level of explicit censorship applied to broadcasters attempting to produce work from this region is unmatched anywhere else in the nation, and, at moments, rivals the level of government interference last seen during the Second World War. It is impossible to say what BBC Northern Ireland might have commissioned and adapted had there not been an ongoing conflict and had the political establishment not strived to control the BBC's output in such a ferocious manner. Thus, any judgment regarding representation must allow for the fact that for a large part of this period, the BBC were programme makers working in extremis. The judgment of previous theorists has varied greatly on the BBC's perceived success or failure in Northern Ireland. Hajkowski, looking at the role of the BBC up until 1953, goes so far as to argue that while the development of regional broadcasting in Wales can be read as a success, Northern Ireland's history of broadcasting is marred by the "fact that it meant giving in, to a degree, to a more conservative, triumphalist and bigoted unionism". (6) Savage, chronicling the BBC in Northern Ireland from 1945 to 1985, defends the news-producing role of the BBC which "offered compelling coverage of events in very difficult circumstances". (32) This divergence comes partly from looking at different periods in history but it also comes from the problem of defining what the BBC is *for*: or, even, what the BBC *is*. If the point of the BBC is to develop a local, regional culture of writing and producing talent, then there is less evidence of this in Northern Ireland than there is in Wales. If the point of the BBC is to represent each region to those who live outside it, then, it can be argued, that the BBC in this period did an extraordinarily good job of telling the people of other regions that there was an ongoing, violent conflict playing out inside the borders of

their country. Where the BBC might be judged to have faltered in their act of curation, was in concentrating so wholeheartedly on the conflict that it failed to adapt a full range of Northern Irish thought and experience.

The tension in the question of the BBC's role has been addressed by David Butler in his essay "The Trouble with Reporting Northern Ireland". (75) Butler argues that, in his opinion, all media studies are just politics by another name. He argues that most academic studies of the media exist "to investigate representation. [...] This is the study of symbolic power; the power of media forms to influence, shape and perhaps define, commonly-held beliefs". (75) Working through the lens of political science, Joenniemi's work on Rumsfeld would seem to argue a related point, (58) in as much as he shows Rumsfeld using his access to the media to construct a politically-expedient temporal history of Europe. This thesis does not claim to know *how* the BBC should be representing its many regions and nations, only that it has made a written commitment to do so. As identified in the section on the broadcasting ban, at times the perceived standards for regional representation on the BBC reflect nothing more than what the BBC has chosen to do in the past. Nothing similar to the BBC existed before it was invented, and none of the large broadcasting or media companies in the UK can match its reach or scale. But it is undoubtedly true that representation – and the assumed power of such within mass media – is the subject matter at hand. Representation always has a political angle; the perceived existence of countries, groups and conflicts, is always dependent upon some level of representation. In this case, the BBC is sometimes caught between two acts of representation, one of a nation and the other of a conflict. And, to make matters more complex, any representation of the country of Northern Ireland (as opposed to the island of Ireland) is going to be perceived by some in the loyalist and republican communities as a political statement in and of itself. In the case of the first three adaptations outlined above, the BBC appears to be trying to represent the people of Northern Ireland in the cracks between all the things they think they cannot say and have been told they cannot mention. Thus, there is an

imagined Northern Ireland in which no-one ever mentions the border, internment, the Battle of the Boyne, the English monarch, the British Army, Bobby Sands, Orange order marches, city checkpoints or the ongoing death toll from the conflict. This, despite the fact that the conflict – whether modern or historical – is a major narrative point for all these dramas. Radio worlds are always, to an extent, floating worlds; stripped of the physical and the visual and heavily reliant on the imagination of the listener. In the case of Northern Ireland, particularly in the first three dramas, these worlds seem even more untethered than normal. The language of conflict has been stripped away. And with it some of the signposts for the listener. There is something hazy in these adaptations' description of Belfast, as if its various parts and communities were disconnected. It is, perhaps, too complex a task to unpick what part of this is attributable to the restrictions of censorship and what part to the disconnection of any city partitioned and divided by internment and war. The Northern Ireland the BBC offers us is a partially-redacted, politically-weighted construction, but one which nonetheless retains its own complexity and meaning: even in those moments when it is silent.

As a way to understand what it means to adapt in a time of conflict and censorship, this chapter has examined the very complex layers of silence which are at work in the commissioning and production of four radio adaptations produced between the years 1985 and 2009. In some places, the workings and interworking of various types of silence are extremely complex indeed. In listening across the four plays, the silence would seem to fall into five main categories. The first is political, social and institutional and it is the silence of censorship and self-censorship which shaped the BBC as an organisation during the years of the Troubles. This first kind of silence is discernible in the de-politicisation of adaptations; the failure to commission during the long years of the broadcasting ban; the timidity in failing to address directly the politics of the conflict or even to show the presence of the armed forces in the country. The second kind of silence is part of the culture of the conflict itself. It is a silence born of fear

in the face of violence or threats of violence and it is described in each of the adaptations. In *A Man Flourishing* the listener hears James Gault move from a place of rebellion to a place of silence and conformity. In *Silver's City*, Silver Steele threatens Billy Bonner by continuing to talk about 'the cause' within the Maze, so Billy Bonner decides to silence him forever. In *An Enemy of the People*, Moya finds she is beloved only if she keeps her silence around the crimes of her community. When she tries to speak out she finds herself confined to a kind of social death, with threats of violence all around her. In *Bloody Sunday*, the army tries to exonerate its part in an illegal act of violence by claiming ignorance, failing to answer questions and failing to 'remember'. The third kind of silence is silence as an aspect of colonialism. This silence is social, cultural, institutional and it is most apparent in the two adaptations which illustrate modern Belfast. The absence of Irish culture and the predominance of American music symbolise one act of cultural colonisation. The earlier colonisation, that of Ireland by Britain, is for the most part swept away or smothered by the first kind of silence: censorship. There is an echo here of Said's writing on post-colonial ways of reading, particularly in regards to the ways in which a country's culture can fail to be benevolent. (63) Indeed, the turbulent history of Northern Irish representation on BBC Radio brings together the first (institutional silence) with the third (post-colonial silence) in the travails of an institution grappling with the ways in which it can be benevolent or less benevolent, holding – as it does – the power to amplify or silence many voices. The fourth silence is silence as a symbol of modernity, urban living and a commerce-driven existence. This is the least geographically specific of all the silences and it seems to make an appearance even within the historical drama *A Man Flourishing*, which contrasts the silent, mercantile world of Belfast with the noisy, political, 'natural' world of the Antrim countryside. This is a kind of silence which seems to speak of soullessness and though it is hard to speak of silence describing things, in the context of these plays, this silence seems to describe an absence of culture, emotion and spirituality. The fifth silence,

the silence of the listener, is hard to quantify or describe. It is not geographically specific, but, rather, medium specific. It can be seen, and has been here described, as a 'positive' silence: a silence which allows room for meaning and interpretation; a silence designed to intrigue and engage the listener; and, especially in the case of the last adaptation, to signify an act of historically-, geographically- and politically-significant hearing.

The identification and examination of these multiple silences demonstrates a strong relationship between this thesis's work on audio and Barthes's work on the multiple meanings of text and film in "The Death of the Author" and "The Third Meaning". (48, 52) This case study demonstrates the extent to which creating an adaptation which moves narrative from the page into audio involves more than simply reading and receiving the words of a book out loud. Where, in the Welsh example, voice and language became a nexus for meaning, memory and regional identity, in the case of Northern Ireland much of what is meaningful and constructive exists in what is missing or goes unsaid. The construction of these regional worlds is highly complex, melding dialogue, structure, soundscape, music and silence; and the resultant work of art will be understood in diverse ways depending on the listener. No single, definitive reading of the audio drama is possible, and thus – as Barthes underlines – patterns and structures of meaning must be identified to allow the student of audio to navigate the multiple meanings of any of these works. (48)

The representation of any nation or region within the United Kingdom is significant for the fact that the space imagined has been 'heard' – culturally and institutionally heard, adapted and re-voiced. But the representation of a space at war holds many difficult meanings. The British Government worked hard to prevent the violence around the conflict being classified a war; it was important for the national and international image of the country that it was never seen as such. In this way, it becomes clear that conflicts can be as much constructed and curated as regions and nations can. Conflicts can be reclassified; downgraded; given alternative

narratives and denied. The acts of adaptation analysed here, and the commissioning and production decisions of the institution which produced them, are all attempts to mediate the reality of the conflict. At times, as can be seen during the broadcasting ban, the effort of trying to express the conflict within politically-acceptable lines becomes too much, and the conflict and its nation – both together – are silenced. While the conflict – and its representation, or the lack of it – were prominent in the making of policy decisions around the broadcasting of Northern Ireland, the social and cultural life of the nation outside of the conflict went unrepresented. To put it another way, the conflict silenced the nation, and the broadcast community and the British government, at times, silenced both together. The broadcasting ban, with its resultant years of silence around the existence of modern, conflict-riven Northern Ireland, was an act of unimagining; a stripping away of identity which represented a profound cultural and political failure of representation. The many silences at the heart of this chapter are – amongst other things – a reminder of why adaptation, imagination and representation matter.

Northern Bodies

Bodies, and their role in expressing working-class experience, in
BBC Radio's adaptations of Greater Manchester

Introduction

The history of BBC Radio adaptation in Greater Manchester is also the history of how the BBC has attempted to navigate the various narratives of working-class life presented by the social realist novels of the late nineteenth century. Where, in previous chapters, first voice, and then silence, became a focus for national identity, in the case of Greater Manchester it is the human body which becomes the conduit for regional identity. The adaptations this chapter will consider are a 1991 adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel for children *The Secret Garden*, a 2001 adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton*, Michael Symmons Roberts's 2008 play *Worktown* (adapted from the Mass Observation photographs of Humphrey Spender) and a 2009 adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Ruth*. The adaptations represent a historical spread through the period 1985 to 2009, bringing them into line with the adaptations considered in earlier chapters and representing a period in the history of the UK (and therefore also the BBC) when issues of regional representation and devolution were being discussed in many prominent fora. The spread of adaptations is dominated by a small handful of writers, principally Elizabeth Gaskell, who provided the source material for nine of the adaptations made in this period. The adaptations examined here reflect some of that same weighting, while also bringing in one of the survey's most original pieces, the poet Symmons Roberts's adaptation of Humphrey Spender's photographs of Bolton in the 1930s.

This chapter aims to grapple with some large theoretical areas, pertaining to class, regional identity, and radio as a medium. Remembering Casetti, (50) the analysis of the adaptations will draw on a range of social, cultural and historical discourses. The theoretical and historical background to this chapter has been split into three sections, which make up an extended introduction to the study of the adaptations. In the first, *Readings of 'the North'*, a variety of historical readings of 'the North' and their relationship to a working-class or 'othered' identity are considered. In

the second section, *The Place of Bodies*, the chapter analyses the influence of Gothic fiction and the public health crises of the nineteenth century to uncover some of the reasons that the body came to stand for working-class experience in the sources and their radio adaptations. In the third section, *The History of the BBC in Manchester*, the chapter examines the place of the institution in the region and looks at some divergent examples of how radio has imagined Northern English identity. Each of these sections will describe a range of narratives, events, texts and discourses which can be found woven into narratives of Northern and/or Manchester experience. The complexity of the interplay of these many strands of meaning illustrates once more the multiplicity which exists within the construction and interpretation of narratives of regional identity. Barthes's assertion that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" is well illustrated by the elaborate mesh of narratives which flow into the adaptations. (48) The medium-specific features of radio, with its non-textual sounds and uses of silence, only adds to the complexity and nuance of the text translated into sound.

Following the introduction, and its discussion of key themes and discourses, the chapter moves onto a detailed examination of the first episode of the Classic Serial *Ruth*, which aims to look at the way in which the presentation of Ruth's body interacts with ideas emerging from versions of Northern and working-class identity: the role of religion; the othering of Mancunian experience; the Gothic framing of female experience; the desired but impossible escape to the rural; and the visceral, physiological experiences of lived poverty. The chapter then turns to consider influences apparent in *The Secret Garden*, *Mary Barton* and *Worktown*, before concluding with an examination of the body on radio and the blurred boundaries of expressed Northern experience.

Finally, it is helpful to focus briefly on the reasons why this region offered a suitable case study for the thesis. Each of the case studies looks at a region or nation which was identified by the earliest regional schemes of the BBC and in which the corporation located one of their radio stations.

The original broadcasting houses for England were situated in Bournemouth, London, Birmingham, Norfolk, Manchester and Newcastle. Bournemouth later closed and Bristol opened, but London and Manchester remain the only two metropolitan counties which both contain a radio production centre and are regularly represented in dramatic adaptation. Greater Manchester, unlike London, shares a population level which is similar to that of Wales and Northern Ireland, all three areas having populations between 1.8 and 3.1 million people. In addition, Greater Manchester – along with its close regional identifiers Manchester and Lancashire – has long been seen as a significant city, a major economic centre and sometimes even as an unofficial capital of the north of England. There is a considerable body of work available on the broadcasting, literary, cultural, social and political histories of Manchester, allowing for a more detailed analysis of context to be done, compared with counties such as Devon or Surrey, which, although they are represented in the adaptations from this period, are less often chronicled or analysed.

Readings of 'the North'

Readings of Northernness are significant to this chapter – and the works themselves – for a variety of reasons. The first is that understanding the 'othered' nature of Northern experience helps to cast light on the evolution of BBC Manchester and its work in pulling away from the influence of the BBC in London. The second is that to understand the importance of establishing and imagining an identity for Greater Manchester and the north of England, it helps to understand that English identity is not a single or a cohesive thing; and that, sometimes, what is expressed as English or Englishness, excludes the northern regions of the country. The third is that – in these adaptations – the focus upon work-based identities, and the prevalence of poverty in northern England, helps to explain the way in which the body came to stand in for a Northern

identity, framed around what the person could do (what their contribution to industry could be) and what their body could withstand, in an environment shaped by extremes of poverty and deprivation.

Part of the work of this chapter is to examine the signs and symbols of regional identity which occur in the works and, to this end, it helps to place the idea of English identity into its cultural and historical context. Casetti, in his writing on the study of text to film adaptation, suggested that “[t]he goal is to give an account of a network of discourses, their connections and their intersections; and within this network, the coming together and the coming apart of some entities and configurations.” This thesis aims to broaden the application of Casetti’s thinking by applying this approach to the construction of regional identity on radio, (50) not simply by comparing source text with radio play, but by examining a range of discourses which flow through both. Both Higson and Richards have written about the way in which a unified and highly-romantic Celtic identity for Wales, Scotland and Ireland helped to define England as both intellectual and unemotional – traits which were often identified as making the English suitable for leadership: in war, in government and in the empire. (61-62) Thus, English narratives of identity have tended also to be narratives of power. These are not narratives which are owned, written or guided by an English working class. However, the literary narratives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Greater Manchester are principally narratives of poverty: stories of people who own no wealth and sometimes lack the most basic control over their own lives. In these stories of poverty, ill health and vulnerability, there is an alternative imagining of a possible English identity. Thus, it becomes important in this chapter to look towards alternative historical narratives of English identity such as the work of E. P. Thompson.

In his seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson examines the formation of a cultural identity for the English industrial cities and heartlands, including Manchester. (76) Thompson focuses heavily on the cultural influence of religion, looking to the spread

of Methodism in Northern communities and its effect both in quelling revolutionary ideas in the age of the French Revolution and elevating the moral value of work for communities about to be uprooted and transformed by the arrival of mass industrial employment. (76) It should be noted that Thompson's identification of the role of religion in building narratives of community points to a relationship between his, Colley's and Shafir's work on the role of religion in constructing class-based, national and regional narratives of identity. (57, 60, 76) Thompson also writes at length on the influence of the Peterloo massacre, which took place in Manchester in 1819, when economic suffering; the social and financial burden of the Napoleonic wars; and the absence of full enfranchisement, combined to encourage the flourishing of radical dissent in Lancashire and beyond. (76) 60 – 80,000 people gathered in St Peter's Field, Manchester in August 1819 to demand greater representation, and to be addressed by a popular proponent of working-class radicalism, Henry Hunt. Local yeomen attempted to arrest Hunt, followed by armed soldiers, and in the violence which followed 18 people were killed and more than 500 were injured, including women and children. The unprecedented event shocked the nation, but its effects were, perhaps, felt most acutely in Manchester. The massacre helped to redefine the idea of class struggle and inequality in violent, mortal terms; and Thompson traces the way in which the massacre led to the development of radical and dissenting movements across the industrialised north of England. (76) In addition to these influences, Thompson points to a history of working-class collectivism, where the existence of radical political groupings, unions, friendly societies, reading groups and church-based organisations provided a structure and a culture with the potential to foster cohesion and visibility. (76) Thompson points to the philosophical significance of Methodism and its attitude to the virtues of work; class consciousness fostered by events such as the Peterloo Massacre; and the history of collective endeavours in working-class communities as key influences in the development of working-class culture. (76) These factors help to make up an alternative imagining of

national identity. This reading of identity is helpful in understanding the works that follow: in particular, but not exclusively, the adaptations of Elizabeth Gaskell's novels which are heavily informed by ideas of class consciousness; the lived experience of inequality; the pressures of religious morality; and the social importance of collective forces.

Thompson's class-focused work does not provide the only useful set of perspectives on Northern identity. Stuart Rawnsley's work on Northern English identity demonstrates the way in which the North has, in its construction, been imagined as less civilised and more rebellious; has seen its diverse regions conflated; and has had its identity yoked to a constructed cultural past which has been used to legitimise the industrial conditions and working-class status of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century North. (77) While recognising the inherent difficulties in talking about any ill-defined region, Rawnsley has attempted to describe a construction of the North in the period running up to the end of the Second World War. (77) Rawnsley points to historical evidence that by the sixteenth century the North had come to be seen as a "site of rebelliousness". (77) Rawnsley refers to the work of the historian J. E. C. Hill in describing the way in which the North was characterised – at the time of the English Civil War – as a place in which old superstitions still held sway (77); a place which, thus, needed to be saved by an influx of conventional religion and belief. It is interesting to note that, although these acts of construction happen in different periods and with a range of different motivations, the imagining of the North bears some resemblance to the imagining of the 'Celtic' countries in Higson's and Richard's summaries. (61-62, 77) The intellectual and unemotional southern English are being imagined through the construction of a superstitious, wild other. In fact, Rawnsley goes on to point out the way in which Irish immigration during the industrial revolution contributed to the imagining of Northern communities as rebellious and anti-authoritarian, (77) demonstrating the continuing relationship between the construction of a Celtic identity and a Northern English one. Echoing Shafir's work on industrial narratives and

the rise of prominent regions, (57) Rawnsley looks to E. P. Thompson's work on the industrial revolution, and identifies the way in which the flowering of different industries in different areas helped to establish separate regional identities for, in his examples, Tyneside, West Riding and Lancashire. (76-77) This emergence of separate cultural and industrial identities is important, since it challenges the idea that 'the North' can be categorised as a single cultural space and, in so doing, helps to explain why this chapter focuses on a single metropolitan region and not the north of England as a whole. Rawnsley looks at the way in which the idea of work and labour were brought together with ideas of ancient crafts and heritage to form a construct of 'Northern labour' which looked backwards to an imagined, culturally-rich, pre-industrial North, while validating and romanticising the working-class status and culture of the post-industrial North. (77) Rawnsley's work on the early construction of the North helps, in particular, to illuminate aspects of the characters in the adaptations which follow. Each of the three protagonists⁷ is defined either by her rebellious nature (Ruth and Mary Lennox) or by her relationship to rebellious men and rebellious acts (Mary Barton's relationship with her father and the killing of Harry Carson). The fourth drama, *Worktown*, offers the idea of work as a defining characteristic of Northern identity; is structured around acts of rebellion – cock fighting and the tense act of threat in the abattoir; and is an adaptation of one example of the next aspect of Northern imagining – the North as a kind of English jungle.

As Rawnsley underlines, the othering of the North and the reframing of its identity as that of a rare and only half-discovered world – a kind of English jungle – led to the early and mid-twentieth century phenomenon of documentary-style books and art which made it their mission to explore the mysterious netherworlds that lay north of Derby. (77) Rawnsley points to the way in which a better connected England – an England of car ownership and complex rail networks – combined with the

⁷ *Worktown* has no identifiable protagonist.

documenting of northern industrial decline in the interwar years, contributed to a new breed of writing and art – the faux-exotic British travelogue. (77) In these books and artworks, journalists, photojournalists and cultural commentators would travel around the economically-ailing north of England documenting poverty and gritty, sooty decline. This phenomenon helped to imagine a backward, othered North – and in turn to construct an intellectual, prosperous and analytic South. Notable writers of the period express and address many of these ideas in their work, not least the Yorkshire-born-and-raised writer J. B. Priestley. In Priestley's 1933 work *English Journey*, the author recognises that the idea of England belongs to the South:

What is the use of England – and England, in this connection, of course, means the City, Fleet Street, and the West End clubs – congratulating herself upon having pulled through yet once again, when there is no plan for Lancashire? (78)

Thus, Priestley recognises the othering of the North in the imagining of England, and yet he goes on to write about the citizens of the North – specifically, the working-class citizens – in a deeply othering way. As Priestley watches Bolton and Manchester go by, his observation that poultry is often kept in these yards, leads to the following summation:

The hen, herself, I suspect made a deep subconscious appeal to these men newly let loose from the roaring machinery. At the sound of her innocent squawking, the buried countryman in them seems to stir and waken. By way of poultry he returned to the land [...] (78)

The mill workers are imagined as people who have been transformed – perhaps even brainwashed – by their working environment, but who carry within them a 'true' identity: an older, rural identity. It is an act of

imagining that suggests that the mill workers have not the ability to be themselves in the current time and place. Priestley here chooses not to try and domesticate the mill workers of Lancashire, allowing them to appear foreign to the reader in their half-human, half-lived lives. Despite being born and brought up in the neighbouring county of Yorkshire, Priestley – possibly swayed by issues of class identification – chooses in his book to identify with the England of the first quotation: the England of “the City, Fleet Street, and the West End clubs”. (78) Priestley’s dilemma in *English Journey* – to entertain the reader and delineate regions by allowing them to seem foreign, or to domesticate them by inviting the reader to observe what is universal and relatable in the lives of their residents – is a dilemma which speaks to the question of this chapter as a whole.

The Place of Bodies

The preceding section has already provided many explanations for why bodies should find themselves the central signifier of Mancunian experience on radio. The framing of the wild, rebellious North versus a thoughtful, authoritative and powerful South, casts the South as owners of the nation’s intellect and, thus, the North as the nation’s de-intellectualised bodies. Priestley’s description of Lancastrian mill workers in *English Journey* seems to confirm this view: tired bodies living without full knowledge of what they have lost or the intellectual ability to change their condition. And, indeed, post-colonial writing has much to say about the way in which writers from a powerful region have, historically, tended to imagine inhabitants of less-powerful regions more in terms of their bodies than their minds. See, for example, the way in which precolonial European writers focused on colour, and fetishized the bodies of imagined Africans in their writing, as they worked towards constructing an African ‘other’. (79) Or note the way in which Aimé Césaire’s twentieth-century theory of Negritude was so heavily informed by European readings of the African

that it denied that rationality was to be found at the centre of black culture. (67) To this complex picture of historical, social and cultural influence, must be added two further threads, one medical and one literary. The first is closely related to the working-class nature of Northern identity, as expressed in the last section, and this is the widespread and complex public health crises which Greater Manchester experienced in the nineteenth century. The second is the influence of Gothic literature on English fiction, particularly that of nineteenth-century women writing narratives of female experience. The influence of both public health crises and the Gothic resonate strongly through the four adaptations considered in this chapter.

To consider, first, the state of Manchester's health in the years in which most of the source texts were written: the historian Alan Kidd divides Manchester's nineteenth century into two distinct halves. (80) The first half, up until 1850, was dominated by the development of a vast and highly-original economic model: high density living, large-scale industrial employers, and a booming level of income for the city's many business owners. (80) The second half of the nineteenth century, Kidd argues, was dominated by loss, as cities across the UK and beyond imitated Manchester's economic model and the citizens of the city continued to suffer from an environmental crisis centred around living and working conditions. (80) Even as the average working-class wage in the city rose through the early part of the nineteenth century, living conditions in Manchester worsened, with the city gaining an unpleasant reputation as holder of one of the highest mortality rates in Britain (second only to Liverpool). (80) Houses built in the early part of the nineteenth century were often 'back to backs', two-room terraced houses with no yards or gardens, insufficient light, and no or little indoor plumbing. (80) In the 1830s and 40s more than 20,000 Mancunians were living in converted cellars which would sometimes house up to 10 people, often in extremely damp surroundings. (80) The early part of the century saw "epidemics of typhus, influenza, diarrhoea and cholera..." and pulmonary tuberculosis

was responsible for 10% of all deaths. (80) The health of Manchester's citizens was fragile and life expectancy short, not only for the labouring classes but all sections of society. The crisis in health was made public through a number of reports in the middle of the nineteenth century, most notably Edwin Chadwick's 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* which proclaimed that as of that year the average age of death for the professional classes and gentry of Manchester was 38 years old. Writers from the area could not fail to be aware of the terrible medical cost of Manchester's revolution and this – as will be evident in the adaptations – translates into an imagining of Manchester which is visceral, physical, fragile and diseased.

Beyond the high mortality rates and polluted air of Manchester's streets lies a second prominent influence, this time artistic: the influence of horror-filled narratives of the body in extremis, particularly those arising from the Gothic movement. Aspects of Gothic literature influence all four of the works adapted, but they do so in different ways. David Punter has pointed to the way in which the idea of Gothic literature is, itself, an unstable space – an unstable space which imagines other unstable spaces: a slippery presence within culture, and one that is hard to define. (81) Fred Botting has described the way in which a vast web of historical and cultural narratives flow into the creation of the eighteenth-century Gothic: which he characterises as holding a fascination with “chivalry, violence, magical beings and malevolent aristocrats”. (82) And yet, there are multiple indications within the adaptations that the unstable and fluid world of Gothic imagination flows into these works of imagining Manchester. Certainly *The Secret Garden*, *Ruth* and *Mary Barton* all use narratives within which the malevolent aristocrat (or wealthy, upper-class gentleman) is central to the working of the plot. In addition to this, the working of *Mary Barton*'s plot hinges on acts of violence and bloodshed, while all three of the texts contain acts of redemptive chivalry, from male characters towards female characters. Meanwhile, the early-twentieth-century world of *Worktown* is characterised by multiple acts of violence –

upon adults, children and animals – and by a slightly other-worldly milieu of ritual and superstition. Symmons Roberts places threads of magical thinking and alternative belief through his rendering of Bolton: from the various rituals of death and dismemberment; the meaning of the cock's claws handed to the young boy; or the appearance of the seller of love potions in the market scene. To the more general signifiers of Gothic imagination can be added the narrative thread of what is sometimes known as the female Gothic. The female Gothic centres on narratives of a young woman's passage into womanhood and her ambivalent relationship with either marriage, motherhood or both. (83) As such, the female Gothic is important in offering a model to nineteenth-century female writers in how they can write about a gendered experience of the world through the negotiation of a heroine's body and the demands put upon it by society. *Ruth* and *Mary Barton* are both works which centre themselves around these coming-of-age narratives of female experience; and Elizabeth Gaskell was a writer who played with the Gothic in many and various ways throughout her work.⁸ Laura Kranzler points to the way in which the Gothic doubling of female identity appears throughout Gaskell's work: both that which is specifically Gothic and those books which cleave more to the social realist or romantic models. (84) In *Ruth*, Gaskell utilises both a female Gothic narrative of sexual vulnerability and abuse, and a narrative framed by ideas of Gothic doubling: Ruth the mother, in tension with Ruth the sexualised being, in tension with Ruth the moral and religious soul. Thus, it is possible to see the ways in which aspects of multiple Gothic texts flow in to the imagining of Manchester in ways which defy boundary and border.

The influence of Gothic literature is important because of the way in which Gothic preoccupations interact with narratives of the body and the privileging of the body within the text. In the novels of Elizabeth

⁸ Gaskell wrote and published a variety of gothic stories, including the following: *The Haunted House* and *The Crooked Branch* (1859); *Curious, If True* (1860), and *The Grey Woman* (1861).

Gaskell, the coming-of-age narrative arc of female Gothic – with its negotiation of the sexualised and fertile body – offers a framework for her novels of young women in extremis. Ruth’s life is defined by bodily poverty; then redefined by Bellingham’s sexual interest in her; then redefined again when she falls pregnant; then ruined by society’s horror at her sexualised past. Thus, the central consciousness of the novel is constantly finding herself derailed by other people’s opinions about her body. Here is the Gothic doubling from Laura Kranzler’s analysis, Ruth the young woman having constantly to negotiate and make room for these shadow readings of her body: Ruth, the temptress; Ruth, the whore; Ruth, the mother; and Ruth, the fallen woman. In *Mary Barton*, the Gothic influence spreads itself in a less gendered way through the plotting of the novel. Unlike *Ruth*, *Mary Barton* follows a more classic Gothic narrative: one which involves the crimes (and perceived crimes) of the malevolent rich, acts of chivalry and heroism and a series of violent confrontations. Here, John Barton (the character Gaskell wished to place at the centre of her narrative, before her publishers refused) is the character most tortured by ideas of doubling. Barton is, at once, the working-class hero of the mill and a loving father and a cowardly murderer; destined to be torn apart by the gap between his reputation, his self-image and the reality of his violent actions. Every one of the four major male characters is haunted by acts of physical violence; and every one of them spends the majority of the text under threat of execution or of murder; or dealing with the repercussions of murder. Thus, the Gothic influence can haunt the bodies of men as easily as it prays upon the bodies of women. Meanwhile, in the dreamlike world of *The Secret Garden* – which, being a children’s text, is more open to ideas of redemption and renewal – the Gothic mansion of Misslethwaite Manor, the cursed body of Colin Craven, and the domineering presence of Mr Craven are all softened by an ending which resolves the ideas of loss and suffering. But this does not change the fact that the world which Mary Lennox enters is one that has been imagined along Gothic lines, as a young girl finds herself abandoned and largely alone in a vast stately home,

haunted at night by strange sounds and screams. Burnett's work offers a child's reading of the Gothic, one in which Mary Lennox's coming-of-age story stops short of dealing with her sexuality. Nonetheless, the mood of the text is set by the vulnerability of the bodies which it contains: the memory of Mary's dead parents and of the cholera-ridden house in India; the ghostly presence of the dead Mrs Craven and her locked-up garden; and the psychological and physiological suffering of scared and haunted Colin.⁹ Finally, Symmons Roberts's adaptation of the Gothic leads him to a portrayal of Bolton which foregrounds the vulnerability of the working-class body and the degree to which it is associated with violence.

Worktown was produced in the same year that Symmons Roberts's collection of poems *The Half Healed* came out – a collection of poems which imagines a violent and haunted world, filled with bodily dislocation, torture and death. (85) From the funeral at the beginning; through the scenes around the cockfight; to the road accident in the market; and the scene of criminal threats in the abattoir: *Worktown* is a play which revels in alarming and suspenseful locations and events. This is an adaptation of the Gothic which speaks both to the male narrative of the Gothic and to the male experience of Greater Manchester life: in interlinked stories which are suffused with death, violence and injury. Everything in *Worktown* is dangerous; every body in *Worktown* is vulnerable.

For all the literary, historical and cultural focus on the body, there is an essential problem when bodies are translated onto radio. Radio, as a medium, both can and cannot represent the human body. It can certainly be argued that what radio represents most comfortably is voice and, through it, the life of the mind. Indeed, the preceding chapters illustrate the way in which the voice in another language, or the voice in song, or the voice silenced can be used to communicate essential aspects of identity. Radio, as a medium, knows how to use voices, and thus the voice becomes

⁹ In the novel, Mrs Craven's missing body – and all that it stood for and inspired – is reimagined as a garden, an interesting literary comparison with the medium of radio where, more often, spaces are re-imagined as bodies.

the natural tool through which to convey key aspects of meaning. But, it can also be argued, that since the lived experience of the body is processed through the consciousness, then dramatizing the life of the mind does offer a window into the experience of living inside a body. Or, to put it more simply, on radio the voice is key to dramatizing and adapting the body for audio. The boundary between the body and the mind is a blurred one – yet one more indistinct boundary in a thesis which is full of them – but it is a boundary very much at play in this particular act of translation. The bodies bearing the weight of regional identity – the bodies in the chapter – are holding within them a history of working-class identity based around labour; a class consciousness affected both by the violence of class struggle and the many public health crises of the period; a history of Northerness defined by othering and the stripping away of intellectual ability; and the memory of the Gothic and its gendered treatment of the vulnerable human form. These are bodies bearing an extraordinary weight of meaning; bodies in which economic, social, cultural, historical and literary constructions meet and interact. In a sense they are bodies being read, thinking back to Barthes, (48) almost as if they were texts, sites of meaning and adaptation. But they are also impossible bodies – not simply because they are imagined but because they are invisible as well.

The History of the BBC in Manchester

The chapter now turns to a different kind of body: an institutional one. The section which follows aims to examine briefly the history of broadcasting in the region, looking at some of the reasons why the BBC might have chosen Manchester as a centre of production, and some of the features which may have contributed to the imagining of the place itself. Greater Manchester has been at the forefront of broadcasting in the United Kingdom since the early 1920s. This is, in part, a legacy of the industrial revolution, which left Greater Manchester as home to many of

the early electronic and technological industries and as a key economic centre for northern England. Unlike many other cities of the UK, radio had arrived in Manchester before the BBC came calling. The American industrialist George Westinghouse had built a vast complex at Trafford Park in 1899 from where his company oversaw technical and engineering projects for the UK. When the American section of the Westinghouse corporation in Pittsburgh started broadcasting music radio in 1920, engineers in British Westinghouse (now renamed as the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company) went over to the US to learn the new techniques in 1921. (33) Applications were made from the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company to the Post Office for a licence to broadcast from Manchester and Slough, but they were turned down. Undeterred, on 17 May 1922 a first evening's programming was broadcast from a transmitter mounted on the Metrovick water tower in Manchester and its schedule published in an article in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*. (33) By December 1922, the British Broadcasting Company had persuaded the Post Office to grant them a two-year broadcasting licence, allowing that the company would be formed of a number of large firms and small companies throughout the UK. The Metrovick station found itself subsumed into the workings of a nascent BBC, but the technical and institutional innovation which marked their original endeavour continued to be a feature of the BBC in Manchester.

BBC Manchester in the 1930s was a prolific and experimental producer of works for radio. The scope of the work produced at this time, and the diversity of the companies assembled around the BBC was due in large part to London-born manager Archie Harding, who had been transferred from his work at the BBC in London due to his left-wing views. Lord Reith decided to move Harding to BBC North (as it was then known) on the grounds that removed from the London offices "you can't do much damage"; and Harding encouraged all those under him to put as many voices onto the airways as possible, regardless of social background. (33) Under Harding's management BBC Manchester brought together a large

and diverse community of actors, comedians and musicians which, in the 1930s, included the singer and songwriter Ewan MacColl, the theatre innovator Joan Littlewood and actors such as Wendy Hiller and Wilfred Pickles. To the displeasure of some senior management in London, BBC Manchester developed a strong regional voice, hiring many journalists from their neighbour *The Manchester Guardian* to work on regionally-focused news stories, and pushed a level of regional analysis and advertisement which was not seen in the other English regions. (33) As war was declared in 1939, the BBC Radio drama department, led by Val Gielgud, decided to relocate from London to Manchester due to Manchester's superior regional facilities and, in the aid of servicing the department, a Manchester actors' repertory company was formed, one which is still in existence. (33) After the war, BBC Manchester continued both to innovate and to assert regional identity and difference. A *Northern Children's Hour* was started, with a view to offering children in the region a view of childhood that was "less 'pony riding, who's for tennis'" than the *Children's Hour* produced by the BBC in London. (33) This decision demonstrates both a blurring of region and class identity, and the blurring of Manchester identity with ideas of 'the North'. In the late 1940s, the station attempted a first BBC Radio soap opera *At the Willows*, which predated *The Archers* by more than a year, (33) and, although the programme was relatively short lived, it paved the way for a key development in BBC Radio programming. All this was before the advent of regional television, but the 1950s saw the opening of the first BBC Manchester television studios and the independent Granada Studios in 1954, followed three years later by a further set of BBC studios in Manchester city centre. With such considerable pieces of infrastructure in place and a substantial history of innovation behind it, Manchester's place in the twentieth-century broadcasting world was guaranteed.

Yet, for all that Manchester was being represented in the broadcasting schedules, the nature of that representation was part of a wider challenge. Namely, in a twentieth-century broadcasting world

dominated politically, institutionally and creatively by London, how does one imagine a distinct Northern-English identity? Thinking about Benedict Anderson's hierarchy of creation, (55) Archie Harding's innovations and hiring policy speak to a desire in the early decades to allow Manchester to imagine herself and to take ownership of the curation of identity.

Undoubtedly, the group of people running the studios and commissioning programmes for BBC Radio were dominated by the middle classes both in London and in Manchester. But there is evidence in the actors' company of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, which included actors such as Wilfred Brambles, a young Beryl Bainbridge and Billie Whitelaw, that the creative universe of BBC Manchester did not entirely exclude those from a working-class background. Not only that, but the work which was created specifically for the audience receiving their programmes from the transmitters in north-west England looked to offer a distinct urban and rural version of Northern English life which could cross class boundaries. The importance of this localised, regional viewpoint on the world cannot be underestimated: for instance, the existence of *Northern Children's Hour* influenced not only the development of children's broadcasting but the future of Northern English identity as it would be imagined for adults. Furthermore, the decision to relay many of the most popular slots on *Northern Children's Hour* to London, from where they could be broadcast nationally, meant that when the creators in BBC Manchester imagined their region they did so not simply for the people who lived there but for all the listeners in the country. In the long and varied history of *Northern Children's Hour* there exist many examples of the ways in which the BBC tried to imagine Northern English identity, but the two which follow lay out some institutional attitudes to the Northern body, as well as illustrating something about the plurality of Northern experience.

The first example concerns Violet Carson, who was a young Manchester-based musician, employed to work for *Northern Children's Hour* in 1935. She went on to lead a slot for *Northern Children's Hour* called *Nursery Sing Song*, where she performed with a number of local children

from the Manchester area. (33) One evening, when the recording link to London was broken, she entertained the children by improvising a song called *Manchester Street* and describing each of the people who lived there¹⁰. One of the children present that evening was Tony Warren from Salford, who would go on, as an adult, to develop this idea into *Coronation Street*. (33) Warren took the idea to commissioners at BBC Television who turned it down, pronouncing it “boring” (33): a fact which may say a lot about the BBC commissioners’ views on the relatability of everyday life as lived by working-class Mancunians. Undeterred, Warren took the idea to independent television producer Granada where it was produced to great success and where he later employed Violet Carson to play the key role of Ena Sharples. Tony Warren’s urban, class-conscious rendering of Northern experience did not meet with approval within the corridors of the BBC. But *Northern Children’s Hour* was to gift the British audience an alternative imagining of Northern experience in the form of the Reverend Bramwell Evans and his character of ‘the Romany’.

Bramwell Evans, who was descended from a Romany family and who lived and raised his family in a traditional caravan, had made a name for himself within the Christian ministry as an outdoor speaker and visitor to schools. (33) In the 1920s and 30s he had written articles about nature for a variety of newspapers including the *Cumberland News*, calling himself by the character name of ‘The Tramp’. (86) Adapting Evans’s idea for a scripted (essentially fake) documentary series, *Northern Children’s Hour* employed Evans in 1934 to take the listening children of the region on imaginary walks through the countryside, where he would describe to them the plants in the hedgerows and teach them about the English countryside in a programme called *Out with Romany*. The sound technician Jack Hollinshead produced the sound effects, creating aural landscapes

¹⁰ Various versions of this story exist. In other accounts, Carson sang the children a traditional dialect song which described the inhabitants of a local street. However, all accounts agree on the idea that it was Carson who gave Warren the idea for *Coronation Street*.

which varied from the sea shores of the North West to the country lanes and fields of Lancashire. (33) The 'Romany's' rambles became a major radio success for the BBC, broadcast nationally from BBC Manchester and listened to by an audience of up to 13 million adults and children (87); and such was the grief at Evans's sudden death in 1943 that schools were forced to cancel lessons and send distraught children home, and his caravan – then sited in Wilmslow – was bought and opened to the public in perpetuity as a place of pilgrimage.

The examples given here, though removed in time from the adaptations in this chapter by forty years or more, illustrate a number of key points in the way in which adaptation interacts with the imagining of Northern English identity. In the first place, they demonstrate the creative potential of establishing an artistic community around radio stations: Carson, Warren and Evans – none of whom came from a privileged background and all of whom lived lives rooted in Manchester, Salford and Wilmslow – were able to offer diverse but highly popular versions of Northern English identity to the listeners and viewers. Secondly, these examples demonstrate the central place that adaptation plays in the creation of imaginary cultural worlds. Evans, who adapted his own life and interests to create the newspaper character of 'The Tramp', was then further adapted by the BBC into the romantic – and fundamentally un-English – figure of 'the Romany', who served to teach the children of England a knowledge of nature which both Evans and his commissioners felt was falling away in the experience of modern childhood. Thirdly, this almost-prelapsarian fantasy of a rural idyll in the North West contrasts starkly with the urban world that Warren created in his attempt to write about Greater Manchester. One adaptation was commissioned by the BBC, the other was not: and it is hard not to find in this contrast a suggestion that the BBC finds some English imaginary worlds more comfortable than others. This theme – the tension between rural and urban imaginings of the North – helps to cast light on the adaptations which follow.

This chapter will begin its analysis by looking in some detail at the first episode of the Classic Serial adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, since this particular adaptation brings together many of the major signifiers of regional identity found in adaptations concerning Manchester: the adaptation of public health crises, of poverty and of a culture and society shaped by Methodism. It will then look briefly at the way in which these signifiers reoccur in adaptations of *The Secret Garden*, *Mary Barton* and *Worktown*, and at the way in which other influences – institutional, personal, historical and cultural – drive these imaginings of place and identity.

Ruth

Ruth

From the novel by Elizabeth Gaskell

Adapted by Ellen Dryden

Classic Serial (3 parts) – Radio 4 – 2009

Ruth, a book which – despite Gaskell's popularity within the BBC – the BBC chose not to adapt until 2009, is the story of a young working-class orphan living outside Manchester who is wooed, taken to London and then impregnated by a local member of the upper classes, Henry Bellingham. Having been abandoned in North Wales, Ruth attempts suicide before being rescued by a clergyman who takes Ruth home to make a new life with his family in a small town outside Manchester. However, when Ruth meets her seducer later on in life, her true identity and the status of her son are revealed and she loses her position as a governess and is estranged from the clergyman and his family. Ruth becomes a nurse and, as a contagious illness spreads through the community, she hears that Bellingham is near to death. Ruth goes to him and nurses him back to health. However, she catches the illness herself and dies. Ruth's funeral is

well attended and many of those who previously knew her now regret the harsh way in which they treated her because of her position as an unwed mother. It is an important and unusual novel, bold in its assertion of the hypocritical differences between society's treatment of men and women. Certainly, Gaskell's writing here speaks to an obsession with bodily frailty which runs through much of nineteenth-century Northern English writing, especially that of the many women writers – Gaskell, Burnett, the Brontë sisters – who shaped that culture. Ruth's health, fractured by her poor working environment, altered by early pregnancy and then destroyed by a region-wide epidemic, sites Ruth's story firmly in the realm of the body and bodily frailty. The following analysis focuses on the first (one-hour) episode of the three-part serial.

The adaptation begins with a clear message to the listener that Ruth's value lies not in her mind but in her body. And yet, it is Ruth's mind that is imbued with a richness and a texture which her invisible body lacks. The listener hears others focus on Ruth's physical form, but the adaptation invites us to admire Ruth's mind. And, thus, two aspects of Ruth's self – her mind and her body – are placed in tension with each other. The first scene is one invented by the adapter – the novel of Ruth begins with a long passage of narrative introduction – and, thus, the adapter, taking her cue from the theme of Gaskell's novel, chooses to foreground the subject of Ruth's physical virtues. Absent from the first scene, Ruth is discussed by the man charged with her infant care and a prospective employer. Ruth's future employer, a dressmaker, exclaims in horror at the idea of a farm girl “with red cheeks and coarse, chapped hands” being allowed to touch the dresses of fine ladies. Ruth's guardian promises her that Ruth is attractive like her mother was before her, “a very pretty girl, tall, slender, dark eyebrows, fair complexion and beautiful, dark brown curls”, and thus suitable for refined employment. Even before the listener first meets Ruth, her body is presented as her worth, and this reduction of Ruth to the properties of her outer casing will continue as the adaptation goes on. In contrast, in the scenes where the listener hears from Ruth herself, the

adaptation suggests that Ruth has a vivid and exciting life of the mind. Ruth's imagination stretches to a countryside she imagines beyond her place of work. Sitting up at 2am on a winter's night with her fellow seamstresses, Ruth speaks of her desire to escape the sewing room, and to see what "trees and grass and ivy look like on a night like this". She describes, very briefly, the ugliness of their "tumbledown" surroundings and waxes lyrical in her desire for some beauty in her life. And here, as will be echoed later in the series, the invisible, imaginary rural is offered more vividly to the listener than the everyday surroundings of Ruth's life. This imagining of Ruth's experience draws the listener's attention to the invisible – and the way in which the invisible interacts with the imaginative. Ruth's body is prized by her guardian, her employer and her seducer – but the listener cannot see Ruth's body. And Ruth herself, prizes the outside world which she can only see in her mind's eye – her imagination and memory coming together to create an internal escape for her tired mind. In both cases what is most prized is also – in this adaptation – unseen: the invisible body and the impossible, imagined space.

In the absence of observable space, the radio Manchester of *Ruth* looks to Ruth's experience of space and builds a soundscape which encompasses not a town, not even a house, but one small part of the room in which Ruth works. Ruth's world is shrunk to little more than the space of Ruth's body; and, so, while Ruth's mind roams impossible and imagined worlds, Ruth's body labours in a universe no more than six foot square. Ruth's own lodgings, the house of the dressmaker, are left vague, or, rather, silent. No echoes, no creaks, no hoots, no wind, no nature sounds, no road sounds or outside noise invades; the town-based world is built around the whirr of sewing machines, the voices of the workers and the coughing of cold, ill Ruth. This leaves the listener with the sense that whether human or mechanical, it is machines and moving parts which dominate this Mancunian world, and not the environment in which it takes place. When Ruth whispers in monologue to the listener, it is her sewing machine we hear behind her words; and when Ruth speaks of her

surroundings it is the furniture in the rooms which she describes; drawing a vision of the world which is tightly bound around Ruth herself: her body, the machine she sits at, her imagination, the furniture in her view. The construction of this world utilises a number of auditory elements, some of them particular to radio as a medium. The soundscape without visuals; the absence of other voices; Ruth's monologue; and the actor's delivery of that monologue work together to create a vision of Ruth's world and to give that vision meaning. It is a construction of space heavily influenced by the medium, using sound, silence, text-based information, and non-text-based information to create an imagined world for the listener. It is a very small world, a world without landscape, a world without context: it is personal and biological, the body and its work somehow divorced from cultural context and geography. Here is the blurring of geographic and physiological space: Ruth's world – Ruth's Manchester – is imagined as being her body and the objects and people that interact with it. Meanwhile, Greater Manchester, or, perhaps, poverty – the production does not specify or delineate – is imagined as tight, confining and claustrophobic. Ruth is snared in a world of one room, her sewing machine and the furniture in front of her taking the place of a landscape; and the thing that keeps her there is an absence of money, class, family and standing.

The imagining of Ruth, which, in the context of this adaptation, may be seen to stand in for the imagining of Manchester or Mancunian experience, also includes a powerful, Gothic element. Ruth's narrative is a heavily-gendered one, which plays with the relationship between gender and the body, as well as gender and economics. Ruth is given away into the service of a seamstress by a man; used sexually by Bellingham; abandoned pregnant and without money; saved by the chivalry of the more financially able Mr Benson; before finding herself once again destitute when she is rejected by the wealthy Mr Bradshaw and Mr Benson. In a final act of narrative indignity, her desire to nurse her seducer in his time of illness will lead to her early death. In the first episode, the question of Ruth's body and her wellbeing are quickly opened out to include her sexuality. When

Henry Bellingham first sees Ruth he whispers to the listener, as if making them complicit in his lascivious intent. He describes Ruth to us as “the kneeling figure dressed in black up to the throat”, emphasising ideas of supplication and fetishizing Ruth’s modest attire. In the space of twelve minutes of audio drama, the teenage Ruth has moved from being traded from guardian to employer for her ‘pretty looks’ to being sexualised by an older man as she stoops to sew a hem. And although the listener has met Ruth in the intervening scene, the listener is nonetheless positioned, more often than not, with those who look upon Ruth rather than with Ruth herself. The effect is to heighten the sense of Ruth’s objectification within society while also underlining the extent to which her outward casing is her value in every world in which she is placed. Carol Margaret Davison has noted the way in which the female Gothic has been described as a response to the lifelong trauma of being denied autonomy. (83) Described in those terms, *Ruth* would seem to be a female Gothic text par excellence, albeit one adapted alongside the influence of the romantic narrative. Ruth is a character trapped in a body which is trying to negotiate a society in which she is effectively powerless. In fact, Ruth’s only small measure of power in her own life lies in her ability to earn money, first in the house of the seamstress and, later, as a governess. Her narrative – therefore – is being imagined both in female, Gothic terms and in working-class, labour-dependent terms.

This emphasis on the gendered narrative might give the impression that *Ruth* is a text from which men are excluded. In fact, *Ruth*’s narrative explores male as well as female experiences of Manchester life. When Gaskell introduces the minister Mr Benson, there is great emphasis put upon his disability. In a book which begins by emphasising Ruth’s physical vulnerability – the extent to which her body is viewed and used as currency – it seems important that her rescuer should own a body so disadvantaged. Bearing the slightest echo of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, which was published five years before *Ruth*, Mr Benson’s disability allows him to experience and view the world in terms similar to those of Ruth. This

relationship, so central to the narrative of *Ruth*, and so removed from the sexualised and abusive overtones of her relationship with Bellingham, seems to mirror the way in which Mr Rochester's deformity and blindness creates a new equality between himself and Jane. (88) And, in fact, there is a third text which speaks to this dynamic. As will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, *The Secret Garden* shows Mary Lennox befriending and rehabilitating the terrified Colin, who believes himself to be crippled. There is a pattern here, of Northern female writers, all negotiating Gothic-influenced texts, and finding a corollary of female gendered experience in male experiences of disability. It is indicative of how greatly female narratives of self in this period are focused upon bodily experience, that female writers should have to reimagine and disable male bodies to create friends, or saviours, or life partners for their heroines. This narrative of broken male bodies interacts with a somewhat separate narrative of broken male bodies, which emanates from the expression of industrial and working-class, urban experience. In *Ruth*, some of the male bodies are imagined in terms of their physical power: Bellingham and the contrasting form of Mr Benson. At other times, male bodies are imagined in terms of their economic power: Mr Bradshaw, who throws Ruth out of his house for having had a child out of wedlock and, again, the character of the wealthy Bellingham. Just as narratives of sexual experience and economic experience meet in the body of Ruth (and Mary Barton); so too do narratives of economic and sexual power come together in the imagining of the male Manchester body. Male and female bodies of Manchester have much in common, sharing in experiences of poverty and ill health. The only aspect which truly divides them is social and that is the question of sexual morality: the hypocrisy of which *Ruth* attempts to address.

The fragility of bodies, and illness borne of poverty, are a constant backdrop in the Manchester of *Ruth*, to the extent that they virtually take the place of geographic specificity. The poor body, the ill body, the broken body: these are the structures from which this Greater Manchester is

fashioned. When Ruth meets Bellingham again, it is at the site of an accident where a young boy has fallen from a makeshift boat into the freezing river. Returning the boy to his home, Bellingham is horrified by the dirt and foul air of the boy's living quarters and berates the child's elderly grandmother for the state of her home. The grandmother replies in indignation, coughing, choking and citing her rheumatism to excuse the clutter of their home. On returning from this encounter, Ruth finds one of her fellow seamstresses, Jenny, terribly ill in bed and the dressmaker furious that she has lost one of her workers. In a radio landscape stripped of visual scenery the landscape of Ruth's experiences is often reduced to those aspects of her world which can give voice. In this way, the landscape of Manchester becomes instead a landscape of characters, and in the case of Ruth many of those characters are in poor health. There is a soundscape of ill health which takes the place of scenery in *Ruth* and which is built from the sounds of illness (coughing, wheezing); the brittle, frail performances of the actors; the absence of vital or energetic noise (laughter, birdsong, music); and the textual recognition of ill health in the dialogue. Indeed, the absence of visual landscape (both for the listener, and for Ruth in the world of the play) adds its own symbolic meaning to the narrative of Mancunian life, and, as with so many aspects of this work, it can be seen symbolising poverty. When Ruth dreams of another life in which she could go out and see the countryside, she is also dreaming of the freedom that comes with wealth. Here is poverty being adapted not simply in the context of dialogue and monologue but in the absence of imaginary richness, the poverty of soundscape. Where, in Northern Ireland, silence stood in for all that could not be said, for censorship, trauma and death, here, in Manchester, silence seems to denote poverty of experience and environmental alienation. And yet there are echoes, also, between the regions and the adaptations. There is a theme which runs through many of them which speaks to the idea that modern life involves being starved of nature and joy in everyday experiences. From *Letter from a Far Country*, to *Silver's City* and *Ruth*, each of the protagonists in these adaptations yearn to escape into a rural

freedom, associating pleasure and release with the countryside, and confinement with their urban setting. There is, in the focus on suffering and the need for escape, a problematic action in this imagining of identity.

If Manchester is imagined as a need to escape Manchester, then what does this mean in terms of its regional identity? Benedict Anderson defined nationhood as being imagined, limited, sovereign and involving an idea of community. (55) But the fragile and impoverished Manchester imagined here is not a sovereign place. There is not a sense that those who live here can determine what happens within its bounds. Indeed, Priestley made just this point when he imagined the mill workers as being unable to return to their former rural happiness. Perhaps this absence of agency should not be surprising, for regional identity will not necessarily be the same as national identity, and it makes sense that the latter should be sovereign but not the former. However, in the imagined Manchester of *Ruth* are visible a whole range of interlinked identities which could be described as lacking agency or sovereignty. Female gendered experience and working-class identity are both defined – in part – by an absence of agency. These are identities that exist within a structure where they are defined in part by other facets of the structure which do have agency, in these examples, men and the middle and upper classes. In *Ruth*, Ruth's lack of power is clear when she is in proximity to Bellingham (and, later, Mr Benson and Mr Bradshaw), both in terms of her gender and her class. But Manchester's opposite and defining other – the south of England, London, it could take many names – is invisible in the adaptation itself. As the introduction showed, the North has, for centuries, been defined in relation to the South: in its imagined wildness; then as a land of industry; then as a land of the poor. In a sense, the invisibility of London – or the south of England – asserts a kind of sovereignty for Greater Manchester and the North within these works. There is an echo here of the decision, seen in the work on Wales, to compare Wales, not with England, but with other European countries. And, as will become apparent later in this section, Manchester is compared to other places in *Ruth*, just not the culturally-

and economically-dominant space of the English South. As Gunn observed in his work on Chinese regions, acts of regional imagining are often in revolt from the places with which they are most often compared; the places which have tried to imagine them; and the spaces and narratives which assert the idea that they are a region. (56) In these imaginings of Greater Manchester – its borders and boundaries as fluid as any in this thesis – Northern English authors reconstruct the map surrounding their space to exclude the south of England.

Ruth's interaction with bodies more powerful than her own is not limited to questions of gender and wealth. The novel contains within it a powerful commentary on the religious attitude to female sexuality, a theme which brings in E. P. Thompson's work on the importance of Methodist teaching to the formation of Northern, working-class identity. (76) Even the naming of the book itself, and its heroine, provides the reader with an intertextual commentary on Ruth's actions in the narrative. Here, Manchester finds itself imagined in comparison with another space: the lands described in the Old Testament. In the *Book of Ruth*, a religious text which Gaskell's readers may well have been more familiar with than the average cohort of twenty-first-century Radio 4 listeners, Ruth is a woman of Moab who marries an Israelite and accepts the God of Judaism before losing her husband to an illness which takes most of his family. She travels to Judah with her mother-in-law, where a famine has just ended, and goes to work in the fields to help bring in a crop. Her now-deceased father-in-law has an elderly and rich relative in Bethlehem and Ruth goes and offers herself to him in marriage as is the wish of her remaining relatives, thus demonstrating her obedience. Ruth's importance within the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible lies in her willingness to leave Moab and convert to Judaism; her kind nature and obedience; and her role in producing the man whose son will father David, the second king of Israel and Judea. The *Book of Ruth* shares some of the same preoccupations as Gaskell's text and its dramatic adaptation: the narrative destiny of both Ruths lies in what they are able to offer in bodily terms – in the form of

work, sexual availability and fertility. The Biblical Ruth's life is forged in part by growing to adulthood in a time of famine, suffering through poverty in her youth and serving in the fields in the first harvest to succeed since the famine. Thus, like Gaskell's Ruth, she is surrounded by poverty and shaped by its effects. And in calling her central character after a key Biblical figure, it is possible that Gaskell herself was in some way adapting the religious text for her own literary aims.

Religion figures often in the text, if not the soundscape, of the adaptation. Ruth's assiduous churchgoing is cited more than once as a sign of her virtue and, in a key scene, Ruth's sense of moral probity is brought up against her love of nature. When Bellingham takes Ruth on a walk in the woods, Ruth – marvelling at the beauty of the countryside she craves – wonders to herself if this experience can be anything but innocent: "This charming walk makes me feel happy, which mama used to say was a sign that pleasures were innocent and good for us". Here, and elsewhere in the adaptation, natural spaces feature as places of temptation: Ruth is seduced by Bellingham as they walk in the woods and later she will attempt suicide in the wild landscape of North Wales. This double figuring, nature both as idyll and as place of temptation, draws an obvious comparison between Gaskell's attitude to nature and the biblical presentation of the Garden of Eden. And there is a sense in which *Ruth* is a novel – and a drama – in conversation with the earlier text: a novel which both explicitly criticises the hypocrisy of Victorian Christian communities and adapts aspects of the *Old Testament* to reimagine Manchester in a semi-religious context. Gaskell's obedient Ruth, who – as with her namesake in the Bible – tries to do as she is told by her elders and betters, is often trapped by their demands. In the *Book of Ruth*, Ruth's willingness to convert, leave her home and marry who she is instructed to is her 'salvation'. In Gaskell's *Ruth*, her heroine's lack of agency – her inability to say no – is her undoing. Here, then, is Gaskell as adapter in her own right: adapting an ongoing crisis in public health; the experiences of a region mired in poverty; her society's problematic attitude to sex and women; and the religious text

with which much of Northern English culture was in conversation with at the time.

It will have become apparent that, in this adaptation, Manchester is consistently being compared to places which it is not (though the south of England is, notably, not referenced in the adaptation). There has been the contrast with the Biblical Middle East in the naming of the book and in the adaptation's conversations with aspects of the Christian text. There is even Ruth's imagined place of escape: the invisible and impossible – but much longed for – Manchester of her imagination. Towards the end of the first episode, Manchester will once again be defined by what it is not: here in the case of Ruth and Bellingham's fateful visit to North Wales. It has been noted in the paragraphs above, that Ruth's Manchester locations do not assert themselves in the construction of a city soundscape. Rather, Manchester is imagined as a state of being, a state of poverty, a state of powerlessness and ill health. Thus, it is a strange experience for the listener to find this imagining of the book's main location contrasted with an imagining of Wales which is rich in regional detail and varied soundscape. Having been persuaded by Bellingham to go to London with him, Ruth is then transported to an inn in North Wales where Bellingham has stayed before. Once there, Bellingham berates Ruth for her delight in the wet weather and the beauty she sees from the window: finding her delight in such to be "boring" to him. Out in the woods alone, Ruth is surrounded by birdsong, babbling brooks and rustling leaves and there she meets the disabled minister Mr Benson who waxes lyrical on the beauty of the country of Wales:

[...]my home is very different. I live in a busy town [...] I've been inoculated by an old innkeeper at Conwy with a love for its (Wales's) people, history and traditions. I've picked up enough of the language to understand many of their legends. For instance, I bet that you don't know what makes this foxglove bend and sway so gracefully. [...] The Welsh tell you that it's sacred to the faeries

and it recognises all spiritual beings that pass by and bows in deference to them. Its Welsh name is manyg ellyllod – the good people’s glove...

Here, in a single speech, is the same idea of Wales which Jeffrey Richards writes of in his account of the eighteenth-century creation of Celtic identity (62): a different language, a strong relationship with wild nature, and a love of superstition and romantic fancy. Here, also, is an example of the signifiers of one region being used to contrast and thus define the signifiers of another. The minister Mr Benson notes the spirituality of Wales, something which will come to stand in contrast with the religiosity of Greater Manchester. The noisy and abundant countryside in which Ruth and the minister wander is set in contrast with the silent, urban realm of her home and his. And the context of the scene has a meaning of its own: one which can only be appreciated as the episode continues. Ruth, pregnant with a child out of wedlock, and Mr Benson, hunch backed and infirm, find a solace in nature which speaks to something beyond their bodily woes. Bellingham, presented as both morally corrupted and corrupting, cannot see the beauty around him. Where the episode begins with male and female characters divided by their sexual and economic experiences of the world, it ends with scenes of male and female union. The broken and humble Mr Benson and the poor and pregnant Ruth, lose themselves in the wilds of North Wales: a sort of conjured version of Ruth’s imagined and impossible paradise, first mentioned at the beginning of the episode. Wild Wales is constructed as a kind of nirvana, symbolic of the good; and Manchester a place of poverty and infirmity: silent, denatured and filled with a religion which has lost touch with the spiritual beauty it might contain.

The fact that so many ideas of both Manchester and Mancunian bodies can interact in a single episode of radio drama illustrates the complexity of the Northern bodies in this chapter. Male and female experiences of Manchester diverge and come together, their narratives

interwoven, though rarely identical. The radio soundscape gives us an imagined Manchester world for the young Ruth in which there is nothing for her beyond her body and the things within her immediate reach. Hers is a body in a state of imprisonment, forced to work regardless of how ill she becomes, and unable to leave her workroom surroundings except in her imagination. Gaskell, and the adapter Ellen Dryden, give the listener a sound portrait of Mancunian experience imagined through the lens of working-class experience. And radio contributes to the claustrophobic rendering of this portrait, obliterating signs and sounds of a world outside Ruth's immediate experience. Where, in Northern Ireland, silence was emblematic of the unspoken trauma of conflict and an atmosphere of censorship and self-censorship, in Manchester silence becomes emblematic of poverty. Lacking visual cues, radio struggles to embody wealth; so, rather than concentrate on contrasting Ruth's working-class world with Bellingham's, the adaptation offers the listener another way to imagine poverty. In this reading, and using the natural world as a place of contrast, the human body becomes associated with labour, with poverty and with urban experience. Ruth's body is a placeholder for class and the adaptation offers the listener myriad ways to imagine Ruth's experience, mostly through showing us what Ruth and her body are not. Ruth's body is not male, thus it lacks sexual determinism. Ruth's body is a poor body, and thus it is ill, aching, tired, and frequently trapped. Ruth's body is not that of a character from the Bible, for her situation lacks the redemptive potential of those narratives. And Ruth's body does not belong to the transcendent world of nature (though Ruth wishes that it did), because it has been co-opted to a land of labour, economic hardship and lived inequality.

The construction of the body on radio draws in a complex array of auditory devices. It is not quite as simple or direct as imagining identity through focus on the voice as described in the chapter on Wales. The body is always hidden on radio, and it requires skill from the adapter, the director and the technicians to make the body audible. Sometimes, as in the moments when characters kiss, or the coughing of the old woman in

the scene where Ruth returns the young boy to his house, it is as simple as finding the ways in which the body can make noise. But the body never asserts itself accidentally, it never catches the attention simply by being there, as it might on film. In Gillian Clarke's *Letter From a Far Country*, the bodies of the women in the drama were rarely spoken or thought of. Instead, the adaptation focused on voice (inner and outer), memory and a complex relationship with nature and time. In adapting *Ruth*, Ellen Dryden cannot avoid the theme of bodies, so she foregrounds them in the ways that she is able. Often the subject of bodies is introduced through text, in dialogue, as in the introduction of the young Ruth or Bellingham's focus on her body at the ball. But the early scene depicting Ruth's working life shows how shrinking her surroundings and giving sound to the machine she works at, creates a focus for the listener on Ruth's physical presence in the world. Later scenes use textual cues to discuss the illness of Ruth's friend; auditory cues (such as coughing and wheezing) to symbolise and perform illness; and structural elements such as the story of the boy falling into freezing water and returning to a filthy home. These elements, in turn, gain further meaning when contrasted with the scenes in North Wales. In Wales, the soundscape of the natural world; Ruth's rejection of suicide; the philosophy of Mr Benson; and Ruth's pregnancy offer a complex meditation on the theme of life and survival. There is no direct or simple way of rendering the body on radio. However, there are dozens of small cues – textual, non-textual, structural and symbolic – which can, taken together, create drama around and draw attention to the subject of the body.

The Secret Garden, Mary Barton and Worktown

The Secret Garden

From the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Adapted by Judy Allen

Children's Radio 5 – Radio 5 – 1991

Mary Barton

From the novel by Elizabeth Gaskell

Adapted by Lavinia Murray

Woman's Hour Serial Drama (20 parts) – Radio 4 – 2001

Worktown

Play by Michael Symmons Roberts

Adapted from the Mass Observation photographs of Bolton taken by
Humphrey Spender in the 1930s

Afternoon Play – Radio 4 – 2008

Where, in *Ruth*, Manchester was imagined by all the places it was not, *The Secret Garden* is a text which takes the concerns and milieu of Greater Manchester and transports them to another region and another class. Frances Hodgson Burnett was born into an upper-middle-class family and, after a childhood in Greater Manchester, found herself transported by her family to America. She returned to the Manchester area regularly, and often stayed at the stately home Buile Hill Park in Salford. There she wrote *The Secret Garden*, basing the novel's Misslethwaite Manor and its garden on the Greater Manchester estate. *The Secret Garden* is a text which takes many of the issues around Mancunian experience but reimagines them in a Yorkshire demi-paradise. It is, in some ways, similar to *Ruth* in the way that it uses the rural to define what is lacking in the Mancunian way of life. But whereas, in *Ruth*, the rural appears only in brief passages to provide an act of contrast or a momentary escape, in *The Secret Garden*, Burnett takes the Manchester condition and allows it free run of the restorative world of nature.

Burnett, like Gaskell before her, leant heavily on her own experiences in imagining the world of the book, not least in using the Salford estate she wrote in, and in adapting her own experience of loss.

Burnett had lost her older son, Vivien, to tuberculosis when he was sixteen, and in her vision of a house destroyed by illness are echoes of her own experience of the health calamities which were unfolding in her childhood city. Mary Lennox's life is one transfigured by the terror of transmittable disease. Indeed, in the first episode of the serial we learn that Mary has been discovered in India walking the corridors of a house in which every other person – including her parents – has died of cholera. It is a nightmarish vision to introduce into any children's book; perhaps symptomatic of the fact that – as Burnett well knew – communicable disease was no respecter of the sanctity of childhood. Thus, like Ruth before her, Mary Lennox's experience of life is transformed from childhood by her proximity to illness. Of course, Mary Lennox's narrative also differs from Ruth's, and the main way in which this is true is in their relationship to class. Mary is rich – Burnett draws her as spoiled and overbearing – and thus hers will not be a working body. But she is still a child and a female child at that, and her experience of the world is mediated by both those facts. The contrast between Mary's relationship to the world and Ruth's is interesting: Mary's experience of life is that of a privileged body which finds itself in unfortunate circumstances. Burnett appears to be adapting the experience of being upper middle class in a world which is, nonetheless, blighted by ill health. Mary has greater autonomy than Ruth, but she is still forced to navigate a Northern experience which is defined in terms of the body. Her own world is shattered by the death of her parents and everyone she knows. When she is transferred to England, she is robbed of a playmate by Colin's imagined malady and trapped in a house which has been transformed by the death of its mistress. The fragility of the body continues to define the Northern experience, regardless of class, age or county.

As in *Ruth*, wealth is reimagined in *The Secret Garden* as an abundance of rural delights. If poverty is defined in these texts as the experience of the ill and fragile body, the rural continues to be presented as its opposite. Whereas many of Mary and Colin's freedoms (and potential

freedoms) come from their inherited wealth, richness is imagined in these texts, not as a state of economic plenty, but in the transcendent pleasures of the rural. There are many possible reasons for this transfer of meaning – so many that the question might be a thesis in its own right – but a few possible examples can usefully be advanced. As noted previously, E. P. Thompson points to a way in which Methodism shaped a Northern understanding of morality. In these terms, though work is a virtue, wealth itself is often seen as uncomfortably unchristian. As such, it may be morally and philosophically advantageous for writers to reimagine wealth as the more abstract and less problematic rural. This approach also offers the benefit, to a socially-progressive mindset – and both Gaskell and Burnett were engaged by political ideas regarding social reform – that the rural is a place of richness which can be enjoyed by working-class and middle-class bodies alike. It is a kind of common good: largely free of political associations; religiously unproblematic; and possessing a rich heritage of positive cultural figuring. The poor bodies of *The Secret Garden* – Ben Weatherstaff and Dickon – count themselves happy because they are allowed to delight in nature. In episode four, an early scene with the frail, angry and bedbound heir Colin is immediately contrasted by the sound of the optimistic Dickon. Mary finds Dickon in the garden with a crow on one hand and a squirrel in each pocket: an imagining of the happy, rural poor which seems to borrow heavily from fairy tale or woodland fantasy – transfiguring the body of Dickon into a kind of Yorkshire Puck. Later in the episode, Mary asks Colin to open the windows of his room. She tells him: “That’s the fresh air coming in. Lie on your back and draw long breaths of it. That’s what Dickon does. He says he feels it in his veins and it makes him strong and he feels as if he could live for ever and ever.” Here, Burnett is imagining the rural as a cure for all ills, a source of physiological redemption. The poor in *The Secret Garden* gain an almost magical health and vitality from their exposure to the grounds of the house. Finally, the shared redemptive powers of nature help to blur the gendered experience represented in the other texts in this chapter. All of the characters, poor

and rich, male and female, find solace and fulfilment in the rural. In this way, the rural becomes a magical and impossible space, an unseen heaven on earth – obliterating difference and lifting everyone away from the miseries of urban, industrial, divided Manchester.

This bucolic, rural imagining of Northern identity is unusual amongst the adaptations discussed here, but it has a lot to say about the way in which British culture navigates around issues of class. Burnett's rendering of working-class, Northern experience is based both in something real and something fantastical. For, while many of Manchester's public health crises were a product of an unhealthy built environment and industrial working, rural living could not, by itself, provide the many advantages of wealth. Nonetheless, *The Secret Garden* advances the same idea which was apparent in Priestley's writing on the mill workers: that the poor might be happy if they were only released from the industrial and the urban. In this imagining of English poverty, it is not economics which burdens the poor but Manchester itself; change Manchester to Yorkshire and the poor are saved their unhappiness. It is an imagining of poverty strengthened by the fact that the poor bodies in *The Secret Garden* are never seen as ill: in Burnett's world only the rich suffer. *The Secret Garden*, then, is a strange, counter-intuitive and highly-autobiographical reading of Manchester and the ill body – but one which illustrates in how many different ways the narrative of Northern bodies can be imagined. *The Secret Garden* was produced as part of a strand called Children's Radio 5 – and thus, in more ways than one, it belongs to the same tradition as the Reverend Bramwell Evans and his character of 'the Romany'. It is striking that in both examples offered by BBC Radio to the children of Britain, Northern bodies and poor bodies, are imagined into a rural idyll. It is, perhaps, an acknowledgment that the more usual reading of Northern bodies – that they are bodies in a state of trauma – may be too upsetting, even confusing, to young listeners. After all, understanding the context of why so many bodies might find themselves in a state of trauma does require some familiarity with British history. But it is hard to escape the

feeling that this is a fairy tale framing of poverty; a repudiation of economic and social history; and an attempt to imagine Northern identity without the framing of class consciousness. In addition to this, these acts of imagining draw a line between the lost rural idyll of Welsh hiraeth and the lost England of rural romanticism. Such echoes even make it across the sea to Northern Ireland, where Silver in *Silver's City* yearns to find love and redemption in the countryside, and Gault and Kate in *A Man Flourishing* leave the sound of music and politics behind them to find success in Belfast. In Manchester, constructions of the lost rural carry a strong repudiation of politicised identity, but they also belong to a wider trend within British acts of regional imagination.

The adaptation which follows casts light upon the issue of gendered and politicised bodies, but it also looks at the treatment of the city of Manchester as a body in its own right. It is based on one of the most influential social realist works of the mid-nineteenth century: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. The novel is an unapologetically-political work, which imagines the ramifications of hatred stirred up by economic inequality for a group of Manchester families. BBC Radio's 2008 adaptation of the work was made, in twenty parts, for the Woman's Hour Radio Drama strand. As such, it represents the longest of all the adaptations considered in this thesis: a drama which spans five hours of radio. One might expect that such a production would take the opportunity to dig into every layer that the novel had to offer. It is, thus, surprising that the *Mary Barton* that the BBC chose to air is a drama stripped of almost all its political reference points. The bodies of this *Mary Barton* are certainly gendered, but they lack both specifically-Mancunian and working-class reference points. In the first episode, the listener meets Mary and her future lover Jem on a country walk with assorted relatives and friends. Here again, is the rural as idyll and escape, and, indeed, Gaskell begins her novel with these same scenes. But shot through both the narrative and the dialogue in the printed text are discussions of Manchester society, Manchester habits and Manchester topography, as well as the differences

between Manchester and its surrounding areas. Despite this, and despite the fact that the novel itself is subtitled *A Tale of Manchester Life*, the first episode bears no mention at all of place – no city or country name, no naming of hills, streets or localities. The discussion of factories is excised and the industrial background, so key to the themes of urban living and inequality in the novel, is only hinted at in two passing mentions of the word ‘mill’. The political discussions of the early part of the novel give way in adaptation to discussions of religion; and the focus on John Barton and his place in society takes second place to Mary and her teenage flirtations with Jem. Where the Manchester of *Ruth* was oddly silent and barely visible, and the Manchester of *The Secret Garden* was transposed to a Yorkshire wilderness, here is Manchester once again stripped of its trappings and its names. If it were not for the other case studies in this thesis, it might be possible to imagine that this was general BBC Radio practice – a drive towards the universalisation of adapted texts. But Wales is allowed the names of its towns and villages, it is even sometimes allowed its own language; and Northern Ireland – though sometimes less vividly imagined than Wales – has its Belfast and its River Lagan. The question presents itself as to whether nations are allowed a particularity – a kind of personality and substance – that regions are not. Or whether Manchester, in standing in for the whole of the North, cannot be allowed its specific names and places. Whatever the reason, the body of Manchester is stripped bare of feature, and of industry, and of the working-class identity which attaches to those two.

As an example of the ways in which the BBC adapts, this *Mary Barton* is fascinating, because it highlights the fact that politicised texts can sometimes be treated as problematic texts. It also speaks to another aspect of gendered bodies: the question of the author’s gender. Back in the early 1850s, Gaskell had faced a fight with her publisher over the nature and naming of the novel, a novel which she wished to call *John Barton*. Gaskell’s publishers would only consider the novel if it was renamed *Mary Barton*, (89) thus emphasising its romantic arc over the tragic, socio-

political narrative of John Barton's rebellion against Manchester's business-owning class. The Gaskell specialist Shirley Foster asserts that Gaskell most likely used James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth's 1832 study *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* as well as Peter Gaskell's *The Manufacturing Population of England* from 1833 in her preparation for writing the novel. (89) And it is clear that Elizabeth Gaskell meant to site her novel in the context of an unfolding British awareness of the particular challenges to the communities in and around Manchester. To be clear, this is a work suffused with class consciousness: a work in which Northern bodies are also working-class bodies. And yet, the specificity of Gaskell's intent, the relationship she draws between her novel and works of sociology, history and politics, are drained from the work as it makes its journey to radio adaptation. Ironically, of all the works adapted here, it is probably *Mary Barton* which has the most to say, explicitly and textually, about regional identity. And yet that specificity is removed from the adaptation. What remains are a great number of domestic love scenes and fireside conversations, but a marked absence of political discussion, scenes of work and acts of urban and suburban imagination. The gendered body is left intact but the working-class body is quieted and the Northern body almost silenced. In doing this, the BBC, like Gaskell's publishers before, lends authority and approval to the idea of a woman writing about female experience, while de-emphasising the political and philosophical content of the work. This act of adaptation is a helpful reminder that despite the variety of narratives contained within Gaskell's Northern bodies, every aspect may not be treated equally. And that, in adaptation, the Northern body can be remade in a different image.

Despite the depoliticization of the content, the treatment of male bodies in *Mary Barton* remains of interest. Indeed, male bodies were Elizabeth Gaskell's first concern when she imagined the novel. The narrative contains a complex and tense interplay of power and rebellion between two fathers, mill worker John Barton and mill owner John Carson,

and two young men, Jem Wilson and Harry Carson. The mirroring of the two father's names is, of course, no accident. Gaskell is fascinated by the way in which structural matters of class and economics divide a community. By the end of the drama, John Barton will be begging forgiveness of John Carson for having murdered his son, before dying in Carson's arms. Even without Gaskell's writing about Manchester, its mills and its unions, it is still clear that the men's lives are tightly constrained by matters of class and social standing. And when the men in the drama do try to break out of their restraints, the punishment is considerable. John Barton's rage at his own – and his daughter's – lack of agency nearly destroys them both, and takes the life of Harry Carson. Both Jem Wilson and John Barton live, for part of the novel, under threat of execution. Three of the main male characters in the drama spend a great deal of their time on radio trying to escape from their lives: Harry Carson through romancing Mary; John Barton through increasingly extreme acts of rebellion; and Jem Wilson, first through courting Mary, and then later in his escape to a new life in Canada. As has been seen elsewhere, one of the main reactions to living in these imagined Manchesters seems to be a desire to escape them. Economic power and sexual desire interact in these male narratives, just as they did in the female ones; but the dynamics are somewhat different. Jem Wilson and Harry Carson both desire Mary, and they are both aware that their ability to win her hand in marriage is – to an extent – attached to their ability to provide both for her and her father. Thus, bodily happiness is tied – uncomfortably – to economic ease. Two of the four main male characters will die during the course of *Mary Barton*; another two will live under threat of execution; and both fathers will see their lives nearly destroyed by grief following the loss of a loved one. The male experience of Manchester may lack the sexual abuses suffered by

Ruth and by Aunt Esther¹¹, but it is still an experience profoundly shaped by vulnerable bodies, ill bodies and poor bodies.

The adaptation of *Mary Barton* contains one other striking aspect which helps to shed light on the imagining of Manchester. As has been seen, every adaptation up to this point has imagined Manchester by giving the listener a place which Manchester is not: the rural, the Biblical Middle East and Wales in *Ruth*, the rural and Yorkshire in *The Secret Garden*. Here, once again, in *Mary Barton* the listener encounters another space drawn in vivid detail, in exactly the way that Manchester is not: and that place is Liverpool. In the latter episodes of the serial, Mary journeys to Liverpool to find the witness who can potentially save Jem's life at trial. Not only is Liverpool named more than once, but the actors use heavily-enunciated Liverpool accents and at one point the boy leading Mary stops and describes the Liverpool Exchange to her in considerable detail: "Look... with its statues... anatomy hiding under a blanket. Er, Lord Admiral Nelson and a few others standing in the middle of the court." Later, the ships at anchor are described and the scene of Liverpool docks brought into the dialogue. Thus, for reasons that are not immediately clear, Liverpool wins the right to be made specific, to have its buildings and topography painted in the listener's mind. Meanwhile Manchester – whose features are so carefully considered in the early part of the novel – has its particularity erased. The function of this would seem to be different than in the preceding adaptations. In *Ruth*, the rural, the Biblical Middle East and Wales were all elevated as places of transcendence and beauty. Manchester was framed as a kind of labour-intensive hell – rarely described but heavily contrasted with these happier and more spiritual spaces. In *The Secret Garden*, Salford was obliterated in favour of the Yorkshire moors and the urban was erased in favour of the redemptive rural. But Liverpool is another urban space, an

¹¹ Aunt Esther is the sister of Mary Barton's mother. In a prefiguring of the work Gaskell will do in *Ruth*, Esther is seen running off to have a relationship out of wedlock, before being left an unmarried, single mother. Esther then becomes a prostitute and suffers great hardship and physical suffering in an attempt to feed her child.

industrial and working-class space – one which might bear comparison with Manchester but makes an odd site of contrast. The answer, then, may lie in the nature of Gaskell’s writing as she describes Manchester. The 2008 adaptation starts with instrumental music, but it does not use the ‘Manchester Song’ which starts the chapter it is adapting:

Oh! 'tis hard, 'tis hard to be working
The whole of the live-long day,
When all the neighbours about one
Are off to their jaunts and play. (30)

Nor does the dramatic text which follows adapt – either in dialogue or soundscape – any of Gaskell’s observation on the life and bodies of Manchester. For instance, describing John Barton to the reader:

One was a thorough specimen of a Manchester man; born of factory workers, and himself bred up in youth, and living in manhood, among the mills. He was below the middle size and slightly made; there was almost a stunted look about him; and his wan, colourless face gave you the idea, that in his childhood he had suffered from the scanty living consequent upon bad times and improvident habits. (30)

Or describing Carson’s mill:

Carsons' mill ran lengthways from east to west. Along it went one of the oldest thoroughfares in Manchester. Indeed, all that part of the town was comparatively old; it was there that the first cotton mills were built, and the crowded alleys and back streets of the neighbourhood made a fire there particularly to be dreaded. (30)

Gaskell's writing of Manchester is pointedly conscious of class and the politics of the city and its region. Manchester as a body has been given a powerful, working-class identity throughout the work. But this identity is invisible in adaptation, leaving the listener with the odd juxtaposition of a Liverpool which is vivid and rich in detail and a Manchester left undescribed. It cannot be stated with any surety that this a political act, but there would seem to be some kind of political erasure in the treatment of the text as a whole. This, then, demonstrates one further aspect of the region in adaptation: Manchester is a body which can be erased.

So far in this section, Manchester bodies have been transported and reimagined in *The Secret Garden* to adapt the plight of the unwell in a very different landscape of class. And Manchester bodies have been stripped of their class and Mancunian particularity in *Mary Barton*. The final adaptation – the first to concern itself mainly with male artists and characters – sees Northern bodies from a distance: in a rendering of Northerness which is, at once, communal but depersonalised. Symmons Roberts's *Worktown* is an adaptation of Humphrey Spender's photographs of 1930s Bolton, and it takes its name from the codeword used for Bolton by those who ran the Mass Observation project. The drama adapts one of the narratives of Northerness identified in the work of Stuart Rawnsley: that of the anthropological investigation of the 'Deep North'. In the interwar period, there was a boom in pseudo-anthropological investigations of the north of England, inspired, partly, by the decline in industrial output of the 1920s and 1930s. Rawnsley quotes one of the founders of Mass Observation, Tom Harrison, who had previously studied cannibals in the New Hebrides:

Living among cannibals [...] taught me many points in common between these wild looking, fuzzy haired, black smelly people and our own, so when I can home from that expedition I determined to apply the same methods here in Britain. (77)

There is, observable here, a fairly brutal othering of one English region by another. Harrison, like Priestley before him, aligns himself with the England of the South in regarding the English of the North as specimens to be described, documented and wondered at. And, while the orchestrators of the Mass Observation movement came from varied political backgrounds, they share a view of the working-class North as a place which was strongly alien. Humphrey Spender himself said:

I always come back to the factor I was constantly being faced with – the class distinction, the fact that I was somebody from another planet, intruding on another kind of life. (90)

Priestley, Harrison and Spender all associate themselves with an identity – and an England – which is not the same England as the one they are chronicling; a deeply odd and fractured sense of national identity which seems to hinge on class difference before all else. Thus, the bodies which appear in Spender's photographs will have been framed for many who participated in the study as alien bodies, even if this is not how the pictures were universally viewed.

The poet Symmons Roberts, who was born and raised in Lancashire himself, adapts Spender's large series of photographs for the radio and, in doing so, he also adapts some of the alienation and distance apparent in the photographs themselves. The drama starts at a funeral, with the sound of a hymn sung in the distance, as a long crowd of Bolton mourners filter through the streets, observed (in a nod to Humphry Spender) by a photographer. A narrator figure introduces the listener to the ritual being observed: "A town needs to know how to bury its dead. No fuss. Just a long slow procession on a Wednesday lunchtime in a hot July." A father leads his son through the funeral procession in a hood, making jokes to those around him but refusing the boy's entreaties to be uncovered. From there, the boy is bundled into a car and taken off, his destination unknown to him, counting to himself to calm his fears. The hooded boy is led through a

pub, bustling with conversation, and then into a cock-fighting arena round the back. Handed the severed feet of the losing cock, the boy runs from the scene of the fight, throwing the feet into the road and causing a truck to crash. The boy has no name and his experience, though joked about by his father, is not humorous except in the very darkest of senses. Rather, he seems to be confused, by the rituals and society around him, and by what is expected of him. Interestingly, it is hard to discern whether we are meant to empathise with the boy's confused and alienated experience or watch it from a distance. Symmons Roberts – possibly adapting the methods of the Mass Observation experiment – does not invite us too closely into this boy's world. We are not allowed his name, or to hear much of what he says. We do not know where he has come from before he breaks through the funeral procession, nor where he goes to after he throws away the feet of the fighting cock. The play – like Spender's photographs – is very much a drama without a protagonist. We are invited to observe but are kept at arms' length. From an intellectual point of view, this is a fascinating exercise: a commentary on the nature of photography, which tends to keep the viewer at arm's length from the subject, and of the Mass Observation movement itself. But as an act of drama and an act of regional imagination it sits awkwardly with more conventional works.

In *Mary Barton* and *Ruth*, the middle-class Elizabeth Gaskell was engaging in an exercise in working-class observation. But in introducing her reader to John, Mary, Jem and Ruth, and then asking them to spend a number of hours in their company, she was also appealing to the reader's ability to empathise. These fictions and these dramas are twin exercises in observation and empathy. Symmons Roberts in *Worktown* gives the reader something much more complicated and ambiguous: a play shot through with ideas of community and collectivism, but one which imagines Greater Manchester experience in a strangely alienated and lonely way. It is a play into which many ideas and narratives flow, as Symmons Roberts's Bolton seems to adapt, not just the photography of Humphrey Spender, but a narrative of Northerness that highlights the communal. From the funeral,

to the pub, the cock fight, the abattoir and the crowded market, Symmons Roberts locates his Bolton identity in crowds. In this, he differs markedly from the imaginings of Elizabeth Gaskell and Frances Hodgson Burnett, cleaving instead to a version of Northern identity which is closer to the work of E.P. Thompson. In *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson identifies collectivism as a key value which emerged from the disruptive and turbulent years of the industrial revolution. (76) Thompson also identifies a series of social rituals, which defined the leisure time of the English working class, including fairs, festivals, feast days, pugilism and animal baiting. (76) Symmons Roberts takes this collective, collaborative, communal imagining of Northern identity and makes it the focus and the milieu of his play. Where many of Spender's photographs include single figures, or scenes of life which are unpeopled, Symmons Roberts gives us a Bolton built from community and social interaction. So, this is a communal Bolton, but not an especially kind one. From the hooded boy, to the cock fight, to the market stall holders at the sight of the crash, and the final confrontation in the abattoir, there are very few moments of love to be found here and a great deal of anxiety and violence. As scenes of a funeral seep into scenes of a car accident; and a young abattoir worker, busy learning how to cut apart the legs of a cow, is set upon by a violent criminal and his angry dogs: the bodies of these characters refuse to hold together. The people of Manchester find themselves torn apart from within by sickness and without by accident and violence.

Worktown illustrates that the construction of working-class, Northern experience lies in the vulnerability of bodies. In doing this, it seems to concur with at least two of the other adaptations examined in this chapter. But, as with all the adaptations considered here, there are many variables present in its examination of the Northern body. For instance, as the only one of the adaptations to involve male artists, there does seem to be a different and a gendered experience of Northernness on view. *The Secret Garden*, *Ruth* and *Mary Barton* all presented experiences of Northernness in which the female participants were cut off from a large

range of collective experiences. To put it another way, the female bodies of Northern imagining are generally alone. There are no unions or friendly societies in these women's experiences of Manchester. A female Manchester is not a Manchester of cock fights or taverns or political meetings. And yet – counter intuitively – the Manchester presented by Gaskell and Burnett seems somehow less alienated and lonely than the crowded scenes of Symmons Roberts's Bolton. Perhaps it is because the women of the female adaptations understand their loneliness as part of their gendered experience, whereas the boys and men of Symmons Roberts's Bolton find themselves alone in a crowd. The men of Greater Manchester should not be lonely, and yet this is exactly what they seem to be. Their fragility and vulnerability is rendered in a different way from the female experiences of the nineteenth-century adaptations. *Worktown* is a play aching with contradictions: offering soundscapes which seem to suggest intimacy and then drawing narratives of experience in which every character seems alienated. It is a play which carries something of Mass Observation's anthropological attitude to the North; yet also adapts E. P. Thompson's collective and communal reading of working-class experience. It is a play in which very little is allowed to make sense: the listener never discovers who is being buried; why the father took his son to the cock fight; or the back story of why the young man in the abattoir is threatened. As such, it adapts the partial effect of Spender's Mass Observation photographs but it also offers a heavily-fractured and philosophically-confusing reading of the North.

There are threads which seem to emerge from this survey of acts of Manchester imagining. The first is the complexity of the narratives of Northern identity which interact in every adaptation; and the way in which any writer, adapter or programme maker may focus on two or three narratives while excluding others. The second point, leading on from the first, is that the BBC – like the cultural community it adapts – is a collective body which holds within it diverse views and experiences. There is not one single way in which Greater Manchester can be imagined or adapted and

there are myriad narrative threads that any maker can draw upon in forming their act of imagination. Having said all that, there are points of similarity and themes which seem to occur again and again. The first is the way in which bodies – ill bodies, abused bodies, threatened bodies – dominate the narratives of the region. And the second – and related point – is that the narratives of the region are heavily filtered through the experience and narratives of working-class life and consciousness. These are not narratives of power, they are narratives of vulnerability, some of which seem to be imagined from the inside out and some from the outside in. The third point, is that these narratives are profoundly affected by gendered perspectives and that – in the politicised milieu of Northern imagining – the gender of the narrative often speaks as loudly as class.

Conclusion

The centrality and complexity of Northern bodies to these Greater Manchester radio adaptations is undeniable. Where Welsh identity was imagined through the voice; and narratives of Northern Irish identity formed around a skeleton of censorship, silence and trauma; Greater Manchester is a region being interpreted through a class-conscious lens, one which frequently focuses identity around the human body and its suffering. The conclusion will consider four aspects of these acts of imagination. The first concerns the body of Greater Manchester itself, and the way in which its definition is destabilised by multiple problematic borders. The second concerns the ways in which trauma, and the traumatised body, has asserted itself as a defining feature of regional identity. The third concerns constructions of a happy, poor body, immersed in the rural. And the fourth involves the technical aspects and meaning of imagining a region through the body, when that act of imagination is being expressed on a non-visual medium.

Moving on from the geographically- and linguistically-blurred borders of Wales, and the brutally-contested geographic and sectarian borders of Northern Ireland, this chapter has uncovered and explored further blurred boundaries. Greater Manchester itself is an problematic space; an unstable body. The borders between regional and class identity constantly leak meaning; Manchester and the other regions of the North merge into one another; experiences of the gendered body intersect messily with experiences of poverty, class and region; and space itself becomes translated into other forms and dimensions within the medium of radio. Without a doubt, the narratives of Greater Manchester commissioned for adaptation are predominantly working-class narratives, meaning that when BBC Radio imagines Manchester it is imagining a region whose identity overlaps with that of a social and economic class. At times, in BBC Radio drama, 'being from Manchester' is standing in – as an identifying feature – for being from a working-class background; and the weight of this confusing equivalence means that distinct Mancunian identity can seem to disappear. This effect is only heightened by the fact that, in many of the adaptations, Mancunian particularity is erased in favour of a Northern English but otherwise indistinct geographic identity. As the history of the BBC in Manchester attests, Manchester has often been required to stand in for the whole of the north of England and, inevitably, this expectation eats away at the distinctiveness of Manchester's imagined identity. The third blurred boundary comes in the form of gendered bodies, and the way in which gendered experience intersects with class and regional experience. In *Ruth*, the central character's vulnerability lies in her gender but also in her poverty and her class identity; and her class identity intersects with her regional identity. From the sexually-vulnerable women of Gaskell's work, to the threatened and scared bodies of Symmons Roberts's *Worktown*, the use of the human body as a site of meaning draws the listener's attention to issues of gender and gender difference. But the gender of these characters' bodies is never presented as an issue in isolation. In Greater Manchester, gender is always

a construct which is seen in conversation with class. The fourth problematic border is one which is central to the question of how radio adapts space: and that is the blurring of boundaries between geographic space and physiological space. This chapter has demonstrated the way in which Manchester narratives of poverty – with their emphasis on physical suffering, illness and sexual abuse – see the human body become the site of a Manchester identity. In Manchester, the city and its neighbouring towns are fractured and redrawn to fit inside the human experiences which radio can communicate.

The second theme which emerges from these imaginings of place is how often trauma, and the response to trauma, drives, not only the narrative but the understanding of Manchester as a place. The narratives of these dramas are filled with bodies in a state of trauma or reacting to the aftermath of threat or violation. Ruth, Mary Barton, Mary Lennox (even the boy taken to the cock fight in *Worktown*) all spend a significant amount of their narrative arc attempting to process, move beyond or live through some kind of trauma. In addition to this, there are similarities – in places – between the treatment of Manchester and the treatment of Belfast, that suggest that in adaptation silence around the features of a place is symbolic of the trauma which attaches to that place. Much of the cultural and topographical detail of Belfast was erased in the three Northern Irish dramas which were set there. And, in similar fashion, Manchester seems almost to be missing from *Ruth* and *Mary Barton*. Certainly, Gaskell spends a great deal of time in both novels describing the city, its society and surroundings, so the absence seems not to come from a lack of adaptable material. Rather, taking Manchester and Belfast together, a question arises: are cities on radio erased because they are urban or because they are sites of trauma? In trying to unpick those two ideas, a further blurred border presents itself and that is the border between the city and the history of the city. In this chapter, Manchester is both a city and a major site of the industrial revolution; a meeting place for many decades of civil unrest and the Peterloo massacre; and the home to a series of disastrous

breakdowns in public health. The erasure of Manchester – or the failure of radio to imagine the city of Manchester in detail – may speak to the idea that radio has a problem with the urban, but it may also speak to the way in which the city has, in the past two centuries, become defined by a catalogue of traumatic events. This act of urban amnesia shifts the focus of bodies from the characters of adaptation to the adapting body itself. In this reading, BBC Radio becomes the body in trauma – unable to process horrific memories, so choosing to expunge them instead.

Just visible, moving in and out of sight across adaptations, is the idea of the happy poor, the poor body resplendent in a rural idyll. As the introduction posited, this model of poverty was one which had proved popular with the creators of BBC Radio – and their national audience – in the form of ‘The Romany’. ‘The Romany’ – an adapted figure himself – had offered the audience of *Northern Children’s Hour* a model of contented subsistence, a romantic vision of a simpler way of life, lived on country roads. This idea re-asserts itself in the vision of Burnett in *The Secret Garden*, where the servant classes find joy and purpose in a life lived in, and tending to, nature. There is even an echo of this thinking in the writing of Ruth and Mr Benson walking in wild North Wales. Ruth, throughout the novel and its adaptation, takes enormous pleasure both in imagining and experiencing the rural; and for the minister, Mr Benson, it is a space of spiritual pleasure and comfort. In the opening episode of *Mary Barton*, Mary and her family walk up on the hills above the towns they live in, Mary and Jem teasing each other and flirting as they go. The happiness of these moments provides a contrast to the unhappiness, violence and angst which will follow. Thus the rural is a space which helps to define the unhappiness of its opposite, the urban and the industrial. The rural also offers a kind of hiraeth around the idea of the Manchester body: industrial bodies looking backwards towards a rural existence which may symbolise the life of the working class a hundred years before, or even a journey back into prelapsarian bliss. Yet, the rural is – like so many spaces in this thesis – an unstable world. Like the fluid concept of the North, the rural never sits

within defined borders, but seems to exist more as a moment or a memory or a work of the imagination. Rural moments in the adaptations are always symbolic of a kind of bliss, relief from and contrast to everything that has gone before and will come afterwards. Thus, radio can be seen to make a fresh act of translation: adapting the idea of the rural into an emotional and psychological space: to which the traumatised bodies of the North long to escape.

Finally, the fourth aspect of Northern bodies on BBC Radio is the relationship between the medium of radio and the human body. Radio cannot do space – it cannot picture it, it cannot give its listeners dimensions and scope – but it does understand how to represent human experience. Although the eradication of politics in the adaptation of *Mary Barton* destabilises and rewrites the text in odd ways, it does play to the strengths of the medium. In this version, *Mary Barton* becomes an intimate drama of romance, friendship and confrontation. Dominated by duologues, it is engaged with representing human interaction, something which radio excels at reproducing. The adaptation of *Ruth* stresses the isolation Ruth feels, but also brings the listener tight inside her constrained world, listening to her breathing, hearing her sewing machine whirr beneath her hands. Ruth's fraught psychology and the vulnerability of her ill body, each of these attains a vivid portrayal on radio which obliterates the demands of place and relocates regional identity inside subjective experience. In *Worktown*, there is the tension between the body in its individual state and the body en masse. Bolton is imagined as a space composed of social interaction and social spectacle, yet, when the listener enters the crowd, it gives the impression of being formed of alienated and haunted individuals. In *The Secret Garden*, Burnett offers a different perspective on Northern bodies; the poor enjoying strong, healthy, rural bodies and the rich – weighed down by aspects of grief to which the poor seem immune – broken, crippled and neurotic. *The Secret Garden* brings together constructions of the traumatised Northern body with the romantic Northern body, offering an idiosyncratic imagining of the relative

physiological experiences of class. Greater Manchester's unstable body – broken and confused by the many fluid boundaries and fault lines described above – shatters into a thousand pieces on radio: each of them human. Traumatized Manchester, poor Manchester, ill Manchester, violent Manchester – these descriptors belong to the human world, not to the world of landscapes or buildings. This is a region imagined and constructed out of human, bodily experience.

The imagining of a regional identity on radio constructed around the idea of bodies may still seem – on a medium-focused level – both strange and counter-intuitive. But this complex act of construction is, in part, enabled by the many locations in which meaning can be found in listening to a work of audio adaptation. Representations of Wales were shown to take a more obvious path towards the construction of identity, using the aspect of human physiology – the voice – which radio showcases most effectively. But the complex layering of possible meanings contained within the act of listening allows for less obvious, more obtuse and metaphorical constructions of meaning, narrative and identity to be formed. To do justice to this complexity it helps to draw on both Casetti's entreaty to consider the text in relationship to social discourses, (50) and Barthes's work on the many locations of meaning within any given text. (48) Each adaptation builds its narrative of experience and place out of a complex layering of texts, signs and meanings. In the background to each of these adaptations lies a history of narratives of Northerness, both historic and cultural, as well as the particular histories of the towns and cities of Greater Manchester. Every listener will have a different relationship to this background, based on their knowledge of these texts and discourses, and their own geographic location and identity. Moving on from these background narratives and discourses, there is the adapted text (or work of visual art) which is itself in conversation with aspects of these discourses and with other texts and works of art. Again, each listener will have a unique relationship to the adapted text based on their level of knowledge and the subjective nature of memory, as well as a unique

understanding of the way in which this text relates to and adapts other texts and discourses. The next layer of possible meaning can be observed in the act of audio adaptation itself. Listeners aware of the adapted texts (or art) may bring their own range of emotional and intellectual responses to the ways in which the audio drama cleaves to or deviates from the source material. On top of all these rich and intricate layers of meaning (and potential responses to the same), there are the component parts of audio drama: the text; the structure of the narrative; the soundscape; the performances; the editing; and the uses and patterning of silence and sound. Each one of these component parts offers myriad ways of delivering meaning, and each part is interacting with all the other parts within the audio drama itself. Furthermore, each component part may also be interacting with all the layers of discourse, narrative and text which lie beneath the surface of the work, and with other texts and discourses that the listener brings with them to the act of interpreting the audio. Given all of this, the act of listening to audio drama can be seen to be as multiple an act as the act of reading which Barthes described in *The Death of the Author*. (48)

The centrality of bodies in these works is certain, but the precise narrative of Mancunian identity taken from these works will depend heavily on the listener. The construction of regional identity through the use of bodies may be confined to the listener's understanding of the immediate elements of audio narrative: sounds of illness; textual referencing of bodies; narratives based on bodies; and empty city soundscapes which focus attention on the body. But the listener's response may also draw on an understanding of working-class consciousness; narratives of Northern experience; knowledge of public health crises or the industrial revolution; a response to echoes of Gothic narratives of the body; or an understanding of the gendered experience of male or female bodies. There can be no definitive understanding of the meaning which accrues from all these elements; only a consideration of the particular blend of elements on offer and the trends which present

themselves. In Greater Manchester, identity gathers around an aspect of physiognomy which the radio struggles to represent. But, just as the inherent challenges of analysing radio should not be seen as a reason to neglect the medium, so too the inherent difficulties of understanding how the body is figured on radio are not reason enough to neglect this complex act of figuring.

Conclusion

Overview

This thesis set out to examine the following question:

How has BBC Radio – through its commissioning and production of radio adaptations – chosen to interpret the Royal Charter commitment to “[represent] the UK, its nations, regions and communities”? (1)

In doing so, it focused on BBC Radio adaptations of work from three regions of the United Kingdom, two of which are also nations: Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester. The thesis was designed to focus on two areas which had (to different extents) been overlooked in the fields of broadcast history, adaptation theory and narratives of national and regional construction. The first area which the thesis chose to focus on was region, a definition and idea which had received less attention than nation as a focus for academic narratives of history, culture and belonging. The idea of the region is extremely hard to define and yet it is a sufficiently well-recognised idea to win a place in the quoted commitment from the BBC’s Royal Charter. This thesis chose to be led by the BBC itself in how it viewed the British regions, though the BBC’s own definition has changed often over the years. Every one of the regions chosen was the original site of a mast and a production or relay centre in the earliest conception of the structure of the BBC. In addition, each of the three regions had roughly comparable populations. The second area which the thesis chose to focus on was radio, a medium which – despite being consumed on a weekly basis by the majority of British adults – is rarely analysed. (8) Compared to the study of written texts, television and cinema, radio is very little chronicled and rarely examined in detail. Thus, this thesis analyses a range of radio

adaptations, reading them in the context of the history of the BBC in these regions to offer a study of BBC constructions of British regional identities.

The introduction also detailed the BBC's relationship to archiving and cataloguing its own work. Much of the radio drama archive, particularly that recorded before the 1980s, has been lost. It is also extremely hard to know what has survived since the archive is largely inaccessible to the general public. The principal catalogue which does exist, the BBC's Genome Project, is a useful resource but lacks the necessary tagging which would allow it to be searchable by types of programmes, for example, drama or adaptation. Thus, both to facilitate the project and in an endeavour to open up the possibilities and content of the archive to other researchers, a catalogue of adaptations was created alongside this thesis covering the years 1985 to 2009. As well as listing everything adapted and aired by national BBC Radio channels in the period, the catalogue provided details about the source material, including the medium from which the adaptation had been made and the original language in which the source material appeared. A variety of statistics from the creation of the catalogue were included in the thesis, to give a general overview of representation over the period.

The thesis chose to work with theorists from three key subjects areas: BBC history; theories of adaptation and the text; and national and regional identities. The reading of BBC history highlighted disagreement between the narratives of Briggs and Hajkowski on the extent to which the BBC had prioritised or disregarded the British regions. (4, 6, 17) It also demonstrated that, despite the fact that the institutional evolution of BBC Radio had been chronicled and analysed in some depth, historical works focused on BBC Radio paid very little attention to the programmes broadcast and never analysed the audio itself. In the area of theories of adaptation and the text, the virtual absence of radio from work on adaptation theory was discussed. As with the BBC histories, where radio was analysed it was more usual for the theorist to work from scripts than to discuss the audio. There were notable outliers in the area – championing

the importance of audio within the field – but the numbers of people working on this area were still very small. From the area of theories of adaptation and the text, the thesis chose principally to engage with two theorists. The first of these was Barthes and the thesis explored the powerful, untapped resonances of Barthes’s theory in the study of radio. (48, 51-52) The thesis also looked at Casetti’s work on the relationship between adaptive texts and their historical and social context. (50) The thesis harnesses the power of Casetti’s theory to a new study: radio. Lastly, the thesis explored work done on the construction of national identities and theories around narratives of region. The thesis followed some of the thinking implicit in Anderson’s approach to the construction of national identity, (55) but applied this view of construction to the idea of the regions and to audio, rather than text-based culture. As with the two preceding fields, work on cultural constructions of national or regional identity rarely touched on radio as a medium, and never analysed the audio. Work by Colley was used to contrast a construction of Britishness with the distinct regional narratives which were to follow. (60)

Having presented the reasons for making the catalogue and surveyed the fields of theory, the thesis then turned to look at each of the three regions in detail. In the chapter on Wales, the thesis explored the history of the BBC in Wales and the way in which the regional station had nurtured a community of Welsh artists and musicians, helping to shape part of the cultural community in Wales. The history also revealed that from the earliest decades the regional station had struggled with the importance of the Welsh language and its position in providing programming which was both uniquely Welsh and pleased the Welsh intelligentsia, who were – themselves – involved in developing material for the station. This aspect of curating regional identity existed in tension with the need to provide programming to English speakers and the existence of a Welsh independence movement which pulled against the BBC’s unifying vision of Britishness. From inside a regional station, navigating the pull of these different forces, came a series of adaptations which reflected the

hybrid identity of Wales. The adaptations were notably concerned with problematic borders and thinking about what flowed over and through them. *Letter From a Far Country* dealt with the unreliable boundaries of time, language and memory. *A Kind of Hallowe'en* dramatized the breaking of borders between fantasy and reality, and between Dylan Thomas the poet, Gerry Jones, the playwright, and the protagonist of the piece called only The Man. *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* looked at a group of men negotiating Welsh identity in the Ukraine, unsure of their loyalty to the idea of Britain as war was announced. *The Shadow of the Sickle* (the only adaptation to be taken from Welsh-language literature) showed the journey of a man whose life is thrown into turmoil by hopelessly divided loyalties: to his family; to the women he loves; and to the political cause he tries to follow. The construction of Wales which emerged from the study of the adaptations suggested that there was a version of Welshness which the commissioners favoured: and that this was historical, rural, working-class, Welsh-speaking and male. It also demonstrated that the nexus of Welsh identity was generally adapted as being in the realm of the voice. Thus, Welsh accents; the Welsh voice in song; the Welsh language sung or spoken; and the memory of Welsh created crucial Welsh moments within the dramas and, in so doing, constructed a version of Welsh identity for the radio.

In the chapter on Northern Ireland, the thesis explored the way in which the BBC in the region had initially avoided all attempts to discuss sectarian tensions in broadcasts, and had been seen as a cultural arm of the unionist political majority. The advent of the Troubles and the BBC's role in filming and publicising the events of Bloody Sunday had changed the relationship between the BBC in Northern Ireland, the British Government and the Ulster establishment. The BBC's attempts to report ongoing violence in the province were met by political anger from both within and without Northern Ireland, coming to a head in the 1980s when the British Government banned the broadcast of voices of members of sectarian organisations. During the period of the broadcasting ban, BBC Radio adapted no work which dealt with the Troubles or the history of the

conflict. However, the period after the ban was lifted was notable for a number of boldly-political dramatic adaptations. A theme of censorship, self-censorship and trauma ran through all four adaptations. *A Man Flourishing* was produced before the broadcasting ban, but the political writing of the novel was entirely excised for radio, and Belfast was constructed as a silent city, devoid of background noise, music or debate. *Silver's City* was produced directly after the ban was lifted and adapted a novel about a unionist terrorist broken out of prison but failing to adapt to modern Belfast. Once again, Belfast was imagined as a city emptied out and silenced, a place of echoing rooms, road noise and muzak. As in *A Man Flourishing*, the noises of the countryside were used to symbolise the world of nature flourishing outside the sterile world of the Northern Irish city. In *An Enemy of the People*, the Ibsen play is rewritten to be set in a Catholic community, fractured after the long years of conflict. What seems initially to be a warm and communal audio world is slowly stripped out and silenced as the adaptation progresses, as shows of loyalty and kindness are revealed to be based on lies. Finally, in *Bloody Sunday: Scenes From the Saville Inquiry* the British army is held to account in a verbatim play based on inquiry transcripts. Even at this key moment of being called to account, members of the British Army can be heard to obfuscate and feign ignorance, frequently falling into silence. The Northern Irish chapter detailed the different ways in which silence – symbolic of both censorship and trauma – had given the adaptations an unlikely aural construction of identity. The chapter detailed a large number of silences running through the four adaptations, each of them fraught with meaning.

In the final case study, the thesis looked at the way in which constructions of Mancunian identity had long intersected with constructions of the North. The chapter looked at a variety of cultural, historical and social discourses including: historic constructions of the North; Gothic literature and the female Gothic; Mancunian public health crises and the Peterloo massacre; and working-class constructions of identity. Many of these discourses overlapped with each other, and most

of them coalesced at points around the idea of the body – the labouring body, the ill body and the violated body. These same constructions of identity were apparent in each of the adaptations of work from Greater Manchester writers. The chapter focused on one episode of the serial *Ruth* to allow a more detailed study of a single piece of audio drama to draw out the many complex narratives running through the construction of the main character and the regions in which she found herself. The treatment of Ruth as a character demonstrated the way in which her body was foregrounded in the adaptive narrative, from discussions of Ruth's body in dialogue; through the way in which the soundscape shrank to fit a small space around her working body; to the fact that the narrative turned on aspects of Ruth's bodily freedom or exploitation. In the absence of a city or industrial soundscape, the wider world of Manchester was itself constructed out of an aural and textual soundscape of ill, poor and damaged bodies. The remaining adaptations looked at variations on the treatment of the body. *The Secret Garden* saw a Manchester estate and meditations on chronic ill health transplanted to a paradise-like Yorkshire idyll, in which the poor could be imagined well and free of worry. *Mary Barton* is heard in adaptation stripped of both its politics and its imagining of Manchester. What survives is a narrative built around the fragility of bodies – death, threat of execution and violence hanging around all the characters as their lives intertwine. Finally, in *Worktown*, Mass Observation photographs of Bolton are reimagined as an impressionistic narrative of cock fighting, frightened children, car accidents and fraught encounters in the abattoir. The Bolton of the play manages both to be crowded with voices and oddly alienating in the way the stories are told – foregrounding confusion, fright and fragility. Taken together, the adaptations demonstrated the many ways in which bodies could be used to compose a narrative of regional identity for Greater Manchester. They also demonstrated that the many narratives which flow through the source material – including the Gothic, working-class identity, and crises in public health – could be expressed in a great number of ways and combinations.

In the next part of the conclusion, this chapter will consider the wider impact and meaning of the findings described above. The first section – Impossible, Powerful Spaces – looks at the unstable borders, firstly, of the BBC; secondly, of the text in and out of adaptation; and, thirdly, of radio. The second section – Redolent Bodies: Radio is People – considers the particular transformation and realignment of space on a medium which cannot construct space. This section examines the way in which the medium of radio interacts with and reimagines the BBC Royal Charter commitment named in the research question. The third section – Trauma, Nostalgia and the Continuing Problem of Identity – looks at the socio-political ramifications of locating regional and national identities in ideas of trauma and loss. The chapter ends with a consideration of the ways in which this thesis has added knowledge to the various fields of theory.

Impossible, Powerful Spaces

The BBC is an imagined community in possession of unstable and shifting borders. It is also a potent and controversial space, frequently analysed and criticised in cultural discourse – often in reductive terms. The BBC is sometimes imagined as a person: the illustrated and quoted Auntie or Auntie Beeb. It is sometimes imagined in the form of one of its more iconic buildings – White City or Broadcasting House – which are often referred to as if they somehow embodied the spirit of Auntie herself. It is imagined, often interchangeably, with its on-air spaces, for instance BBC One or Radio 4, which are imagined both by the BBC itself and by those outside as defined, quasi-physical spaces with their own rules, values and tone. In fact, the space of the BBC is so frequently discussed and criticised by non-employees that in *W1A* the BBC managed to create a popular comedy out of satirizing the internal politics of its imagined staff. In common parlance, and in the printed press, the BBC is routinely referred to

as if it is a single body possessed of a single consciousness. Yet, the BBC never has been a single body. It was created by the merger of six private companies and contained within it a number of key members of staff, even in its earliest incarnation. The BBC today is a collection of full-time, part-time and freelance individuals numbering in their thousands (full-time staff alone stands at just under 19,000 people as of 2015). (91) It is a collection of real and imagined spaces – office buildings; television and radio studios; and the on-air presence of nine national television channels, 11 national or international radio stations and 57 local radio stations. This is before the BBC's considerable online presence is taken into account. Viewers and listeners are liable to hold multiple BBCs in their head at any one time. They will refer to 'the BBC' as if it were a single consciousness when they are angry at something they have heard or seen; but the building in their local city where the radio station operates is also 'the BBC'; and the body which produces their favourite show or curates their most comforting channel or station is also 'the BBC'. In fact, the BBC may be one of the most confused and indistinct entities in the whole of Britain's imagined cultural realm.

In many ways, the BBC appears to have learnt to capitalise upon its impossible space and unstable borders. In its acts of dramatic adaptation the BBC moves between visibility and invisibility from production to production: sometimes standing in multiple places all at the same time. For instance, the meaning of the BBC adapting work from Northern Ireland is notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the BBC identifying Northern Ireland as a nation or region is, in itself, a political act. Secondly, this thesis demonstrates that in adaptations from the province where Protestant and/or Catholic Northern Irish communities are imagined, the role of British people from the mainland (most potently, the presence of the British Army on the streets) is often hidden. This obliteration of British soldiers in the BBC's construction of Northern Ireland – this act of exceptionalism – serves to highlight the (mainland) British identity of the broadcaster who made the programme. In some cases, the BBC becomes

visible because it is choosing to make itself visible: for instance, when it chooses to adapt its own role as a broadcaster. When Gerry Jones is commissioned to write a play (*A Kind of Hallowe'en*) inspired by Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, BBC Radio is adapting its own back catalogue, using possibly the most famous British radio play of the twentieth century. Thus, the institution which funded and commissioned Thomas's key work, is adapting their own success; asking their listeners to remember that success along with them; while also adapting their own historic vision of Wales. The unstable borders of imagined spaces become visible in this action. Is *A Kind of Hallowe'en* adapting a vision of Wales that belongs to Dylan Thomas, to BBC Radio, to Gerry Jones, or to some imagined construct within Jones's play? The answer, of course, is that the play is adapting multiple acts of imagination all at the same time, with the BBC's visibility as a patron, an employer and a curator of imagined worlds visible to differing degrees throughout the play's many scenes. Indeed, in constructing both itself and ideas of Wales in the production, the institution is capable of imagining multiple problematic worlds in a single work. In constructing its own identity, the BBC points not just to its role as a patron and curator of the arts, it also points to the BBC's work in the region: thus, constructing both itself as a cultural presence and the idea of its role as a champion of regional representation. This is evident in the Welsh example given above, but also in the adaptation of *Silver's City*. In *Silver's City*, the BBC uses audio of their own news footage to have Iain Paisley talking to a journalist in the background of one of the scenes, thus adapting and promoting their part in reporting the conflict. The BBC is, thus, capable of standing inside and outside of their own adaptations: taking the role of actor, soundscape, and inspiration, as well as producer and broadcaster. This fluidity of presence is a strength in terms of the BBC's ability to represent itself; but it also points to the ongoing problem of how the BBC is perceived by their audience and by cultural commentators. Failing to stand in one place can open an imagined community to attacks from multiple angles.

So far, this section has addressed the unstable and imagined space which is the BBC, and the institution's shifting level of visibility around its own acts of adaptation. Remembering Casetti's work on putting adaptations into their context, (50) it is also important to note that these adaptations are commissioned and produced within a constantly-changing cultural backdrop, to which the BBC is expected to remain sensitive. As will be evident in the later section on the influence of radio, space and time interact in influential and sometimes unexpected ways throughout this work. The imagining of space over time – in the worlds of discourse outside the BBC – changes and mutates narratives around the meaning of region. When the BBC adapts *A Man Flourishing* and excises the political content, it is adapting not just Sam Hanna Bell but a 1972 novel in the context of 1988. The novel itself was published just three years into the Troubles but its adaptation came twenty years in, and the possible consequences of even such an unsympathetic character as Dr Bannon trying to explain the rationale behind the separatist violence was evidently seen as too incendiary. By contrast, the novel of *Silver's City* in 1981 – where Maurice Leitch had chosen not to use the name of the city, the prison, the terrorist group or anyone in its community – is transformed into an overwhelmingly-explicit piece in the context of BBC Radio in 1995. Coming in the aftermath of nearly six years of legally- and politically-imposed silence, and after the IRA's 1993 ceasefire, this adaptation was both an act of defiance on the part of the BBC (thus adapting its own relationship to censorship) but also an optimistic assertion that the age of terror in the province might be moving into the past. None of the BBC adaptations in this thesis function as a simple transference of text to script; every work has been commissioned for numerous reasons, adapted and shaped by multiple hands and channels a series of narratives, discourses and ideas – including the prevailing preoccupations of the period in which it has been adapted. Which is not to say that every adaptation exhibits a similar weighting of these concerns – or, indeed, similar attitudes to them; but that – as Casetti suggested in his writing on adaptation and social discourse

– no adaptation is created floating free of its cultural and historical context.

(50)

The complexity of these acts of imagined identity point to the resonance in radio of Roland Barthes's assertion that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture". (48) The unstable borders of the BBC as an imagined community are meeting here with the unstable borders of adaptation itself. While Barthes was talking about texts in general, adapted texts are particularly interesting in this regard, as their producer (in this case, the BBC) often makes a feature of the source from which the adaptation comes, most often a widely-read text or prominent author. Thus, in being an adaptation – in noting the source material alongside the new text – the BBC frequently makes a feature of its adaptation's pedigree. Within the terms of this thesis, that can be seen as an attempt to create more solid borders for a text which may – in reality – be adapting thousands of ideas, discourses, narratives and other texts. In this thesis of unstable spaces, the text – analysed, described and reproduced, as it may be – remains, like nations, regions, the BBC and radio, a space which is at once unstable and highly potent. There is not a text in this thesis which could escape the charge that it is unstable. Examples of this multiplicity of influence, include the play *A Kind of Hallowe'en*, in which Dylan Thomas the man; Dylan Thomas's writing of *Under Milk Wood*; the BBC's production of *Under Milk Wood*; Gerry Jones's reaction to *Under Milk Wood*; The Man's reaction to Dylan Thomas and *Under Milk Wood*; and the listener's own memory of Dylan Thomas and *Under Milk Wood*, all intermingle and combine, in ways far too subtle and diffuse to be adequately unpicked. In Symmons Roberts's adaptation of Humphrey Spender's photographs, the Mass Observation photographs of Humphrey Spender interact with historical and cultural readings of the North; of industrialisation; and of working-class identity: creating a subtextual conversation around the relationship between sight and sound (photographs and audio); and between historical and cultural narratives of identity. These two texts (and their audio productions) are unstable both

because of what is present but also because of what is missing. Both pieces are inspired by their source (*Under Milk Wood* and the Bolton photographs of Humphrey Spender) but do not present their source directly to the listener – instead presenting a reaction to that source. Thus, there is a suggestion, essential to the work, that it may be somehow incomplete. Both unimaginably complex and somehow incomplete: these are unstable texts indeed. This instability is only magnified by the medium on which they are interpreted: for, in this thesis, the unstable borders of the text meet the impossible space of radio.

Radio weakens the expression of borders. Writing about radio tends to focus on the removal of a single barrier: the aspect of sight. But the way in which radio imagines is to remove and weaken multiple barriers simultaneously. Radio is capable of making time and space interchangeable. Radio melts distinctions between geographic and physiological bodies. The moment in *Hiraeth in Hughesovka* where David sings in Welsh; or the moment in *Shadow of the Sickle* when Harri arrives at the Eisteddfod; or the moment in *Letter from a Far Country* where Siân falls down the rabbit hole of Mamgu's memories: each of these moments become the equivalent of a Welsh space. In the work on Greater Manchester, where many of the adaptations imagined other places – North Wales, or Yorkshire, most often rural places – in vivid auditory detail: Manchester, by contrast, seemed to be obliterated. Illness, fear and vulnerability, created a sense of place not based on anything traditionally geographic or topographic. In Northern Ireland, the location of meaning moved even further from a traditional, visual notion of place and into the realm of meaningful silence. Silence, as a response to trauma and censorship, is a powerful and evocative space in which to place the weight of regional identity – but there is nothing conventional about its use. It should be clear by now that these acts of imagination are not simple acts, they are both multiple and complex. They are hard to speak about because they ignore conventional boundaries and find new, medium-specific, ways to express ideas about space and identity. Thus, the already unstable texts

– imagining their unstable regional spaces – find themselves imagined in a medium which defies traditional borders and which will reimagine and redefine many of those offered by the source text.

Redolent Bodies: Radio is people

As a medium, radio lacks borders on multiple levels. As expressed above, radio lacks a body of work theorising its ability and potential; and, unable to express space in conventional terms, it translates space into temporal and physiological expressions of identity. Even thinking about radio as a physical presence in the social sphere, it is clear that the relationship of the radio to space lacks stability. Radios are often found in the moving spaces of transport; and radios of various kinds (transistor radios, wind-up radios, radios located in MP3 players, headphones or smartphones) can be pocketed, carried, transported through space. The programmes which are broadcast are invisible, existing only briefly in time and never in space. Yet, for all this, radio is a powerful and popular medium. As quoted in the introduction, Rajar's listening figures for the last quarter of 2017 show radio being consumed by 90% of all UK citizens 15 years and older, with an average listening period of 21 hours per week. (8) Thus, the lack of borders and boundaries – radio's invisibility – are evidently not a medium-destroying absence. It may even be that radio's flexibility and fluidity in the absence of borders and boundaries is one of its strengths. But, the work of this thesis points towards another reason for radio's continuing resonance: people. While the case studies in the work demonstrated the extent to which radio struggled to articulate space, the solution that radio found in many of the cases cited above was to reimagine the geographic as the physiological: to map space onto and into the realm of the body. Radio's assertion of the personal and physiological in their adaptation of imagined identities, played into one of the great strengths of the medium: its ability to express things on a human level.

Radio can do people. Indeed, radio is people. As this thesis has demonstrated, the work of creating the fluid world of BBC Radio is that of many thousands of people working together to imagine and construct the medium. The work of creating radio drama (and adapted radio drama) is always a process in which many creative bodies and imaginations are engaged. The medium of radio is one which relies on mimicking social interaction, both in fictive and factual programming: with the listener eavesdropping on conversations, or overhearing confessional monologues. Radio's fluid borders allow identities relating to space to be reimagined as identities relating to bodily experience. Thus, radio is a medium constructed by people; which emulates the social interactions of the real world; and reimagines large abstract ideas in human terms. It is a medium which, above all else, is moulded around the idea and the experience of the human. The examples which follow, look to the way in which radio has harnessed identity to human experience in Wales, Northern Ireland and Greater Manchester.

The Welsh body, in its broadest sense, had been imagined by BBC Radio as rural, historical and lost; but how does this correspond to the Welsh body in its particular and partial state in radio adaptation? As demonstrated in the chapter on Welsh identity, the assertion of Welshness is contained in acts of the voice. Gerry Jones imagines Welshness as being carried in the echoing words of Dylan Thomas; Islwyn Ffowc Elis imagines Welshness to move and coalesce around a celebration of the language (the *Eisteddfod*); Colin Thomas locates Welsh social identity in the communal spaces of Welsh manhood and Welsh personal identity in the expression of feeling through Welsh language, both spoken and sung; and Gillian Clarke finds female Welsh identity in the voices and memories of the women who came before, who speak through her memory and her imagination. The BBC has adapted writers who locate Welsh identity in internalised language and sound: a reading of Welsh identity that flatters the medium of radio and helps to draw together a cohesive conception of Welshness from some fairly disparate writers. Fixing the embodiment of Welshness in language

and the voice, allows that reading of Wales to be articulated on radio, while also imagining Welshness in a way which does not disagree with the broader reading of Wales. The Welshness of Welsh voices does not pull against the idea that essential Wales is rural, historical, lost and mourned. And the use of the Welsh language (at a time when the number of Welsh speakers had been falling for decades) is helpful to the idea that true Welshness resides in the past. In fact, in embracing the Welsh language on radio at a time when the Welsh language movement was resurgent, the programme makers of the BBC were able to pull off the interesting feat of seeming to modernise their artistic offering while simultaneously historicising Welsh identity. Or, to put it another way, the use of the Welsh language is capable of pulling in more than one historic direction at the same time. The classic locations of imagined Welsh identity are – at times – semi-audible in the background of these dramas: the industrial workplace, the chapel, the working mens' club. But these spaces are never foregrounded in the narrative. It is the human experience around which radio is always centred; and in BBC Radio's imagining of Wales the pathway to ideas around Welsh identity is always the voice. It is a personalised, subjective, intimate expression of identity.

Northern Irish adaptations help to illustrate the complex politics of imagining a region, but they also showcase the multiplicity of BBC acts of imagination. The use of silence to express experience and identity brings together the experiences of two groups of people: those who lived through the everyday trauma of the conflict and those tasked with imagining and reporting it. The silence of personal and communal trauma meets – in the Northern Ireland of BBC Radio – with the silence of an institutional body which has been consistently censored. The experience of Northern Irish bodies comes together with the experience of BBC bodies to create an adaptive space which is as alive to the potency of censorship as it is to the effects of war. Here, in these dramas, are examples of the way in which radio is not only a medium built from the imagined lives of the listeners, it is also a medium built from the lived experiences of those who make it. The

construction of Northern Ireland expresses the relationship between the BBC's idea of regions and the BBC's idea of communities. Community, unlike region, is a conception of identity which cleaves more closely to the idea of people than it does to space. Which is not to say that community is not a problematic term: if anything, the idea of community is even more diffuse and fluid than that of region or of nation. Whereas the imagining of Wales and Manchester tended to revolve around the adaptation of very similar communities, in the work commissioned from Northern Ireland the BBC is attempting to represent the views of different communities within one region, which is also (for some, but not all of its citizens) a nation. In Northern Ireland's adapted dramas can be found representation of three communities: the Northern Irish Protestant community in *A Man Flourishing* and *Silver's City*; the Northern Irish Catholic community in *An Enemy of the People* and the mainland British community in *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry*.¹² This representation of separate communities highlights the unstable borders of the idea of Northern Ireland – both as a region and a nation – but it also signals a movement away from an idea of identity which is contained in or defined by space. In portraying the space-based conflict in Northern Ireland, the BBC is forced into a position where it must attest, more strongly than it does in the other case studies, to the problematic nature of geographic and political borders. Northern Ireland's contested space leads to a retreat into the idea of communities; and radio's space-free medium then distils those communities down into their separate parts: the experience of individuals. In each of the case studies found in this thesis, the problem of trying to imagine the world in terms of nations and regions is apparent: but in Northern Ireland the conflict-laden history of the space comes together

¹² *Bloody Sunday* also includes representation of the Northern Irish Catholic community in the form of witness statements. However, it is written by someone from the British mainland; depicts an inquiry held on the British mainland; and is the only one of the three dramas to include representations of the British army who, in the context of Northern Ireland, were generally seen as possessing an identity relating to the British mainland.

with the imaginative adaptation and transfer of identity on radio to argue for the privileging of human experience above national construction.

Greater Manchester is another example of a place where the source material for adaptation offers a powerfully-politicised view of regional identity; but for all the complexity of the interplay of politics and personal experience, it is the fixation upon physiological experiences of poverty which really stand out in these dramatic works. Where, in Wales, the use of voice was an assertion and remembering of identity; and, in Northern Ireland, silence represented the censoring of personal, regional and community identities; in Greater Manchester, the ill and vulnerable body tells a story of poverty and oppression. Narratives of suffering are written into the bodily experiences of Mary Barton, her father and her two love interests; of Ruth, Bellingham and Mr Benson; of Mary Lennox, Colin Craven and his late mother; and of the hooded boy, the woman hit by the truck and the threatened abattoir worker in *Worktown*. There is a relationship here between the reading of trauma in Northern Irish works and the reading of trauma in Greater Manchester. In Belfast, in a war zone, very little violence is actually shown, but the silence enveloping everything speaks to the trauma of war; to censorship and the emptying out of cultural identity. In contrast, in Manchester a great deal of violence and death are dramatised: the city is silenced but not the experience of the bodies it contains. Personal, physiological and subjective experiences are here working together to provide a narrative of place. Contrasted as it is with Wales, Yorkshire and Liverpool there are – oddly – no attempts in the adaptation of the nineteenth-century texts to imagine the vista of Manchester, either in the form of soundscape or description within the text. Where, in Belfast, people and events were silenced, in Manchester the city itself falls quiet. Bodily suffering carries with it the weight of place and community joined together.

Trauma, Nostalgia and the Continuing Problem of Identity

There is a sense in which – in constructing identities for these three spaces – BBC Radio has been drawn into a reading of identity which privileges trauma. The trauma is most apparent in Northern Ireland, where conflict and stress define the lived experience of the Troubles. But trauma is also apparent in Greater Manchester’s readings of experience, where narratives of poverty and oppression dominate the works. In Wales, the expression of trauma is quieter, but still apparent. The focus on hiraeth – on lost identity and an impossible, imaginary Wales – conveys a sense of grief and dislocation embedded in the idea of belonging. In all three cases, the meaning of locating regional and national identity in ideas of trauma is multiple: but one possible reading of this trend is that the trauma inherent in these narratives of regional and national identity may be related to the impossibility of defining or fixing national or regional space. In Northern Ireland, trauma is undoubtedly related to the experience of a conflict which emanates from ideas around contested space. In Wales, the porous borders of Welsh belonging; the tension with English space and the English language; and the sense that Wales is vanishing all link the experience of trauma to the problems of defining and occupying space. In Greater Manchester, the trauma of vulnerable, ill bodies is linked to the way in which the United Kingdom has interpreted this northern space in economic terms through industrialisation. Greater Manchester is one of many northern spaces which had their economic (and thereby social) meaning redefined for them over a very short period. The trauma which has come from that act of reimagining (and indeed the later shock of economic depression which stands between the earlier three texts and *Worktown*) is present in every stressed body, and in every uncertain, stumbling narrative. The progenitors of trauma are multiple in this study: and the symptoms ring through spaces torn apart by war; by cultural upheaval; and by economic reassignment.

The influence of trauma is not felt in isolation: there is another emotion – connected with a sense of loss – that flows through these imaginings of place: a feeling of hiraeth, mourning and nostalgia. The construction of every one of these spaces relies upon a sense of something lost. In the Welsh adaptations, the characters continually look backwards – to a rural, Welsh-speaking, vanished Eden of true identity. In Northern Ireland, the entire region is exhausted by its losses, not simply in terms of lives, but the loss of culture and identity, the emptying out of voice and meaning. In Greater Manchester, the characters crane towards rural escape, straining to be released from the disease-ridden, work-intensive now. Taken together, these are immensely disquieting constructions of place and identity to be emanating from Britain’s national broadcaster.

Additions to Knowledge

This is a thesis which has dealt with unstable boundaries but it is also a thesis which has aimed to dismantle or challenge certain borders. The first area in which it offers an innovative approach is that of BBC history and it does this, primarily, through its use of audio analysis of BBC Radio’s drama adaptations. The fact that analysis of audio produced by BBC Radio has been excluded from historical narratives of the BBC is an unhelpful and illogical border which this thesis has sought to challenge. In addition, and related to the first point, the thesis has offered a detailed, nuanced and imaginative response to the question of the BBC’s history of regional representation. The narrative of regional representation which this thesis presents innovates in its marriage of institutional history; complementary social, cultural and historical discourses; and analysis of the audio representation of place and identity. This thesis maintains that engagement with the programmes broadcast by the BBC deserves to have a greater place in the analysis of the BBC as an institution and its relationship to wider British culture and society.

This thesis aims to fill a critical gap which exists in narratives of BBC endeavour. Extensive work exists on the structure and development of the institution; its hiring, commissioning and producing practices; and analysis of media responses, political responses and listener feedback to the work produced. But between the commissioning and producing of the work and the response to the same there exists a critical silence in this field. The broadcast work itself seems to go missing, as if it is in some way impossible to analyse a programme made for broadcast. In part, this may be due to the inaccessible nature of the archive, and that is something which the catalogue produced for this project aims to address. (2) And it may also be because audio analysis is rarely undertaken on non-musical items made for radio. The virtual absence of this field of study has, in effect, made the audio recordings doubly invisible, or unheard, sending out a message that either non-musical radio is not worthy of analysis or that the academic fields are not capable of analysing such an object. Of course, both of these assertions are untrue, but they need to be challenged. The creation of the catalogue and the analysis of programmes from that catalogue is an attempt to challenge the false borders and boundaries described here.

In bringing together historical accounts of BBC Radio in the regions with analysis of the adaptations produced over the period, this thesis has demonstrated the way in which the history of the institution, its commissioning practices, and the narratives contained within its adaptations are interconnected. For example, the development and commissioning of a cultural community around the BBC in Wales has contributed to the way in which the work of Welsh poets, from Dylan Thomas to Gillian Clarke, have influenced the construction of Welsh narratives. In addition, the tension apparent within the history of the corporation in Wales between promoting Welsh-language content and avoiding anything which is too heavily associated with Welsh independence finds a direct echo in the fluctuating inclusion and exclusion of the language in the adaptations produced. In Northern Ireland, the BBC's complex history of attempting to report the conflict in Northern

Ireland without enraging the British government of the day is expressed in both the commissioning and the content of the BBC's Northern Irish adaptations. The range of adaptations, taken together, express the tension within the BBC as an organisation between bowing to outside censorship or self-censorship and the desire to tell uncomfortable truths. And then there is Manchester, where the BBC's institutional history of blurring the boundaries between Manchester and the North bleeds through into adaptations where Manchester is frequently erased. The uneasy mingling of working-class narratives, Northern narratives, Mancunian narratives, and narratives of the body in turmoil, express the way in which the BBC in Manchester (indeed, the BBC in England) struggled to deal comfortably with English narratives of poverty when they strayed from the rural idyll of preferred BBC imagination. The audio analysis rarely contradicts the institutional histories of the BBC in these regions, but what it does instead is to broaden and underline an understanding of how the BBC struggles with disruptive and problematic regional narratives. Moreover, the catalogue of adaptations demonstrates the way in which the BBC has adapted work from the nations and regions and has even managed to commission these works in a fairly proportional manner. (2) The BBC as it emerges from this thesis is neither a centralising behemoth nor a movement of iconoclasts. Rather, and perhaps a little prosaically, the picture which emerges is of a very large group of people trying to curate and adapt representations of regional experience, always mindful, and often a little wary, of the impact of these works on a broader view of cohesive Britishness.

In the field of adaptation theory, all of the main contributions this thesis hopes to make are around the study of radio: showcasing the possibilities of such study; investigating language and frameworks by which audio might be examined; and thinking about the act of adapting into an aural medium. Firstly, the creation of the catalogue is a step towards unlocking the BBC Radio archive for researchers and students, by letting them know the adaptations produced in this period, and giving them

details about those adaptations which can help to demonstrate ways in which the adaptations can be grouped together for study. Secondly, this thesis places the analysis of audio at the centre of its investigations, thereby showcasing the fact that the exploration of audio works can offer fertile ground for research. Thirdly, the thesis explores the problem of how researchers can analyse audio, in the absence of a common theoretical framework. The thesis offers recognition of the challenges in decoding and interpreting audio, but also offers a series of readings which suggest ways in which meaning within audio is conveyed: through text, structure, performance, soundscape and patterns of sound and silence. Furthermore, the thesis looks at a number of these areas in depth, analysing (in the chapter on Northern Ireland) different kinds of silences within the works, and describing (in the chapter on Manchester) the ways in which diverse narratives of identity can interact in the listening experience. Overall, the thesis hopes to provide a model of the way in which analysis of non-musical audio can be drawn into areas of study more often dominated by textual and visual art forms.

In exploring the possibilities for audio analysis, the thesis has engaged, primarily, with the work of two thinkers on the text and adaptation – Barthes and Casetti – and tried to expand the areas to which their thinking might be applied. In the case of Barthes, this thesis has explored the potential of applying his thinking on the text to the analysis of works of audio. It has engaged in an imaginative way with his work on the multiple locations of meaning, adapting these ideas to explore the many layers of meaning and textual/auditory interplay found within the adapted works. (48) Audio has been shown to impart and create new meaning through an inter-relationship with other narratives, languages, sounds and discourses. These include the way in which audio can carry and adapt the memory of specific audio texts, such as *Under Milk Wood*, so that the radio listener may simultaneously draw meaning from two audio works of imagination and the relationship between them. In the chapter on Wales – where regional identity has been shown to coalesce around giving voice to,

listening to or remembering spoken or sung Welsh – the very act of using a particular language is shown to carry memory and meaning. The work on Northern Ireland has demonstrated the resonance of silence, and the way in which silence from within an institution; the silencing of voices or ideas within the adapted script; and silence as part of the soundscape, can interact to create meaning in complex and multiple ways. The chapter on Manchester looked at the way in which multiple social, historical and cultural discourses flow through both the source material and the work in adaptation, losing many of their boundaries as they do so and influencing the way in which regional identity is constructed within the audio. In analysing the narratives of region in this manner, this thesis has extended the application of Barthes's thinking in ways which have proved fruitful in the formulation of a method for analysing audio.

The examples given above demonstrate the way in which Barthes's thinking has been repurposed for the interrogation of audio. But they also speak to the work of the second key thinker in the area of text and adaptation: Casetti. This thesis aimed to stretch the possibilities of Casetti's thinking – drawing it away from the world of film and text to demonstrate the way in which it can serve the study of audio. One of Casetti's injunctions involves the need to explore relationships between text, film and the social discourses which surround their creation. (50) This thesis has interpreted and repurposed Casetti's injunction in two ways. Firstly, the thesis has examined the historical, political and cultural background to the creation of many of the source texts and their audio adaptation and shown, where applicable, how things have changed between these two acts. Secondly, the thesis has woven together histories of the BBC in the regions; historical discourses on regional identity; and cultural narratives, as well as elements of sociology and politics, to demonstrate the way in which the acts of regional construction are acts of adapting multiple discourses, and not simply the source material at hand. This thesis has remained alive to the ways in which acts of audio drama draw on and adapt the context of their creation; the history of the institution which

makes them; and a complex range of other elements and discourses. In this way, Casetti's thinking has been expanded to apply to the worlds of audio art and adaptation.

This thesis aims to offer new thinking, primarily in the area of building a framework for analysing audio, but also in the area of understanding adaptation as it applies to works which are heard. This thesis would contend that building a new framework for analysing non-musical audio requires three things. Firstly, that it is accepted that audio is difficult to interpret and describe. And that this is because, as a culture, we lack understanding of the nuances of listening and interpreting sound; and because, a related point, there is relatively little critical language which has been designed to apply to audio. Secondly, that, in building a framework by which audio can be analysed, suitable critical works from the study of text and visual arts can be used, re-purposed and adapted to interrogate the meaning of audio. Thirdly, that, given the many subtleties of listening, remembering and decoding meaning, work undertaken on radio should be imaginative and open to the many complex locations and relationships from which meaning can arise. All of the above applies to audio, but it is not particular to the study of adaptation. There are two key points which this thesis wishes to contribute to thinking around audio adaptation. The first is an appreciation of the diverse acts of adapting and remembering through which audio adaptations create meaning. If adaptation can be conceived of as the art of structuring memory, then these works of audio adaptation bring together an extraordinary collection of memories; memories which draw on history, other texts, other structured audio, and the world of sound. The Mancunian adaptations remember their source material, but they also (at times) remember the work of E. P. Thompson; the public health crises of the nineteenth century; the influence of female Gothic narratives; and the history of imagining the rural as an idyll for the poor. Adaptation in audio remembers so much more than its named source would suggest. The second key point which this thesis aims to add to the study of adaptation is the observation that when a text is adapted for

audio, the adapter frequently reinterprets geographic space (and the identity which accrues to the same) onto a human canvas, thus making it audible to a radio listener. So, in the absence of rural landscapes and an image of Wales, the Welsh adaptations offer the Welsh language, Welsh accents and song as a way of constructing Wales within a sound-based medium. The human voice carries the weight both of creating an aural landscape and imagining an identity for the region. In Northern Ireland, this construction of experience is turned inside out and, instead, silence – indicative both of trauma and censorship – becomes the defining sound of the region. And, in Greater Manchester, a landscape and an identity are built out of and cluster around experiences of the body in strife. Radio, as a medium, is psychologically intimate, domestic and conversational. It is a medium which, in the absence of a wider, visually-accessible world to play with, concentrates fully on the human. Thus, adaptations into audio take what radio showcases best, and use voice, memory, and reflections on the human form to create an audible, human-centred landscape.

In the area of national and regional identity, this thesis has contributed to thinking in the field by foregrounding an analysis of radio, a medium which – despite being consumed by over 90% of the British population every week – is almost universally ignored in the study of constructions of British identity. (8) This thesis aims to show that radio is a rich area for the study of regional construction, while also examining elements of that construction, such as its multiplicity and the way in which constructions of region can be temporal as well as geographic. Work on national and regional identity has tended to cleave to the study of text, with some engagement with works made for television or cinema. While radio is mentioned, it is never subjected to the kind of thorough-going scrutiny or analysis afforded to newspapers, novels, historical narratives and other textual artefacts. Thus, this thesis has aimed to offer up a series of readings of radio drama which demonstrate the way in which constructions of identity can be found in many and various forms by analysing the audio of a nation or a region. Some of the work done here on

radio complements Anderson's vision of the newspaper as a long-running novel, consumed by the general public in a temporal but often sporadic manner. (55) Radio operates in a strikingly similar way, narrating stories of both regions and nations for the British listener. This makes it all the more surprising that so little work on national and regional construction engages with radio as a medium. This thesis hopes to illustrate the ways in which radio – a popular and reassuringly-domestic medium – brings constructions of regional identity into the homes, shops and vehicles of British listeners, potentially influencing the imagining of identity both for those who live in the region and those who do not.

The multiplicity of regional construction has been addressed in the preceding paragraphs, but the temporal nature of regional identity as imagined by BBC Radio is key to understanding the ways in which the BBC has represented its nations, regions and communities. This temporal aspect to regional identity is apparent in two facets of BBC Radio's narratives, each existing in tension with the other. The first is the way in which the construction of the region is seen to change over time, something which conveys the idea that regional identity is not fixed and can evolve. This is evident in BBC Wales and their increasing use of the Welsh language in English-language dramas in the years after devolution, and in BBC Radio's embrace of narratives of conflict as it moved through the period of the broadcasting ban and the aftermath of the Troubles. The second facet is the way in which the commissioning of the work around certain regions ties that region to a point in its history. So, constructions of Wales and Manchester are more often historical than contemporary, despite a wealth of modern literature existing from the writers of both these regions. Siting any region in an historical period, while at the same time privileging more modern work in general (Table 14), suggests a temporal narrative of Britain in which Manchester and Wales are in the past, while other parts of Britain exist in the now. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, a region which is often constructed as historical in the early part of the period this thesis covers, is pulled into modern Britain by the

BBC's attempts to adapt and represent the armed crisis. While Wales and Manchester seem somehow to be trapped in history, Northern Ireland finds itself constructed as a nation caught in a state of violence and trauma. Every version of these regional, temporal identities emerges as profoundly problematic. Once again, the issue of uncertain boundaries asserts itself, but this time the boundaries are temporal. The construction of regions is allowed to evolve in small ways over time, reflecting the institution of the BBC and their relationship to the region itself. But the core imagining of the region tends to remain fixed to history or trauma, or, in the case of Manchester, both at the same time. Regions, in the three examples examined here, are not allowed to have an identity which is built around thriving in the present.

The regional spaces examined in this thesis share one vital point in common: like the BBC itself, they are all problematic but meaningful, potent spaces. Lacking clearly-defined borders but in possession of immense resonance, they need constantly to be constructed and curated. BBC Radio's constructions of region bleed at their borders; and they are disruptive narratives – pulling against a homogenised vision of Britishness. But there is also something bold and assertive in their continuing construction, in the way in which they echo through the culture, amplified by a national broadcaster. The fact that these regional constructions have not been swallowed into a narrative of collective Britishness attests to their resonance and cultural vitality. In curating and adapting these narratives, BBC Radio is allowing divergent imaginings of Britishness to communicate themselves into a plethora of social and cultural discourses. Narratives of regional identity may strain at geographic, auditory and adaptive boundaries, but BBC Radio lends space for their continuing adaptation.

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Appendix

Statistics taken from the BBC Radio adaptations catalogue (2)

Gender of author	Male	Female	Both male and female authors	Author unknown	Total
Number of adaptations	2041	728	15	68	2852
Percentage of total	71.56%	25.53%	0.53%	2.38%	100%

Table 1. BBC Radio adaptations by gender of author of original source material (1985 – 2009) (2)

Gender of adapter	Male	Female	Both male and female	No adapter listed	Total
Number of adaptations	1630	702	36	484	2852
Percentage of total	57.15%	24.61%	1.26%	16.97%	100.00%

Table 2. BBC Radio adaptations by gender of adapter (1985 – 2009) (2)

Gender of producer	Male	Female	Both male and female	No producer listed	Total
Number of adaptations	529	675	18	1630	2852
Percentage of total	18.55%	23.67%	0.63%	57.15%	100.00%

Table 3. BBC Radio adaptations by gender of producer (1985 – 2009) (2)

Gender of director	Male	Female	Both male and female	No director listed	Total
Number of adaptations	1327	998	16	511	2852
Percentage of total	46.53%	34.99%	0.56%	17.92%	100.00%

Table 4. BBC Radio adaptations by gender of director (1985 – 2009) (2)

Gender of author	Male	Female	Total
Number of adaptations	182	103	285
Percentage of total	63.86%	36.14%	100.00%

Table 5. BBC Radio adaptations based on material first published or performed in 1980s, by gender of author of original source material (2)

Gender of author	Male	Female	Both male and female	Total
Number of adaptations	136	109	1	246
Percentage of total	55.28%	44.31%	0.41%	100.00%

Table 6. BBC Radio adaptations based on material first published or performed in 1990s, by gender of author of original source material (2)

Gender of author	Male	Female	Both male and female	Total
Number of adaptations	81	65	1	147
Percentage of total	55.10%	44.22%	0.68%	100.00%

Table 7. BBC Radio adaptations based on material first published or performed in 2000s, by gender of author of original source material (2)

Author's country of birth	Albania	Algeria	Argentina	Australia	Austria	Belgium
Number of adaptations	1	3	7	14	16	23
Percentage of total	0.04%	0.11%	0.25%	0.49%	0.56%	0.81%

Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Chile	China	Colombia	Croatia
3	2	10	2	9	2	1
0.11%	0.07%	0.35%	0.07%	0.32%	0.07%	0.04%

Cuba	Czech Republic	Denmark	Dominica	Egypt	England	Finland
1	25	6	4	10	1325	5
0.04%	0.88%	0.21%	0.14%	0.35%	46.46%	0.18%

France	Georgia	Germany	Ghana	Greece	Guyana	Haiti
137	1	64	4	28	4	1
4.80%	0.04%	2.24%	0.14%	0.98%	0.14%	0.04%

Hong Kong	Hungary	Iceland	India	Iran	Iraq	Ireland
1	10	3	49	2	2	121
0.04%	0.35%	0.11%	1.72%	0.07%	0.07%	4.24%

Italy	Jamaica	Kenya	Lebanon	Mesopotamia	Mexico	Moldova
39	1	1	1	1	1	1
1.37%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%

Morocco	Myanmar	Netherlands	New Zealand	Nigeria	Northern Ireland	Norway
1	7	5	14	6	32	15
0.04%	0.25%	0.18%	0.49%	0.21%	1.12%	0.53%

Pakistan	Peru	Poland	Portugal	Puerto Rico	Romania	Russia
2	5	7	5	1	2	83
0.07%	0.18%	0.25%	0.18%	0.04%	0.07%	2.91%

Scotland	Serbia	Slovakia	South Africa	Spain	Sri Lanka	Sudan
159	1	1	11	20	3	1
5.58%	0.04%	0.04%	0.39%	0.70%	0.11%	0.04%

Sweden	Switzerland	Trinidad and Tobago	Turkey	USA	Venezuela	Vietnam
12	10	5	4	266	1	3
0.42%	0.35%	0.18%	0.14%	9.33%	0.04%	0.11%

Wales	Zimbabwe	Total
52	9	2852
1.82%	0.32%	100.00%

Table 8. BBC Radio adaptations by the author of the source material's country of birth (1985- 2009) (2)

Country of UK author's birth	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	Total
Number of adaptations	1325	32	159	52	1568
Percentage of total	84.50%	2.04%	10.14%	3.32%	100.00%
Percentage of British population living in each nation (2011 UK census) (92)	84.3%	2.8%	8.2%	4.7%	100.0%

Table 9. BBC Radio adaptations from source material by authors born in the United Kingdom, broken down by the nation into which the author was born (1985- 2009) (2)

Language of source material	Albanian	Ancient Greek	Arabic	Armenian	Bengali	Cantonese
Number of adaptations	1	26	8	5	6	1
Percentage of total	0.04%	0.91%	0.28%	0.18%	0.21%	0.04%

Coptic	Czech	Danish	Dutch	English	Finnish	Flemish
1	8	21	3	2238	1	1
0.04%	0.28%	0.74%	0.11%	78.47%	0.04%	0.04%

French	German	Greek	Hebrew	Hindi	Hungarian	Icelandic
156	96	3	1	2	11	5
5.47%	3.37%	0.11%	0.04%	0.07%	0.39%	0.18%

Irish (Gaelic)	Italian	Japanese	Latin	Mandarin	Middle English	Norwegian
1	31	15	5	1	9	1
0.04%	1.09%	0.53%	0.18%	0.04%	0.32%	0.04%

Old English	Old Norse	Polish	Portuguese	Romanian	Russian	Sanskrit
1	1	6	5	1	91	3
0.04%	0.04%	0.21%	0.18%	0.04%	3.19%	0.11%

South African English	Spanish	Sumerian	Swedish	Turkish	Welsh	Unknown
1	36	1	15	2	3	29
0.04%	1.26%	0.04%	0.53%	0.07%	0.11%	1.02%

Total
2852
100.00%

Table 10. BBC Radio adaptations from language of source material (1985- 2009) (2)

Medium of source material	Novel	Short Story/Stories	Play	Film	Poetry	Unknown
Number of adaptations	1316	414	729	19	62	20
Percentage of total	46.14%	14.52%	25.56%	0.67%	2.17%	0.70%

Other	More than one medium	Total
239	53	2852
8.38%	1.86%	100.00%

Table 11. BBC Radio adaptations by medium of source material (1985- 2009) (2)

Date of first publication or performance	Before 1 AD	1 - 999	1000 - 1999	2000 onwards	Unknown	Total
Number of adaptations	20	11	2458	150	213	2852
Percentage of total	0.70%	0.39%	86.19%	5.26%	7.47%	100.00%

Table 12. BBC Radio adaptations by millennia of first publication or performance of original source (1985- 2009) (2)

Century of first publication or performance	1000 - 1099	1100 - 1199	1200 - 1299	1300 - 1399	1400 - 1499	1500 - 1599
Number of adaptations	2	1	2	3	7	38
Percentage of total	0.08%	0.04%	0.08%	0.12%	0.27%	1.46%

1600 - 1699	1700 - 1799	1800 - 1899	1900 - 1999	2000 - 2009	Total
85	54	443	1823	150	2608
3.26%	2.07%	16.99%	69.90%	5.75%	100.00%

Table 13. BBC Radio adaptations by century of first publication or performance of original source (1000 – 2009) (2)

Decade of first publication or performance	1800 - 1809	1810 - 1819	1820 - 1829	1830 - 1839	1840 - 1849	1850 - 1859
Number of adaptations	6	36	9	30	41	45
Percentage of total	0.25%	1.49%	0.37%	1.24%	1.70%	1.86%

1860 - 1869	1870 - 1879	1880 - 1889	1890 - 1899	1900 - 1909	1910 - 1919	1920 - 1929
60	38	69	106	88	99	162
2.49%	1.57%	2.86%	4.39%	3.65%	4.10%	6.71%

1930 - 1939	1940 - 1949	1950 - 1959	1960 - 1969	1970 - 1979	1980 - 1989	1990 - 1999
218	167	203	180	175	285	246
9.03%	6.92%	8.41%	7.46%	7.25%	11.81%	10.19%

2000 - 2009	Total
150	2413
6.22%	100.00%

Table 14. BBC Radio adaptations by decade of first publication or performance of original source (1800 – 2009) (2)