

# Wireless Women: Women Writers and Literary Discourse at the BBC, 1922-1956

Submitted by Leonie Thomas, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree  
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## Abstract

This thesis explores the interaction of four female writers with the monopolistic and paternalistic BBC during the first half of the twentieth century. Radio was the dominant information technology in Britain from the BBC's inception in 1922 until 1956, when television licences overtook radio licences for the first time. This was a period of rapid development in technology, listenership, and ideology for the Corporation. Existing scholarly work has tended to focus on the way that mid-century writers were imaginatively influenced by broadcasting, attending to instances of radiophonic style in their literary and creative work. What is not yet understood is the role that gender played in brokering professional relationships between prominent writers and the BBC as it sought to become a cultural authority on literary discourse.

In this thesis, I argue that the Corporation relied on successful, socially elite women writers at moments of tension and growth for the broadcaster. The BBC believed women writers were more amenable to its mission of cultural uplift and would appeal to a wider audience than many of their male peers. However, while the Corporation wanted women writers to provide quaint talks on approved topics, once in the BBC's studios, the wireless women in this thesis set out to redefine literary discourse on-air. Vita Sackville-West imbued the early years of radio with an aristocratic validity and developed a rebellious reading manifesto in her book reviews from 1929-1932. Una Marson leveraged her social network to support BBC broadcasting to the Caribbean during the Second World War, developing an inclusive West Indian identity that was founded on the dissemination of diverse voices. In the immediate post-war period, Rose Macaulay justified the BBC's decision to stratify its programming into three distinct strands, defending, as she did, the existing cultural hegemony beyond the BBC's own expectations. And finally, Elizabeth Bowen reluctantly legitimised the Corporation's educational agenda, following the 1944 Butler Education Act, despite arguing against the academisation of literary education in Britain. Together, the women of this thesis expanded their broadcasting remits from within the BBC, broadening the parameters of literary discourse on-air to acknowledge and display their professionalism, legitimacy, and influence as wireless women writers.

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# Abbreviations

British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre — BBC WAC

British Library Sound Archives — BLSA

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University — BRBML

Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge — WREN

# Introduction

Between March and May 1945, the writers Vita Sackville-West, Una Marson, Rose Macaulay, and Elizabeth Bowen all broadcast on the BBC's airwaves. They scripted and read programmes that were transmitted on different BBC Services and heard by listeners in disparate parts of the world. Yet these writers were united by their privileged access to the BBC's microphone and used that access to voice opinions about the value and importance of contemporary literary culture. During these few months of unintended coalescence on the BBC, the women spoke on a range of topics that went beyond literature to incorporate wider cultural concerns, including the aesthetics of gardens (Sackville-West), the music of West Indians in London (Marson), the etymology of the word 'capitalist' (Macaulay), and the imagined possibility of meeting Victorian novelist, Anthony Trollope, on a train in 1945 (Bowen).<sup>1</sup> They collaborated with BBC producers to create output that was considered relevant to their audiences and furthered their writing careers by increasing their public profile, addressing millions of listeners.<sup>2</sup> They were professional, literary women demonstrating not only their skill with language but their imaginative capabilities and expertise in the medium of radio, too. The women writers of this thesis converged at the BBC during the final months of the Second World War to influence the cultural conversation of a nation in flux. They did so via the dominant telecommunications media of the first half of the twentieth century:

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<sup>1</sup> Vita Sackville-West, "Delight in Gardens", *Away From It All*, *BBC Home Service*, 16 March 1945, Una Marson, "West Indian Party", *Calling the West Indies*, *BBC Overseas Service*, 13 and 20 March 1945, "Caribbean Voices", *Calling the West Indies*, 25 March 1945, Rose Macaulay, "Capitalist", *What Does It Mean?*, *BBC Home Service*, 26 April 1945, and Elizabeth Bowen, "Anthony Trollope", *New Judgement*, *BBC Home Service*, 4 May 1945.

<sup>2</sup> By 1939, there were approximately 9 million registered radios across the British population of 45.6 million. See Ian Whittington, *Writing the Radio War: Literature Politics and the BBC, 1939-1945*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 6.



radio. From the BBC's inception in 1922 until the onset of commercial television in 1956, radio ruled the airwaves.

How writers contributed to the moralising mission of public service broadcasting in Britain throughout the twentieth century has been the subject of some scholarly research.<sup>3</sup> However, what is not yet understood is why, when, and in what circumstances the BBC turned to women writers to further its mission of informing, educating, and entertaining its audience. This thesis argues that women writers legitimised the BBC as an important cultural voice in debates about what literature was, who should have access to the production and consumption of literature, and the most valuable and appropriate uses of literary knowledge during this period. Put another way, women writers fundamentally shaped literary discourse at the BBC during the first four decades of broadcasting in Britain. I define literary discourse as the ongoing conversation, held in public forums such as journals, books, and broadcasts, about how certain writers or writing styles hold relevance or insight for contemporary audiences and the standards of judgement that are born from such debates. Across the interwar, war and post-war period, literary discourse included considerations of canon formation, the analysis of form, language, and theme, and judgements about the quality and validity of certain styles or thematic preoccupations of literature. These concerns I term 'literary values' and they occupied managers and producers at the BBC, as well as the writers who came into the studios of the Corporation, in different and sometimes competing ways in the turbulent years between the development of modernism and the ascendancy of postmodernism.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Todd Avery, *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922-1938*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle and Jane Lewty, eds, *Broadcasting Modernism*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), and Matthew Feldman, Erik Tønning, and Henry Mead, eds, *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

The British Broadcasting Company, as it was until granted its Royal Charter in 1927, was founded on an ethos of public service broadcasting that aspired to raise the taste of the nation. The BBC used the women writers I have selected for study to generate cultural authority because they were seen to be more closely aligned to the institution's values of cultural refinement and social conservatism than many of their *avant garde* male contemporaries. As Alison Light argues, women writers of the interwar period represented a "conservative modernity" that looked both forward to developments in technology and back to the established cultural values of a pre-1914 Britain.<sup>4</sup> In the years of reconstruction after the First World War, Light writes: "It is the women of an expanding middle class between the wars who were best able to represent Englishness in both its most modern and reactionary forms".<sup>5</sup> For the BBC, caught between the modernity of its medium and the conservatism of its founding ethos, the upper- to middle-class women writers of this thesis provided the Corporation with a desired blend of progressivism and familiarity. The BBC therefore approached women writers of the calibre, reputation, and disposition of those featured in the following chapters to discuss books, writers, and writing on-air in order to boost the Corporation's standing in the competitive media ecology of the first half of the twentieth century. What is more, the BBC may have believed that women writers would appeal to broader audiences, particularly those listeners who were excluded from the cultural hegemony as defined by patriarchal values, such as other women and the working-class.

Certain difficult-to-reach audiences gained strategic importance at moments of crisis for the BBC, brought about by internal or external factors. At these times, women

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<sup>4</sup> Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature, and Conservatism Between the Wars*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

writers were more likely to be recruited to the airwaves. This thesis considers four case studies of women writers who were relied upon by the BBC to develop its reach during periods of profound tension, growth, and change for the broadcaster and its public. Vita Sackville-West imbued the early years of radio with an aristocratic validity, Una Marson leveraged her social network to support BBC broadcasting to the Caribbean during the Second World War, Rose Macaulay justified the BBC's decision to split its programming into three distinct strands as the nation emerged into peacetime, and Elizabeth Bowen legitimised the Corporation's mid-century educational agenda when education became a primary concern for cultural workers, following the 1944 Butler Education Act. In these ways, the women writers who feature in this study complied with the BBC's agenda of cultural, moral and intellectual uplift.

However, I argue that these women also subverted or problematised the Corporation's expectations by introducing dissent into their broadcasts and fostering dialogue with or between their listeners, although Macaulay's exchanges with listeners were more antagonistic than the others. Using the BBC's written archives, including many programme records and scripts that have not previously been scrutinised, I conduct an analysis of how women writers challenged the parameters of literary and cultural debate on the airwaves. Sackville-West, Marson, Macaulay, and Bowen were given specific, sometimes quite limited broadcasting remits by the BBC— reviews of new novels, for example, or a three-part educational series on history of the novel. But they all responded to their broadcasting opportunity by expanding the scope and breadth of their programmes. As I will demonstrate, their broadcasting practices were mostly in accord: they developed ambitious critiques, they innovated radio forms, and, with the exception of Rose Macaulay, they

destabilised the cultural hegemony, most specifically the literary canon, by recognising a diverse range of texts and cultural products as worthy of inclusion in their talks. These tactics amount to a manifestation of female expansionism on the airwaves, one that worked to affirm educated women's right to participate in literary discourse at the Corporation. Although the BBC thought women writers would be more amenable to its narrow conception of literature, the women writers of this thesis worked to expand what literature meant on the airwaves of Britain.

That is not to say that they were motivated by the same agenda, although there were some commonalities in their desire to broadcast. I argue that these women writers all agreed to work with the BBC in order to develop their professional careers. Each opportunity offered financial, reputational, and, because the medium of radio was new and exciting, imaginative rewards. Yet the women writers in the following chapters were influenced by the different discursive contexts in which they were working across the first half of the twentieth century. For Sackville-West, a rejection of limiting cultural hierarchies was motivated by her own eclectic literary taste at a time when the literary canon was becoming more formalised and regulated between the wars. This process was taking place in male-dominated universities and periodicals by figures such as the critic F.R. Leavis and his advocates.<sup>6</sup> Una Marson seized her opportunity of curating propaganda programmes to the British West Indies during the Second World War to develop an inclusive West Indian identity that furthered anti-imperialist sentiments in the region. More closely aligned to the BBC, Rose Macaulay was invested in maintaining the crumbling class hierarchy that she herself had benefitted from in the new context of reconstruction Britain.

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<sup>6</sup> See Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of "Scrutiny"*, (London: NLB, 1979).

Consequently, she criticised the quality of BBC productions with a ferocity that the BBC had not anticipated, calling for new forms to be developed in the medium while protecting accents and voices that signified educated privilege. In doing so, Macaulay called for the stratification of the BBC along class lines. And, finally, Elizabeth Bowen was sceptical of the increasingly academic mode of literary discourse that prevailed at mid-century. However, by this time, the BBC's radio departments felt more sure-footed about their cultural authority and were therefore less reliant on women writers for reflected cultural capital. Working with the Further Education department, and therefore even more limited in scope than her predecessors had been, Bowen sought to challenge the encroaching academization of literature in her educational literary broadcasts in 1956. In particular, she attempted to foreground the importance of the imagination to learning. However, according to Listener Research reports, she ultimately failed to convince her audience, who preferred pedagogy to imaginative inspiration. Thus, these women writers can be said to have a range of ideological positions and responses to literary discourse in the twentieth century, some progressive and others more reactionary. In this thesis, I will demonstrate that they all used their broadcasts to debate, discuss, and ultimately broaden literary programming on the BBC by opening it to new audiences and removing it from the constraints of the male-orientated cultural hegemony that still structured the fields of literary and radio production between 1922 and 1956. While the BBC wanted women writers to provide quaint talks on approved topics, once commissioned by the BBC, the women writers in this thesis set out to redefine literary discourse on-air. Due to a lack of consistent sound archive pertaining to the case studies, this thesis does not explore the sonic aspects of voice or vocal performance for women writers speaking on radio. Rather, this research is

about the professional voices of women writers as they interacted with senior BBC officials, with audiences, with the literary marketplace, and with the form of radio through their scripts, articles, correspondence, and myriad other textual interventions. *Wireless Women* traces the written trail of these four writer's interventions with how literature was conceived of at the BBC.

In what is to follow of this introduction, I will address why literature in general, and authorial reputations in particular, were important to the BBC and illustrate the various ways in which the Corporation utilised women writers to propel its literary agenda. I outline the development of the BBC and locate the relevance of literary values to its cultural mission before, during, and after the Second World War. I then turn to consider the motivations of these four women writers who engaged with the BBC, locating their experiences in the broader context of literary culture during the first half of the twentieth century. These sections detail the context relevant for this thesis, while the third section will situate my research in germane critical debates and provide an overview of the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding women and radio. Finally, I will articulate my methodology before providing a chapter by chapter break-down of what is to come in the subsequent chapters of *Wireless Women*.

### **“A Girdle Round the Earth”: The BBC, its Cultural Mission, and its Relationship to Literature**

When the BBC made its first transmission on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1922, a new era of mass communication in Britain began. The development of radio would transform the relationship of the British people to national culture, increasing the public's access to all forms of artistic expression and providing new opportunities for prominent, paid work to musicians, dramatists, and writers. The BBC was founded on the principle of

public service broadcasting, as envisioned by its first Director, the Presbyterian, John Reith. His faith is noteworthy because it imbued his leadership of the Corporation with a Christian ethos that underpinned the broadcaster's moralising mission during its first decades. In his 1924 manifesto for public service broadcasting, *Broadcast Over Britain*, Reith outlined his aim to establish and maintain moral and cultural standards on the air: "As we conceive it, our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be, hurtful".<sup>7</sup> Through its promulgation of first-rate culture, the Corporation would "cast a girdle round the earth with bands that are all the stronger because invisible".<sup>8</sup> However, in the artistic and social ferment of the early twentieth century, the definition of 'best' was ferociously contested. As a consequence of the strong Christian ethic that Reith promoted, the BBC favoured a more socially conservative interpretation of 'the best'. As a consequence, Keith Williams argues, the Corporation's view of British culture "often tended to marginalise cultural plurality and dissent".<sup>9</sup> Unification— of both national culture and organisational structure— was a driving principle for the early Corporation.

Although working with a new technology, the founders of the BBC had inherited notions of what culture should be from Victorian and Edwardian thinkers that still dominated British intellectual life in the 1920s. In particular, the influence of social commentator Matthew Arnold is difficult to overstate. Arnold was a critic of Victorian

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<sup>7</sup> John Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), p. 34. The paragraph goes on to the oft-quoted assertion that: "It is occasionally indicated to us that we apparently give the public what we think they need- and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need. There is often no difference."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> Keith Williams, *British Writers and the Media, 1930-45*, (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996), p. 30.

Britain and advocated for a rejection of ‘philistinism’ through the appreciation of literature and culture, distilled in the population through education.<sup>10</sup> He was responsible for conceiving of culture as something that could enable people to fulfil their capacities, aesthetically, morally and intellectually.<sup>11</sup> In *Radio Modernism* (2006), Todd Avery articulates the consequences of John Reith’s inheritance of an Arnoldian worldview for the Corporation:

In light of Reith’s obvious dependence on Matthew Arnold in forging the identity of the BBC as an example of applied scientific machinery dedicated to the elevation of British cultural and moral standards, it seems eminently reasonable to describe Reith, like his contemporaries F.R. and Q.D. Leavis and T.S. Eliot, as an Arnoldian cultural theorist and to characterize the BBC itself, by extension, as an Arnoldian cultural institution.<sup>12</sup>

Reith’s use of modern mass communication technology to edify the British public was infused with a conviction that saw a hierarchy of culture as inevitable and beneficial– the public’s taste *could* be improved, and it was the BBC’s ethical duty to do so. This moral underpinning was the justification for many of the BBC’s early decisions, including the delivery of a ‘mixed’ schedule, the principle of political impartiality, and a commitment to avoiding controversy.<sup>13</sup> The BBC’s belief in the improvability of taste was crystallised in its mission statement: “to inform, educate,

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<sup>10</sup> Stefan Collini, “Introduction”, in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, auth. Matthew Arnold, ed. by Stefan Collini, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. ix-xxvi, p. x.

<sup>11</sup> See Stefan Collini, “Matthew Arnold”, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, <<https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/679>> [accessed 14 January 2019].

<sup>12</sup> Avery, p. 23. Avery goes on to problematise the reach of Arnoldianism in the large, bureaucratic and unruly institution of the BBC, noting the autonomy of Bloomsbury-affiliated male writers at certain points. This thesis offers a counter-narrative to Avery’s male-dominated account.

<sup>13</sup> The mixed schedule constituted the organisation of the BBC’s full range of programmes- from comedy to concertos- with no fixed points in the schedule, excepting the Sunday services, some News programmes and Children’s Hour. For example, listeners tuning in at 8pm on one Tuesday might encounter a choral concert, while the following Tuesday they might hear a talk on bats. The mixed schedule enabled the Corporation to broadcast programmes of varying lengths but was also used to encourage listeners to avoid selective listening to programmes they already knew or liked. As the BBC’s output grew through the 1930s and faced competition from music stations on the French coast, the ‘mixed programme’ became less workable. Mixed programming was abandoned in 1940, when the Forces Programme was introduced to entertain British troops stationed in France. For the class connotations of selective listening, see Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918–1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 458.



and entertain”, in that order.<sup>14</sup> Arnoldian values would continue to underpin the BBC’s conception of itself until at least 1956, when John Morris, the Controller of the elite Third Programme could still say “the BBC had a moral duty to improve taste and disseminate culture”.<sup>15</sup> By 1956, however, BBC managers were also obliged to concede that listeners should have a “free choice” between “culture or entertainment”, a concession which demonstrates that the BBC had retreated somewhat from its moralising mission by mid-century.<sup>16</sup> But it was the persistence of Reith’s Arnoldian view of culture that moulded the broadcasting experiences of the selected women writers because it shaped the Corporation’s conception of how literature held value at moments when these writers worked for the BBC.

## Literature at the BBC

A wide range of literature was featured on the BBC’s airwaves between 1922 and 1956. Entering the search term “literature” into the BBC’s Genome Project, the digital database of *The Radio Times*, offers a selection of the literary programmes broadcast in these years.<sup>17</sup> Early innovations included the Welsh Service’s *Shakespeare Night* in October 1923, featuring a talk on “Love Labour’s Lost” by Professor Cyril Brett from University College, South Wales and lyrics from the plays sung by T.J. Jones. By 1929, the Corporation had established regular programming highlights, such as a National Lecture. In that year, it was delivered by Robert

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<sup>14</sup> See Charlotte Higgins, “The BBC informs, educates and entertains- but in what order?”, *The Guardian*, 1 July 2014, <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jul/01/bbc-inform-educate-entertain-order>> [accessed 5 December 2018]. The BBC’s mission continues to include the wording “inform, educate, and entertain”, in that order. “Mission, values and public purpose”, *BBC.com/About the BBC*, 2019, <<https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/mission>> [accessed 20 May 2019].

<sup>15</sup> Qtd in Kate Whitehead, *The Third Programme: A Literary History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 213.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> The BBC Genome Project is a free online database that is fully searchable: [<https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>].

Bridges who spoke on the subject of poetry.<sup>18</sup> The 1930s saw the development of some scholarly and some more light-hearted literary programmes. For example, in 1933, the BBC broadcast the long-running series *Readings From Classical Literature*, featuring extracts from the *Iliad* to Theophrastus.<sup>19</sup> In September 1939, the Corporation opted for escapism with a series titled *Away From it All*. This regular programme was billed as “readings from literature having nothing whatever to do with current affairs” and featured the reassuring voice of V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, a BBC stalwart who regularly read Dickens on-air.<sup>20</sup>

By the 1940s, there were more contentious literary programmes, such as George Orwell debating the existence of a Proletarian literature in 1940 and a programme on James Joyce’s poetry in 1941.<sup>21</sup> By 1947, the Light Programme had a regular *Books and Authors* series, edited by Arthur Calder-Marshall, suggesting that literary discussion was a staple item across the BBC’s channels. In June of that year, a representative month, *Books and Authors* comprised of a review of *King Cotton* (1947), by Thomas Armstrong, a talk from Woodrow Wyatt on the short story in English literature, some new short stories of Indian life by R. K. Narayan, reviewed by John Pudney, and the feature “Your Library List”, with comment by Daniel George.<sup>22</sup> Last in my selection of representative literary programmes, and the only one to feature a woman, is Clemence Dane’s 1955 talk titled “Jules Verne and Science Fiction” on the Home Service, relating Verne to popular science fiction of the

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<sup>18</sup> “National Lecture 1- Poetry”, *Radio Times*, 22 February 1929, 282, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> “Readings from Classical Literature-I”, *Radio Times*, 13 January 1933, 485, p. 17 and “Readings from Classical Literature-XLV”, *Radio Times*, 15 December 1933, 533, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> “Away from it All”, *Radio Times*, 831, 4 September 1939, p. 25. Clinton-Baddeley was also the founder of “The London Library of Recorded English”, an anthology of English verse on gramophone records, spoken by leading radio personalities.

<sup>21</sup> “The Writer in the Witness-Box, 10: The Proletarian Writer”, featuring George Orwell and Desmond Hawkins, *Radio Times*, 29 November 1940, 896, p. 27 and “James Joyce”, *Radio Times*, 23 May 1941, 921, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> “Books and Authors”, *The Radio Times*, 6 June 1947, 1234, p. 15.

day.<sup>23</sup> What all these examples demonstrate is that literature was a regular feature of BBC broadcasting and that the occasional *avant garde* writer appeared, as Alexandra Lawrie suggests, “alongside much less radical authors and critics”.<sup>24</sup> Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff describe the catalogue of broadcasting writers as “progressive in outlook, but not too progressive”.<sup>25</sup>

As we can see from the above roll call, when incorporated into the BBC’s mission of cultural uplift, literature played several, sometimes contradictory roles at the Corporation. Firstly, literature was requisitioned by the fledgling Corporation because of its adaptability into radiophonic forms. Literature was attractive to broadcasters because it was comprised of words and speech. Along with music, it was an obvious option for radio content in the early days of technological and formal development. Further, short stories could be read on-air, novels could be adapted into plays, the essays and reviews that appeared in the literary journals of the interwar period could be revised for book talks. In turn, radio, with its privileging of voice and sound could bring life to words that had until now been pinned to the page. The creative possibilities of radio were inspiring for writers, including poets such as Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas, essayists such as George Orwell, and dramatists from J.B. Priestley to Samuel Beckett.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “Jules Verne and Science Fiction”, *The Radio Times*, 7 January 1955, 1626, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Alexandra Lawrie, “The Appreciative Understanding of Good Books’: *The Listener*, Literary Advice and the 1930s Reader”, *Literature and History*, 24:2, (2015), pp. 38-49, p. 43. Lawrie’s discussion is in relation to the roster of writers who contributed to Corporation’s literary weekly, *The Listener*. This publication was arguably a forum for more progressive literary debate than the BBC’s airwaves. For more on *The Listener*’s role in contemporary literary debates, see Charlie Dawkins, “Modernism in Mainstream Magazines, 1920-37”, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume 1, 1922-1939, Serving the Nation*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 154.

<sup>26</sup> See Amanda Wrigley and S.J. Harrison, eds. *Louis MacNeice: The Classical Radio Plays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Amanda Wrigley, “Dylan Thomas’ *Under Milk Wood*, ‘a Play for Voices’ on Radio, Stage and Television”, *Critical Studies in Television*, 9:3 (2014), pp. 78-88, C. Fleay and M. L. Sanders. “Looking into the Abyss: George Orwell at the BBC”, *Journal of Contemporary*

Secondly, and the greater focus of this thesis, was the BBC's use of literature, and particularly authors, as agents of legitimisation. In the early years of broadcasting, radio was seen as a minority interest, the preserve of technological tinkerers who experimented with the transmission and reception of radio waves.<sup>27</sup> When broadcasting grew beyond the bounds of garden sheds, many intellectuals and cultural commentators dismissed it as another vulgarising influence on cultural production, along with the cinema and music hall.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, for the BBC to fulfil its cultural mission, it had to be taken seriously. It needed prominent speakers to come before the microphone and change attitudes towards the medium by imbuing it with a patina of respectability and cultural authority. Accordingly, the Corporation approached well-known literary figures, offering them a reasonable fee, to lend their voices to the airwaves. Broadcasts by such luminaries as George Bernard Shaw provided a level of cultural cache for the Corporation, marking it out from other merely communicative technologies, such as the telephone, through its provision of intellectual content.

This thesis takes as its focus the ways in which female authors were used by the BBC to bolster its cultural authority at moments of tension and change. I argue that the reputations and personalities of the women writers in the following chapters were particularly attractive to the Corporation because they possessed the kind of cultural capital that had traction in difficult-to-reach audiences. Thus, the writers in this study are figured as literary commentators, critics, and tastemakers at the BBC, rather than

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*History*, (1989), 24:3, pp. 503–518, Kevin Branigan, *Radio Beckett: Musicality in the Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett*, (Oxford, Bern: Peter Lang, 2008). For Priestley, see Whittington, *Radio War*.

<sup>27</sup> Andreas Fickers, "Visibly Audible: The Radio Dial as Mediating Interface", in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, ed. by Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 411- 439, p. 416.

<sup>28</sup> For more on the competition between different popular media during this period, see Julian Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-garde*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

suppliers of creative or artistic programming, although many of them performed both roles across their careers. My particular focus is when, how, and in what ways these four women intervened in discussions of stylistic and formal innovations in writing, questions of literary relevance and value, and the evaluation of authors and other producers of literary discourse, such as critics and educational professionals.

By attending to instances of discussion and dissent about literary values by the selected women writers at the BBC, I suggest that their access to the microphone was predicated on the expectation that they would produce a particular type of literary discourse in service to specific cultural hierarchies. Outlining the ways these women diverged from the Corporation's agenda offers us a new understanding of how four prominent women writers intervened in literary discourse at the BBC as professional cultural workers, drawing together questions of gender, class, cultural authority, and mass communication for the first time. This study considers the interplay between how the women writers I have chosen enhanced the BBC's reputation as a cultural provider and, in return, how broadcasting elevated the professional careers of four distinguished women writers across a period of significant cultural change.

## **Beginnings**

In order to bolster its reputation for cultural legitimacy, talks by writers were given prominence at the early BBC. However, the interwar period was characterised by debates about the parameters of literary value, known as the 'Culture Wars' or 'the battle of the brows'.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, literary broadcasts became a target for criticism

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<sup>29</sup> For a detailed account of these debates as relating to literature, see Erica Brown and Mary Grover, ed. *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows, 1920-1960*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

from writers, cultural commentators, and the audience. Some wanted more elite, erudite productions that appealed to the beauty of human nature, others wanted to be more straight-forwardly entertained. The amount of time allocated to 'highbrow' versus popular programmes was a perennial BBC concern.<sup>30</sup> The range of tastes and interpretations of literature led to significant acrimony and literature at the BBC became a flashpoint for controversy. As stated, Reith believed that literature on the BBC should conform to moral propriety and he developed broadcasting policy along such lines, especially in relation to contemporary criticism. The editor of the BBC's weekly journal, *The Listener*, R.S. Lambert noted in 1940:

Sir John Reith held strong views as to the responsibilities of reviewers. He held that it was their duty to encourage 'wholesome' fiction, and discourage 'unwholesome'. But as much of the best fiction of the day fell within the latter definition, according to the Puritans, the reviewer with a literary conscience found it hard to please his BBC employer.<sup>31</sup>

Under instruction to only mention "wholesome" fiction, some reviewers felt conflicted about their responsibility to listeners to discuss the entirety of literature, unwholesome or not, and their duty to their broadcasting employer. Many writers and literary commentators found their remits truncated during Reith's tenure. After a broadcast in April 1927, Rose Macaulay complained that the list of banned topics was extensive: "The BBC people beforehand begged us to be careful not to allude to a long list of taboo'd subjects- politics, religion, birth control, and many others, all of which cause angry letters from the public if mentioned as they are Controversial".<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately for the BBC, these were exactly the topics that many contemporary

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<sup>30</sup> Christina L. Baade discusses how these debates applied to broadcasting music in *Victory Through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> R.S. Lambert, *Ariel and All His Quality: An Impression of the BBC from Within*, (London: Gollancz, 1940), p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> Rose Macaulay to Jean Macaulay, 4 April 1927, ERM/9/17, Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge (henceforth WREN).

writers, especially the modernists, were exploring. Much of the best literature of the age included passages that would inspire 'angry letters from the public'. Therefore, a significant portion of new literature was in danger of omission from BBC schedules.

However, in its efforts to become a respected cultural medium, the Corporation could not afford to ignore contemporary writing altogether. Some senior staff members petitioned for the incorporation of modern literature into the schedule to reflect developments in the world of letters. The Head of the Talks department from 1928 to 1932, Hilda Matheson, was a particularly vocal advocate of modern poetry and prose. With access to a prestigious network of writers, politicians, and intellectuals, she had persuaded many prominent literary speakers to broadcast, including George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and, as this thesis will discuss in Chapter 1, Vita Sackville-West.<sup>33</sup> "Talks about books new or old" she wrote "which encourage a critical as well as an appreciative sense...can, and beyond all question do, exert a far-reaching influence on reading and on public taste".<sup>34</sup> Matheson saw literature as a humanistic art that should be celebrated with intelligence and honesty on the airwaves. She was supported in this view by other, progressive staff members at the Corporation, including the Head of Adult Education, Charles Siepmann, R.S. Lambert, and her juniors in the Talks department, Joe Ackerley and Lionel Fielden. The latter described Matheson's tenure at the BBC as a "ceaseless struggle for wider horizons of toleration" as she sought to incorporate new literature into the BBC's output.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Charlotte Higgins, *This New Noise: The Extraordinary Birth and Troubled Life of the BBC*, (London: Guardian Books, 2015), p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Qtd in Fred Hunter, "Matheson, Hilda", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, n.date, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/49198>> [accessed 5 June 2017].

A further example of tension between contemporary writing and BBC policy was the conflict between writer, diplomat and husband to Vita Sackville-West, Harold Nicolson, and the Corporation over his 1931 Talks series, "The New Spirit in Literature", in which Nicolson was forbidden to mention *Ulysses* by name.<sup>36</sup> Nicolson circumvented the edict by reading an extract from the novel in one of his later broadcasts and he publicly criticised the reviewing policy in a *Spectator* article, in which he called the BBC's Board of Governors "a pack of ninnies".<sup>37</sup> Clearly thinking that the Corporation were being too cautious in their handling of literature, Nicolson exclaimed: "Its aim should be to inspire the rising generation: it should not try to conciliate the past".<sup>38</sup> The incompatibility of the BBC's socially conservative outlook and contemporary literature's disregard for such conventions problematised the broadcast of literary programmes at the BBC in the interwar years.

## War

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the BBC reconsidered its relationship to the field of literary production. It realised that literature was imperative to maintaining the nation's morale. As several scholars have observed, from the late 1930s, the value of literature at the BBC shifted from something which signified cultural legitimacy to an important form of propaganda.<sup>39</sup> Ian Whittington has argued that when the BBC moved onto a war footing in 1939, "[d]omestic wartime programming

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<sup>36</sup> See Charlie Dawkins, "Harold Nicolson, *Ulysses*, Reithianism: Censorship on BBC Radio, 1931", *The Review of English Studies*, 67:280, (2016), pp. 558-578 and Avery, pp. 48-9.

<sup>37</sup> Harold Nicolson, "Are the BBC Too Cautious?", *Spectator*, 21 November 1931, p. 12. Indeed, he repeated the insult twice, just to make sure.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> See David Hendy, *Radio in the Global Age*, (Malden Mills, MA: Polity Press, 2000), Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) and Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *Social History*.



became a means of interpellating British listeners into the nation: the BBC could inform and entertain its citizens while maintaining their confidence in the certainty and justness of a British victory”.<sup>40</sup> The propagandist value of literature during the war was that it could unite the nation under a banner of a shared culture, disseminating an idealised image of Britain by evoking the “imagined community” that Benedict Anderson has theorised.<sup>41</sup> A pertinent example of the intermingling of literary culture and broadcast propaganda was J.B. Priestley’s prominence on the BBC’s schedule during the early years of the war. On the day that war was declared, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, the first dramatic reading from Priestley’s upcoming book, *Let the People Sing*, was aired to much acclaim. As Sian Nicholas remarks, the “simple elegiac tone [fit] well with the prevailing mood”, demonstrating the propagandistic and morale value of creative works by British writers on wartime radio.<sup>42</sup>

It was Priestley’s personality as an author that achieved most significance in the wartime context, fitting the prevailing mood of anxiety, grim determination, and national pride that tended to characterise the early years of the British war effort.<sup>43</sup>

From June 1940 until March 1941, his short, informal talks in the series *Postscripts to the News*, acted as important outlets for discussing Britain’s role in the global conflict, so much so that *Postscripts* became a collective act of national reflection. Priestley’s ability to write for the air and perform his talks with conviction, intimacy, and humour augmented his existing authorial persona. He therefore became a familiar and formidable broadcaster for the British public in service of morale-

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<sup>40</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3rd Edition, (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Sian Nicholas, “‘Sly Demagogues’ and Wartime Radio: J.B. Priestley and the BBC”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 6.3, (1995), pp. 247-66, p. 254.

<sup>43</sup> For more on this, see Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939-1945*, (London: Pimlico, 1992).

boosting propaganda at the BBC. In choosing Priestley as a radio personality who could out-perform Nazi propaganda, particularly the populist Lord Haw-Haw, the Corporation recognised the influence, prestige, and skill that authors exercised on the public's imagination.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Priestley stopped giving these talks in 1941 following concerns from the BBC and the Ministry of Information (MoI) that he exerted too much influence on public opinion.<sup>45</sup> The Corporation wanted to capitalise on the cultural cache that Priestley held but was cautious of the power such writers could accrue via the airwaves.

Another place where the BBC's relationship with literature was riven with contradictions during the war was its Overseas Service. Previously called the Empire Service, the BBC's colonial broadcasting department had begun in 1932 as an accompaniment to white Britishers across the globe. Adapting to the changed priorities of Britain after the Munich Crisis of 1938, the BBC introduced French, Italian and German-language news broadcasts to its existing provision of Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese programming. From November 1939, the increasingly global service was renamed the Overseas Service, transmitting more foreign language broadcasts and tailored programming to a variety of nations, colonies and dominions, including the British West Indies, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Cyprus, India, and America. These efforts were propaganda, designed to emphasise

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Martland articulates the influence of Lord Haw-Haw, whose real name was William Joyce, in *Lord Haw Haw: The English Voice of Nazi Germany*, (Richmond: National Archives, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Miscommunication and accusations of censorship accompanied Priestley's departure from the *Postscripts* presenter rota in 1941, although Nicholas indicates that the writer himself had initially chosen to step back from the role at the end of 1940, frustrated by limitations placed upon him and resentful that he had not received official praise. Nicholas, "Sly Demagogues", p. 257 and pp. 260-5. See also Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 57.

the British view of world events, to create a range of engaged audiences and countermand fascist propaganda directed at the same territories.<sup>46</sup>

Literature played an important role in the Overseas Service schedules because texts and literary discussion could be exported to audiences in the colonies as evidence of imperial unity. The BBC's Eastern Service, for example, hosted an influential literary panel programme, *Voice*, which was produced by George Orwell, and, in a particularly famous episode, featured poetry and discussion from T.S. Eliot, Venu Chitale, William Empson, Mulk Raj Anand and Una Marson.<sup>47</sup> The BBC used the skills and reputations of well-respected authors in a global context to promote an image of the British Empire as intellectually inclusive and equitable. These programmes were designed to bolster the cultural capital of British rule in India during the war, as well as provide genuine opportunities for colonial intellectuals to discuss their work on a prominent platform, often for the first time. However, by recruiting late-colonial intellectuals as staff members and cultural commentators, the BBC unintentionally introduced narratives of nationalism and anti-imperialism to its airwaves via those very programmes that were designed to reinforce imperial unity. Such was the experience of Una Marson, who will be the subject of Chapter 2. Employed for her knowledge of the cultural landscape of the West Indies, Marson modified the BBC's explicitly propagandist programming to the Caribbean into an increasingly diverse and discursive literary production. The resulting programmes encouraged the disparate communities of the West Indian archipelago to recognise their shared linguistic and literary culture. Thus, literature at the BBC during the war

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<sup>46</sup> For more on how audiences of the British dominions responded, see Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>47</sup> This programme is discussed by James Proctor in "Una Marson at the BBC", *Small Axe*, 19:3, (2015), pp. 1-28, and Daniel Ryan Morse, "Fiction on the Radio: Remediating Transnational Modernism", (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Temple University, 2014).

functioned as both a centripetal, unifying force and a stratifying articulation of national and colonial differences.

## Post-War

After 1945, literature at the BBC became a greater marker of class difference as well as a site for intellectual aspiration due to the increased emphasis placed on the value of education in the post-war period. Having fought for liberty and democracy during the war, British people came to consider equal opportunities in education to be a key tenet of reconstruction. This position was manifested in the 1944 Butler Education Act, which, as Gary McCulloch argues, “based itself on the protection of democratic rights against the threat of the fascist dictators”.<sup>48</sup> As an 1947 article in *The Listener* stated, “never has the demand for books at universities, training colleges, technical colleges and schools been more urgent”.<sup>49</sup> The nation was rebuilding itself through education and uplift in all forms. Consequently, culture became one facet of the welfare-capitalism that was established in Britain following the Labour Party’s landslide general election win in 1945. State subsidies saw the creation of the Arts Council in 1946, for example, as part of a narrative of ‘culture-for-all’ that celebrated the democratisation of artforms that had previously been difficult for the majority to access.

Despite state intervention in culture, the elite cultural standards that structured pre-war tastes were often simply transferred to the new welfare state context, proceeding

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<sup>48</sup> Gary McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty-First Century*, (London: Woburn Press, 1994), p. 94. The Act raised the school leaving age to 15, standardised secondary education across the country and made provision for the further education of anyone outside of formal schooling. Ministry of Education, “Education Act 1944”, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1944), <[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1944/31/pdfs/ukpga\\_19440031\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1944/31/pdfs/ukpga_19440031_en.pdf)> [accessed 3 July 2019].

<sup>49</sup> “Too Few Books” *The Listener*, 1 May 1947, 37: 953, p. 656, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8k7STX>> [accessed 11 January 2019].

to alienate a significant faction of the population. Robert Hewison has argued that “[r]econstruction came to mean the recovery of old forms, rather than the evolution of new ones”.<sup>50</sup> Literature, as both a symbol of pre-war cultural hierarchies and post-war educational aspirations, became a site of contestation between those of the old order who wanted to maintain control of cultural capital and those ambitious lower/middle-class citizens, and those who spoke on their behalf, who wanted to remodel it for a modern, liberal democracy. The way literature was taught, and therefore disseminated across the population, was a topic of increasing importance in discussions of national culture. Alan Sinfield articulates the class-based assumptions that framed literary discourse as it was absorbed into new educational establishments in the post-war period:

Literature was presented as a universal culture, and this high claim ratified discriminations in teaching and examinations that, actually, were largely those of class and teachability. The alleged inclusiveness afforded mechanisms of exclusion.<sup>51</sup>

By construing literature as a ‘universal culture’, the welfare state and educationalists obscured the class structures that shaped literary taste and cultural literacy.

Literature had never needed formal teaching before, because the “leisure-class person of letters knew about literature as part of his or her general ambience”.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore the aggrandizement of English literature in British classrooms suggested those being educated were from the lower classes, or other excluded groups, such as women.<sup>53</sup> Inherent in debates about literary education were assumptions and prejudices about class and gender and the extent to which high culture should, or

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Hewison, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War, 1945-60*, (London: Methuen, 1981), p. xi.

<sup>51</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Literature Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, (London: Athlone Press, 1997), p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of the incorporation of literature into the British curriculum, see Alexandra Lawrie, *The Beginnings of University English*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2014).

indeed could, be accessible to a mass audience through education and state sponsored provision.

After the war, the academically rigorous literary criticism that had been established by F.R. and Q.D. Leavis in Cambridge during the 1930s came to be the accepted means of teaching literature in Britain and was theoretically, at least, available to everyone.<sup>54</sup> Techniques of close-reading and literary analysis began to structure English lessons from universities, to schools, to adult education courses in the newly invigorated Further Education institutions. As Terry Eagleton writes:

English was not only a subject worth studying, but *the* supremely civilizing pursuit, the spiritual essence of the social formation. Far from constituting some amateur or impressionistic enterprise, English was an arena in which the most fundamental questions of human existence – what it meant to be a person, to engage in significant relationship with others, to live from the vital centre of the most essential values – were thrown into vivid relief and made the object of the most intensive scrutiny.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, literature as an academic subject became a lodestone for personal and professional development, a sought-after pursuit that was theoretically accessible to all, while still, in reality, reinforcing class differences by privileging a ‘universal culture’ that was predicated on middle-class cultural tastes. The post-war BBC, as a prominent cultural institution, sought to provide programming that met both the demand for educational uplift from the post-war population and maintained a reputation for elite culture.

In practice, this meant incorporating educational literary talks into a new Further Education department from 1950 onwards and finding a more elite platform for highbrow literary discourse elsewhere on the airwaves. A pattern of stratification was

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<sup>54</sup> See Sean Matthews, “The Responsibility of Dissent: F.R. Leavis after Scrutiny”, *Literature and History*, 13:2, (2004), pp. 49-66.

<sup>55</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 27.

to become commonplace in the late 1940s and 1950s as the Corporation responded to incompatible tastes and demands from its audience by providing distinct broadcasting strands. In doing so, the BBC was coming to terms with the consequences of its wartime broadcasting policies. Having tailored its output to the domestic audience via the Home Service and maintained troop morale with the Forces Service during the war, the BBC could not go back to providing the limited choice of one National programme and various Regional channels, as it had before the war.<sup>56</sup> Competing conceptions of the value of British culture came to be embodied by the BBC's very structure. The then Director-General, William Haley, decided on a solution which, he believed, saw three separate programmes cater to the full range of cultural tastes. The Light Programme specialised in the most popular cultural expressions of music hall, comedy, and light entertainment. The Home Service blended popular skits such as *Its That Man Again (ITMA)* and more rigorous current affairs and educative programming.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the Third Programme, launched in September 1946, was the most prestigious and experimental of the Corporation's offerings, featuring highbrow music and drama as well as in-depth talks on a range of subjects. Content from higher up Haley's 'pyramid', as it came to be known, would be woven into the Light and Home services, tempting listeners to engage with more edifying output and move up the listening scale. The tripartite structure of cultural uplift emphasised the upward trajectory of the ideal listener as they moved towards intellectual sophistication, mirroring the post-war emphasis on personal improvement

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<sup>56</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio 3*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996), pp. 9-12.

<sup>57</sup> *Its That Man Again* was a hugely successful comedy show that had started during the war, written by Ted Kavanagh and starring Tommy Handley. 'That Man' refers to Hitler.

in a new nation. It was this structure that Macaulay supported in her post-war broadcasting, aligning herself with the top echelon of the broadcasting pyramid.

In a similar way to Macaulay, the Director of the Third Programme, Harman Grisewood, was defiant about the stratification of taste along pre-war lines: “I believe in elites, because they are simply the best. And I think the best is the right thing to have”.<sup>58</sup> This post-war re-articulation of the Reithian ‘best’ was explicitly and unapologetically elitist. Thus, literature at the Corporation tended to be understood as the preserve of educational programming or a symbol of an elitist cultural hegemony. Such divisions worked to preserve existing cultural hierarchies.

Indeed, the centripetal form of wireless telegraphy has caused critics to warn of the authoritarian aspects of radio technology. Examining the underlying motivations of mass communications technologies in general, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer note: “What is not mentioned is that the basis on which technology is gaining power over society is the power of those whose economic position in society is strongest”.<sup>59</sup> For Adorno and Horkheimer, radio is necessarily a means of maintaining the status quo through the perpetuation of the economic elite’s dominance over culture and society. Even the more quotidian realities of broadcasting regulate access to the medium. As Aaron Jaffe acknowledges “the knobs and dials of radio reception belong to the hands of the many, the mode and means of its transmission are controlled by the hands of the few”.<sup>60</sup> The very infrastructure of radio and the culture it transmitted, especially at the monopolistic

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<sup>58</sup> Carpenter, p. 78.

<sup>59</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 95.

<sup>60</sup> Aaron Jaffe, “Inventing the Radio Cosmopolitan: Vernacular Modernism at a Standstill”, in *Broadcasting Modernism*, ed. by Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle and Jane Lewty, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), pp. 11-30, p.15.



BBC, reinforced socio-economic hierarchies by promulgating the ideology of the middle- and upper-classes because they were the dominant faction in society and within the BBC itself.

By 1956, the context of radio broadcasting in Britain had radically changed from its early, pioneering days. For one thing, television as a medium was in the ascendancy. As the 1950s progressed, the BBC's television departments began to absorb an increasing proportion of the Corporation's licence fee revenue and audience figures. Furthermore, in 1955, commercial television had been introduced. Faced with domestic competition for audiences for the first time, the BBC moved away from its original moralising mission to provide ever more entertaining and popular fare. Although 'sound broadcasting', as radio was termed by BBC management, did not face direct competition, the success of the new medium created different problems. Despite establishing its cultural authority in the 1930s and 1940s, BBC radio had less money to make ambitious programmes and was subjected to increasingly stringent demands from management. More esoteric broadcasts began to require evidence of audience engagement, for example, rather than the Corporation accepting their worth on principle. As a result, the final woman writer in this thesis, Elizabeth Bowen, interacted with a more rigid and regulated Corporation than earlier contributors, such as Sackville-West or Marson. The consequences of BBC radio's more stringent commissioning policies will be discussed in Chapter 4.

### **Cultural Workers, Professional Women: Women Writers at the BBC**

Throughout the varied contexts of the thirty-four years covered in this study, the BBC courted women writers to speak on its airwaves because they were seen to attract

women readers. And female readers, as Nicola Humble articulates, were a major concern in these years:

Questions about what women read, and why, and in what ways they do so became a major preoccupation in this period. Critics, intellectuals, writers, librarians, publishers, and sociologists interrogated female reading habits as if they held the key to the significant changes in cultural values that were becoming increasingly apparent.<sup>61</sup>

One finding of such scrutiny of women's reading was that women often read books written by women. As such, broadcasts by female writers were considered appealing to female audiences, a demographic that was essential to establishing radio listening in the regular pattern of domestic life. For the BBC to be heard in the widest number of homes, it could not afford to alienate those portions of its audience who lacked an elite education: women and the working-class. If literature was going to function at the Corporation as part of its mission of cultural uplift, those writers who were popular and accessible needed to be harnessed for the airwaves. It was often the case that women writers had large readerships and their celebrity status brought listeners to the BBC who might otherwise have been put off by its reputation for stuffiness. Vita Sackville-West is a good example. Her award-winning poem, *The Land* (1926) established her as a household name across the nation, giving the BBC a certain cultural cache when she started reviewing for them.

The BBC may have considered women writers to be less of a threat to its mission and ethics than contemporary male writers, many of whom tended to be outspoken critics of the BBC's literary policies.<sup>62</sup> More privileged male writers tended to agree with Louis MacNeice who wrote in 1947: "Before I joined the BBC I was, like most of

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<sup>61</sup> Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> The confrontation between the BBC and Nicolson has already been mentioned, as has Priestley's. In Chapter 1, I will consider Desmond MacCarthy's criticism of Reith's book reviewing policy.

the intelligentsia, prejudiced not only against that institution but against broadcasting in general”.<sup>63</sup> Thus, it was more difficult to persuade contemporary male writers of the benefits of broadcasting than their female peers, who may have held their prejudice less strongly. Indeed, Reith’s own misogyny seems to support such a position. R.S. Lambert of *The Listener* noted that “Sir John’s attitude towards women officials in broadcasting seemed to oscillate between nervousness and sympathy”.<sup>64</sup> Reith was nervous about the power that senior women such as Hilda Matheson and Mary Somerville, the Head of Schools Broadcasting, held at the Corporation and it can be assumed he felt in a similar way about women writers. That Reith was also sympathetic suggests that he may have recognised that women should be given a chance to demonstrate their worth, but under strict guidelines and in limited ways. Reith’s attitude towards professional women within the BBC, as well as prominent women writers, can be seen as an indication of the fraught and sometimes contradictory attitude of senior BBC officials to tenacious female employees. While some exceptional women were tolerated, even celebrated for their contribution to broadcasting, their efforts were often limited to specific ‘female-appropriate’ fields, such as education, women’s programming and the arts, or curtailed by pernicious gender-based assumptions about capacity, interest, or expertise. The women writers selected in this thesis, for example, tended to be given smaller, less exacting remits than their male counterparts when they were initially approached by the Corporation. On the other hand, by marginalising the broadcasting contributions that these women writers made, the BBC also subjected them to less rigorous scrutiny than their male peers. Much female-oriented, female-made radio went under the radar of

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<sup>63</sup> Qtd in Amanda Wrigley, “Introduction”, in *Louis MacNeice: The Classical Radio Plays*, ed. by Amanda Wrigley and S.J. Harrison, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-30, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Lambert, p. 69.

senior BBC management, allowing for experimentation with new presentation styles and formats that were then sometimes adopted widely. Kate Murphy has considered how early women's programming at the BBC, initially under the title "Women's Hour", established the principle of "broadcasting for women by women" as "both expected and acceptable".<sup>65</sup> As daytime programmes were considered less prestigious due to their female audience, producers were emboldened to make presentational experiments. Murphy writes:

The 4.00 pm debates [beginning in 1924] were the first occasion that two discussants had appeared within a BBC programme, a format that would be developed and expanded on within the general output during the next few years. Likewise, the afternoon women's programme was where 'interviews' were first piloted...Amongst those interviewed were the film star Gladys Cooper, the novelists Rebecca West and Ruby Ayres and the suffragist leader, Millicent Garrett Fawcett as well as 'real' people.<sup>66</sup>

Some of the most vital and engaging radio formats— the interview and the discussion— were initially trialled in women's daytime programming because it was not subject to the same managerial scrutiny or expectation of 'quality' as the evening schedule. The implicitly gendered premise that men mostly listened in the evening when they were home from work and that they deserved or demanded higher quality output enabled women's programming to become a site for innovation. In contrast to the BBC's expectations, women's programming was often experimental and ambitious. Moreover, the appearance of two female novelists in Murphy's list evidences the centrality of literary production to women's broadcasting content at this time.

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<sup>65</sup> Kate Murphy, "Brightening Their Leisure Hours'? The Experiment of BBC Women's Hour, 1923–1925", *Women's History Review*, (2019), pp. 1-15, p. 4. It was this tradition that the long-running programme "Woman's Hour" leveraged when it began in 1946, seeking to educate women on their responsibilities as citizens amongst other, more conventional or domestic concerns. See Kristin Skoog, "Neither Worker nor Housewife but Citizen: BBC's Woman's Hour 1946–1955", *Women's History Review*, 26:6, (2017), pp. 953-974.

<sup>66</sup> Murphy, "Brightening Their Leisure Hours", p. 9.

As this thesis will show, the BBC's assumption that women writers would be less likely to challenge its authority was also misplaced— my chosen women writers went on to develop innovative broadcasting techniques that pushed BBC broadcasts about literature in directions that were unanticipated and sometimes undesirable for the Corporation. For example, Sackville-West developed a dialogic approach to reviewing books on-air that enabled her to discuss the value of important, “unwholesome” texts with her audience. This amounted to an act of female rebelliousness that rejected existing literary orthodoxies. In part, she was able to do this because of the limited remit the BBC gave her as a woman, a remit which she expanded gradually and concertedly to influence how books were discussed on the BBC. By contrast, her husband, Harold Nicolson, was granted a prominent and wide-ranging remit in “The New Spirit in Literature” series in 1931, but he was subject to greater scrutiny by BBC officials. As a result, his attempts to discuss prominent texts were censored. This thesis examines how Sackville-West was able to discuss controversial texts with a freedom that Nicolson did not have. I argue that women writers often participated in overlooked or unobtrusive portions of the broadcasting schedule, beginning with unassuming commissions such as radio reviews or educational talks, which they ultimately developed to challenge the hegemonic conception of literature at the BBC.

## **Cultural Capital**

At the birth of radio in the 1920s and as Britain adjusted to the rapid social changes that were brought about by the First World War, anxieties about shifting power manifested themselves in a preoccupation with class. Often, the clearest demonstration of one's class was through one's choice of reading material— from the

popular daily newspapers that were considered lower-class, to the more literary periodicals of the middle-class— what you read reflected where you were in Britain’s inter-war social hierarchy.<sup>67</sup> Referencing the celebrated middle-class character of Mrs Miniver, the creation of Jan Struther, Alison Light writes: “...the Mrs Minivers of this world knew themselves to be different from the lower orders because of their rich inner life and literary sensibility”.<sup>68</sup> Literary sensibility was a principle marker of class allegiance. It is no coincidence, then, that the women featured in this study, both writers and BBC producers, derive predominantly from the middle-class, and in the case of Vita Sackville-West, and, more problematically, Elizabeth Bowen, the upper classes. Bowen, as a member of the Anglo-Irish, witnessed the decline of that aristocracy in the tumult of Irish independence in the 1920s. The Sackville-Wests owned the biggest house in Britain: Knole, in Kent. Una Marson’s access to the networks of influence that she capitalised on for her BBC work would have been significantly impeded if her father had not been a respectable middle-class pastor. Rose Macaulay’s family were included in Noel Annan’s account of the British intelligentsia, “the Intellectual Aristocracy”.<sup>69</sup> Thus, although these women produced disparate literary works and experienced divergent professional careers, their interaction with the BBC was predicated on a shared set of class values.

Such privilege was not sufficient to guarantee these women’s involvement with the BBC, but it was necessary. More than class alone, I argue that women writers

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<sup>67</sup> See Ann Ardis and Patrick C. Collier, *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) for an introductory discussion of periodical studies.

<sup>68</sup> Light, p. 12. The character of Mrs Miniver appeared in a column in *The Times* from 1937. When war broke out, she was adapted into a 1942 film for American audiences, depicting a sympathetic view of blitzed Britain. For a further indication of the extent to which Mrs Miniver has critical resonance in literature of this period, see Kate Macdonald ed., *The Masculine Middlebrow 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> Noel Annan, “The Intellectual Aristocracy”, in *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, and Geniuses*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 304–41.

required enough 'cultural capital' for them to be considered assets to the BBC and therefore gain access to the microphone. Cultural capital, as theorised by Pierre Bourdieu, consists of "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body", which are "convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications".<sup>70</sup> In other words, cultural capital is the ability to participate meaningfully in high-level cultural activities and debates, potentially for money. Bourdieu suggests that taste, educational achievement, and class are bequeathed through families in a similar way to economic capital.<sup>71</sup> In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), Bourdieu articulates the class underpinnings of taste as a tripartite:

1) *legitimate taste*, i.e. the taste for legitimate works... increases with educational level and is highest in those fractions of the dominant class that are richest in educational capital. 2) *'middle-brow' taste*, which brings together minor works of the major arts...and the major works of the minor arts...is more common in the middle classes...than in the working classes...or in the 'intellectual' fractions of the dominant class. 3) Finally, *'popular' taste*...is most frequent among the working classes and varies in inverse ratio to educational capital.<sup>72</sup>

Not only is Bourdieu's outline of taste hierarchical in and of itself, it refers to persisting hierarchies of "legitimacy" and "major/minor" classifications within culture. While such a theory about the stratification of tastes is clearly a simplification of individuals' cultural engagement, it mirrors the changing position of the British Broadcasting Corporation in productive ways. The BBC in its earliest days had been subject to accusations of 'middlebrow' taste and therefore sought to imbue itself with the prestige of the aristocratic writer, Vita Sackville-West, whose autodidacticism

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<sup>70</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", trans. by Richard Nice, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson, (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 280-291, p. 281-2.

<sup>71</sup> "Forms of Capital", p. 282.

<sup>72</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 1979, trans. by Richard Nice, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 8.

was one indicator of her class and suggestive of significant cultural capital. In the post-war period, the BBC was forced to cater to a wider range of public tastes and stratified its services along the tripartite lines subsequently identified by Bourdieu. As I describe in Chapter 3, Rose Macaulay's reviews of radio programmes in the late 1940s explicitly engaged with the consequences of the BBC's stratification, rendering visible the class assumptions that supported such a split. As the Corporation participated in educational developments in the 1950s, it required contributions from women writers who demonstrated the highest educational capital. In this context, the honorary degrees that Elizabeth Bowen received in those years became relevant to producers.

For the writers in this thesis, leveraging their cultural capital at amenable institutions was essential for translating it into professional success. Lending their name to broadcasts increased their reputations. As Bourdieu noted:

The only legitimate accumulation, for the author as for the critic... consists in making a name for oneself—implying a power to consecrate objects...or people...and hence of giving them value, and of making profits from this operation.<sup>73</sup>

The four wireless women writers in this thesis 'consecrated' the airwaves of the BBC by converting their cultural capital into programme content and were rewarded with concomitant boosts to their professional reputations. Broadcasting was an exceptional opportunity for women writers to grow their audience. No periodical, journal or newspaper of the period had a circulation that came close to the 9 million wireless sets that the BBC licenced in 1939.<sup>74</sup> The actual number of listeners was many millions more. Therefore, by appearing on the radio, women writers expanded

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<sup>73</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. by Susan Emanuel, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 148.

<sup>74</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 6



the size of their potential readership exponentially. As Hilda Matheson wrote to Vita Sackville-West in 1927: “A lot of people told me they went and bought *The Land* after you read it” on-air.<sup>75</sup>

The BBC also paid generously for the work it commissioned. A twenty-minute talk often demanded a script of only 1,500 or so words and the BBC paid anywhere between five and twenty guineas for it, a welcome addition to these working women’s incomes. Of course, Una Marson was a salaried member of staff, so did not receive extra payment for broadcasts she made beyond the remit of her contract. Her starting salary of £480 a year was lower than those of her colleagues, a result of the institutional racism that structured her interaction with the broadcaster.<sup>76</sup>

However, it was still a relatively high salary compared to the average wages of the period.<sup>77</sup> In Bowen and Sackville-West’s cases, their most prolonged engagement with the BBC was at periods of financial strain, brought about in both cases by their husbands’ loss of earnings compounded by the spiralling costs of their aristocratic country houses.<sup>78</sup> My thesis attends to the overlaps and slippages of these women writers’ possession of cultural capital and the BBC’s need for it, suggesting that the Corporation sought the authority and reach of women writers at moments of crisis and that the selected women responded positively when they could see the

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<sup>75</sup> Hilda Matheson to Vita Sackville-West, 24 January 1927, Box 1, Vita Sackville-West Papers, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, (henceforth BRBML).

<sup>76</sup> Proctor, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> For example, Ian Whittington notes that a conscripted private in the British army was paid a mere 14 shillings a week in 1941. Whittington, p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> Alan Cameron, Elizabeth Bowen’s husband, died suddenly in 1952 after the couple had moved back to Bowen’s family home, Bowen’s Court, in Ireland to try to protect his health. Thus, Bowen was left to maintain the house on her writing income alone and turned to broadcasting and lecturing to supplement her income, an arrangement which she was not necessarily comfortable with, as will be explored in Chapter 4. Sackville-West was persuaded to work for the BBC as a means of earning regularly while her husband, Harold Nicolson, resigned from the civil service and established himself in journalism and politics. The couple were re-locating from their first home, Long Barn, and in the process of buying Sissinghurst Castle during these years, so BBC payments were also welcome.

opportunity for professional gain. Once appointed, the women writers in the pages that follow seized the possibility of developing literary discourse at the Corporation in line with their own intellectual positions and developed their broadcasting careers in expansive and intellectually engaging ways.

Moral considerations also played a part in motivating these women to participate in public service broadcasting. Marson certainly felt an ethical compulsion to broadcast. She recognised the power that BBC transmissions had on the education and the imagination of citizens, in Britain and its colonies. She also knew her involvement in the production of such programmes could have a positive impact on her fellow West Indians by representing a greater diversity of identities on-air and providing welcome payment to contributors. The other women in this thesis could by no means be described as activists in the same sense. However, they too had ideological motivations for speaking on-air. With her commitment to maintaining established standards in the pronunciation of English, Rose Macaulay aligned herself closely with the BBC's emphasis on rigorous linguistic accuracy for speakers. Her post-war reviews subjected prominent broadcasters to fervent scrutiny as she endeavoured to defend the dominance of elite culture from the perceived threat of populism. In contrast, Elizabeth Bowen occupied a conflicted position in her relationship to the BBC's Further Education department. Although her husband, Alan Cameron, had worked for the BBC's Educational Committee for many years, her own scepticism of the prevailing trend towards the formalisation of literary education meant that she was initially hesitant to participate in educational broadcasts. Eventually, Bowen saw the series to which she was invited to broadcast as an opportunity to advocate for an imaginative approach to understanding literature, as opposed to a more conventional lecture series. It was in this spirit of compromise that she agreed to undertake the

commission. The women writers in the chapters that follow were part of a society in which broadcasting was having a marked effect on the intellectual and moral values of the nation and they wanted to contribute to the conversation, although often not in the way that the Corporation expected. By considering the kinds of literary discourse developed by Sackville-West, Marson, Macaulay, and Bowen, we can ascertain where, how and why they challenged, expanded or supported the BBC's mission of cultural uplift based on questions of inclusivity and elitism.

Besides, these wireless women found the experience of broadcasting enjoyable and meaningful. The bustle of Broadcasting House, the lavish lunches that were arranged to discuss scripts and forthcoming programmes, and the hush of the studio and its red transmission light were all stimulating aspects of broadcasting for writers of both genders. Moreover, women still tended to be excluded from traditional spaces of elite culture, such as members clubs, the Royal Academy, and the editorship of literary journals (with the honourable exception of *Time and Tide*). The BBC, therefore, was unusual in being a prominent cultural institution that women writers could participate in. Because the women in these pages *could* access the Corporation, indeed were invited in at moments of tension and growth for the broadcaster, there is a sense that they genuinely cared about the quality of literary debate that occurred in the studios of the BBC. The following women writers were absolutely central to the output of the BBC and were, therefore, invested in the outcomes of their collaboration with the broadcaster.

## **Networks**

Who you knew mattered at the early BBC. From its inception, the Corporation sought to access the elite ranks in politics and culture to establish a level of authority and

legitimacy. Overwhelmingly, these networks were the exclusive preserve of men. The ability to understand the unspoken meanings of the male-coded establishment was of great value to BBC management and formed the principles of the Corporation's recruitment policies in its early years. Chief Engineer at the BBC from 1922 to 1929, Peter Eckersley, describes the recruitment process, and its implications, in more detail:

It was asked of every applicant for a responsible job in the BBC: 'Is he a gentleman?'... The term 'gentleman' was not meant to describe an easy-going member of the landed aristocracy, but rather someone apt to obey blindly and put behaviourism before intelligence. In these circumstances, it was inevitable that broadcasting should have reinforced conformity.<sup>79</sup>

In other words, obedience and respect for hierarchy were valued by the BBC's management, qualities that were not always demonstrated by writers, male or female. Eckersley himself saw this principle as limiting or restrictive; the 'conformity' that was cultivated could be seen to stifle innovation.<sup>80</sup>

Policies that privileged membership of certain social and professional networks were also implemented in the recruitment of female staff to the BBC. Women had begun to enter higher education in increasing numbers as well as becoming more prominent in the publishing and journalism professions during these decades of the twentieth century. Consequently, their social networks developed along educational and professional literary lines. Access to university education was a key marker of women's social and professional status in the inter- and post-war period.

Significantly, it allowed women to network in ways that had previously only been

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<sup>79</sup> Peter Eckersley, *The Power Behind the Microphone*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941), p. 173.

<sup>80</sup> There was also personal bitterness in Eckersley's remarks, as he had been obliged to resign from the Corporation following his name being given as the guilty party in a divorce case, a scandal and affront to propriety that Reith could not tolerate. Ed Stourton, *Auntie's War: The BBC During the Second World War*, (London: Doubleday, 2017), pp. 54-55.

afforded to men.<sup>81</sup> What is more, some institutions were more influential than others. For example, many prominent BBC women attended Somerville College, Oxford.<sup>82</sup> As one of the first colleges for female students at Oxford, Somerville was a hallowed place for intellectual women in Britain with the means of attending university in the early twentieth century.<sup>83</sup> In her biography of the novelist Penelope Fitzgerald, Hermione Lee remarks:

Somerville College's place in...Oxford history was a well-defined one...[Fitzgerald] had a typical Somervillian work ethic– and haughtiness about her own intellectual powers. The college was profoundly non-sectarian...egalitarian and independent. It had a reputation for exclusiveness and 'cussedness', and for producing formidable women.<sup>84</sup>

As Lee's description makes clear, an association with this institution of elite education imbued its alumni with characteristics of privilege.<sup>85</sup> Of the forty-four women I have catalogued as prominently participating in developing the programme output of the early BBC, 20% attended Somerville College.<sup>86</sup> Another 9% studied at the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, London and 4.5% at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, St Hughes College, Oxford, and Newnham College, Cambridge.<sup>87</sup> Therefore 42.5% of the prominent BBC women that I have been able

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<sup>81</sup> Carole Dyhouse, "Graduates, Mothers and Graduate Mothers: Family Investment in Higher Education in Twentieth-Century England", *Gender and Education*, 14:4, (2002), pp. 325-336.

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>83</sup> Somerville College was founded in 1879, alongside Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford. The first female college, Girton, had opened at Cambridge in 1869, followed by Newnham College in 1871.

<sup>84</sup> Hermione Lee, *Penelope Fitzgerald: A Life*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), p. 55.

<sup>85</sup> As literature was one of the few high-profile pursuits suitable for ambitious, middle- and upper-middle-class women at the time, Somerville produced a number of successful novelists, including Rose Macaulay (who knew Fitzgerald's mother at university), Dorothy Sayers, Winifred Holtby, Iris Murdoch, and Fitzgerald herself. Penelope Fitzgerald would work at the BBC as a Records Production Assistant during the Second World War. Her novel, *Human Voices* (1980), is based on her experience there. Although she went on to broadcast in the latter half of the twentieth century, her purely administrative wartime role disqualifies her from inclusion in the current study.

<sup>86</sup> All statistics generated from data in Appendix 1.

<sup>87</sup> The graduates of Lady Margaret Hall, Iza Benzie and Janet Quigley, formed a close friendship that saw them succeed in numerous administrative and production roles at the BBC, including the founding of the *Today* programme in 1957. Benzie was the first female Head of the Foreign department, whereas Quigley became Chief Assistant of Talks in 1956. Their focus was not literary, and therefore they do not fit the remit of this study, but they nonetheless also demonstrate the power

to document attended five educational institutions, all of which were small colleges or schools where social networks were tightly woven and exclusive.<sup>88</sup> Such a distribution of educational affiliation leads me to argue that the women of the early BBC were developing and using network structures that had previously only been available to men. Exclusive universities cultivated an infrastructure through which to pass work opportunities and to integrate accepted cultural values; an old girls' network of sorts.

Access to literary society was also key in supporting women's employment at the Corporation. The prominent Features producer, Mary Hope Allen, for example, had carved out a career at the centre of the interwar literary landscape before her appointment to the BBC in 1927. Having been at school with Elizabeth Bowen, Allen went on to study at the Slade School of Art before working as an editorial secretary for the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*, under the editorship of Naomi Royde-Smith.<sup>89</sup> In 1928, R.E. Jeffrey of the Production department wrote to Roger Eckersley, Head of Programmes, noting that Allen had "a very great deal of general knowledge and writing experience" and that she would be useful to the department because "she is in close personal touch with a number of well-known authors and poets who are likely to be of value in programmes".<sup>90</sup> As well as Allen's writing skills, her literary contacts made her a valuable asset to a department that recognised the importance of literary networks for the production of high-quality programmes.

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of female networks at the Corporation during this period. See Kate Murphy, *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 158.

<sup>88</sup> In terms of Universities, a total of 38% of the documented women attended Oxbridge.

<sup>89</sup> Royde-Smith championed Elizabeth Bowen and other prominent writers at the start of their careers, including Rose Macaulay, Graham Greene and Rupert Brooke. Allen subsequently worked as a theatre critic for the *Daily Chronicle* under Hubert Griffiths and followed him to the *Daily Express* as a reviewer of novels, a role she maintained for a time whilst employed as a playreader at the BBC.

<sup>90</sup> R.E. Jeffrey to R. Eckersley, 4 January 1928, Allen, Mary Hope, L1/659/2, BBC WAC.

Within these networks that were intended to perpetuate conformity at the BBC, the four women in this study flourished. They possessed the literary and educational credentials that the BBC sought and used them to access the microphone. Often, they were responsive to the BBC due to personal contacts they had both within and beyond the Corporation, and which they developed further during their broadcasting careers. These women were accepted into the Corporation on the grounds of class and their possession of social contacts, but they retained a sense of excluded-ness from the cultural hegemony due to their gender. Both women producers and writers were accustomed to working as outsiders in the patriarchal structures defining mid-century literary and broadcasting professions. When they worked together, producers and writers developed a mutual understanding that encouraged innovation and risk-taking. Thus, class, networks, and gender were essential factors producing the innovative forms that many of these literary women developed in their broadcasts.

## **Form**

Finally, then, and most significantly, the radio medium was an exciting opportunity to experiment with form, with voice, and with one's own cultural authority in the first half of the twentieth century. Formally, the moment of broadcast was novel. As Elizabeth Bowen confessed: "Writing for the air frenzies me; it is such a new and different technique—all the same, its problems are fascinating".<sup>91</sup> For Bowen, who experimented with writing Features and adapting short stories for the radio, as well as participating in literary talks and discussions, the idea of tailoring one's writing

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<sup>91</sup> Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 215–16.

style to “a vast, mixed, popular, unseen audience” was exciting.<sup>92</sup> Released from the constraints of the journal review, the short story, or the novel, words were encountered in a new context, in a place of experiment and enthusiasm. As writers, these women were ambitious. They wanted to experiment with the modern and ambitious technology of radio.

All of the writers in this thesis expressed awe at the capacity of radio to broadcast their voices into the ether, across social and national boundaries. In a New Year’s Eve broadcast to the West Indies on the cusp of 1945, Una Marson evoked the wonder she experienced when she came to work each day:

I am never able to explain to them just how interesting and miraculous I find it. I never cease to be amazed at the fact that I can sit at a table here in a studio in London, and you can sit in your drawing rooms, and on your verandas, in Jamaica, or Trinidad, or in a thousand places on the globe and hear what I say.<sup>93</sup>

The contraction of space that radio broadcasting entailed was an exciting concept for Marson. Awareness of the “miraculous” nature of the medium, combined with their sense of equality and authority, encouraged my chosen women writers to make interventions in BBC broadcasting that privileged the audience above the Corporation. By this I mean that women writers were particularly committed to developing forms or modes of broadcasting that valued the audience’s listening experience and prioritised listener concerns about literature. Unlike some male broadcasters, the women in this thesis did not take the dissemination of their voice for granted. This was because these women understood what it was like to be excluded from cultural discussions by virtue of their gender, and with the exception

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<sup>92</sup> Qtd in Emily C. Bloom, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 98.

<sup>93</sup> Marson, *Calling the West Indies*, 31 Dec/1 Jan 1944/1945, *Calling the West Indies Script Files*, BBC WAC.



of Macaulay, they worked to open the narrow definitions of who could participate in literary discourse by including the mass audience of the BBC in their high-level cultural conversations.

Admitted into the institution of the BBC, these women still maintained a certain outsider status derived from their exclusion from the male-organised cultural hierarchy. As a consequence, the women writers of the following chapters were aware of and sometimes inclined to include more diverse intellectual positions and tastes in their discussions of literature and literary value than the existing paradigm of male-dominated discourse. Such attempts at egalitarianism can be seen in Sackville-West's use of listener letters in her book reviews and Marson's conscious balancing of ethnicities and identities in the message-givers of her West Indian party programmes. By contrast, a fear of increased diversity underpins Macaulay's disavowal of working-class influence on the BBC, her fears stemming from an acute sensitivity to the new kinds of voices that were beginning to occupy positions of cultural prominence at the Corporation. And questions of access shape Bowen's fraught response to the increasingly academic tenor of literary discussion at the BBC. She resented the closing down of interpretative possibilities that a rigorous academic method elicited but could not fully support the provision of elite, imaginative education for all. So often cast as the silent listener in relation to male speakers and writers, when women writers were offered an opportunity to speak at the BBC, they staked their claim to a literary discourse that, with the exception of Macaulay, rejected limiting canonical definitions and rigid hierarchies.

By incorporating dissenting views on literature, the judgements these women broadcast in their reviewing and discussion programmes were nuanced and

accommodating. Canon-formation tended to be rejected in favour of inclusivity across categories of nationality, class, and taste, with the exception of Macaulay's emphasis on maintaining elite cultural standards. While the three other women did not always achieve fully intersectional representation, they often worked to promote a wider range of views than was being promulgated by mainstream male intellectuals and academics. However, their endeavours also met with mixed responses. Where Sackville-West's audience for her book reviews were grateful and enthused by a wider range of reading recommendations, those who chose to listen to Bowen's Further Education broadcasts for their own edification were somewhat disappointed by her non-pedagogic style. For each woman, it was undoubtable that listeners were more diverse in terms of gender, race, class, and taste than they or the BBC could conceive. Rejecting the narrow role demarcated for women, for literature, and specifically for women writers at the BBC, these wireless women aimed to shatter limiting cultural hierarchies and problematise complacent masculine and Arnoldian cultural values at the Corporation.

## Literature Review

As scholars have documented the significance of women's increasing visibility in the workplace from the beginning of the twentieth century, so consideration has been given to the women who worked in radio, across various national histories.<sup>94</sup> In

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<sup>94</sup> For Australia, see Jeannine Baker, "Woman to Woman: Australian Feminists' Embrace of Radio Broadcasting, 1930s–1950s", *Australian Feminist Studies*, 32:93 (2017), pp. 292–308, for Argentina, see Christine Ehrick, *Radio and the Gendered Soundscape: Women and Broadcasting in Argentina and Uruguay, 1930–1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); for Germany, see Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923–1945*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996) and Alexander Badenoch, "Time Consuming: Women's Radio and the Reconstruction of National Narratives in Western Germany, 1945–1948", *German History*, 25:1, (2007), pp. 52–3; for Sweden, see Karin Nordberg, *Folkhemmets Röst: Radion Som Folkbildare 1925–1950*, (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 1998), pp. 319–52; and the US see Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). For an overview, see Kristin Skoog and Alexander

Britain, the range of roles and influence that women attained at the early BBC has been outlined by Kate Murphy in her monograph, *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* (2016). She illustrates how women contributed to the creation of programmes at all levels in the interwar period when the BBC, as a modern technological organisation, was open to hiring policies that privileged the skill, imagination, and connections of its staff. Contrasting the broadcaster to more discriminatory professions, such as the Civil Service and teaching, Murphy notes that “the newness and modernity of the BBC set it apart from traditional professions in which educated women were clustered”, allowing women to rise higher and faster in the BBC than elsewhere.<sup>95</sup>

However, women at the BBC were still subject to unfairness in pay and promotion and, Murphy argues, were “often isolated amongst men” in their departments and roles.<sup>96</sup> While it is true that senior women were always outnumbered by men at the patriarchal Corporation, this thesis shows that BBC women were in fact connected to each other and to prominent women writers through two overlapping networks: university education and literary society. A networked awareness of women’s participation in broadcasting enables me to foreground the class-based privileges that underpinned these women’s broadcasting careers.<sup>97</sup> Although Murphy recognises that predominantly “trained and educated women” were attracted to the

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Badenoch, “Women and Radio: Sounding Out New Paths in Women’s History”, *Women’s History Review*, n. no., (2019), pp. 1-6.

<sup>95</sup> Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> By networked I refer here to the “Actor Network Theory” of Bruno Latour, as outlined in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Latour conceives of the social as a series of interlocking networks that can only be meaningfully perceived when the connections between people and non-human actors are exercised. Instances of activated connections, consciously or unconsciously, constitute the Actor-Network. I employ this term to mean the overlapping and interwoven influences of people, technology, and texts, which combine to make the radio-literary network of the twentieth century BBC, whether individual actors were aware of it or not.

“modern ‘professional’ industry” of broadcasting, this thesis develops the narrative of upper- and middle-class women’s involvement with the Corporation by examining the centrality of their class-affiliations in their engagement with literary discourse. The choice of Vita Sackville-West as BBC book reviewer, for example, was predicated on class hierarchies.<sup>98</sup> Rose Macaulay’s elite education resulted in her support for the BBC’s post-war stratification of channels, for example, with a fervency that is infused with class-consciousness. Through these examples, I expand Murphy’s analysis to consider the essential role that class played in providing women access to the broadcasting apparatus, as contributors as well as staff. By looking beyond the lists of employees that Murphy considers to the women who were commissioned to speak on specific topics, this study suggests that privileged women writers were the acceptable voice of educated femininity at the early and mid-century BBC.

Of course, the BBC’s relationship to women was not static and it responded to moments of crisis, both internal and external. Moving beyond the 1939 watershed of Murphy’s study, Kathryn Terkanian has undertaken research into the way labour shortages and changed strategic priorities during the Second World War impacted on the BBC’s hiring policies. She provides evidence that the Corporation employed many more women in production, administrative and engineering roles during those years.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, in the following chapters, I assess the extent to which moments of crisis at the Corporation— its early years, the war, its stratification in 1946, and the onset of commercial competition in 1956— altered the BBC’s relationship to women

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<sup>98</sup> Sackville-West was also in a relationship with Hilda Matheson after the pair met when Sackville-West first broadcast in 1928. Although there were personal motivations involved, Chapter 1 outlines how Matheson saw Sackville-West as the embodiment of aristocratic refinement and used such descriptions to persuade Sackville-West to broadcast.

<sup>99</sup> Kathryn R. Terkanian, “Women, Work, and the BBC: How Wartime Restrictions and Recruitment Woes Reshaped the Corporation, 1939-1945”, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Bournemouth, 2018).

writers as on-air speakers. How the Corporation recruited and used its audible female ‘talent’ to create literary debate can tell us about the way literature reflected broader anxieties regarding cultural authority at the BBC across these decades of the twentieth century. My work foregrounds the trajectory of public-facing women at the Corporation to argue that their representation on-air was as significant a measure of gender relations at the BBC as the prevalence of women on established staff contracts.

Furthermore, considerations of how women were represented and addressed on-air has been a major focus of critical studies. As Maggie Andrews asserts, radio was “domesticated” as it entered the living rooms and parlours of interwar Britain, problematising the discursive spaces of the public and the private, which were constructed along gender binaries.<sup>100</sup> In other words, the masculine, public space of politics was absorbed through broadcasting and metamorphosed in the domestic context in which it was received, where women were increasingly recognised as the dominant audience. Radio, therefore, became a site for contesting the role of women as citizens in twentieth-century democracies. Kate Lacey has considered the presence of newly enfranchised female voices on the airwaves of mid-century Germany, noting the “parallels between women finding their public voice, and radio finding an institutional voice which could imitate private modes of speech”.<sup>101</sup> Radio’s growth at a time of enfranchisement and increased employment for women allows Lacey to sketch the interrelated evolution of public service broadcasting and female emancipation: women were developing a public, political profile, of which

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<sup>100</sup> Maggie Andrews, “Homes Both Sides of the Microphone: The Wireless and Domestic Space in Inter-War Britain”, *Women’s History Review*, 21:4, (2012), pp. 605-621, p. 609.

<sup>101</sup> Kate Lacey, “From *Plauderei* to Propaganda: On Women’s Radio in Germany 1924-1935”, in *Women and Radio*, ed. by Caroline Mitchell, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 48-63, p. 48. See also Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies*.

participation in radio broadcasting was one strand. In Britain, early innovations in radio programming acknowledged the new voting rights women had received. Hilda Matheson's pioneering *The Week in Westminster*, for example, brought the first female MPs to the microphone to explain about parliamentary procedures to the new electorate. My research builds on Lacey's critical position by considering participation in literary discourse as another facet of national citizenship that women gained greater access to with the advent of wireless broadcasting. Some of the women writers I study, particularly Sackville-West, Marson, and Bowen, performed a similar role to *The Week in Westminster* for mid-century literary debate by opening questions of taste, judgement, and value in literature to those sections of the audience who had previously been excluded from the conversation.

Scholarly research into other women writers' involvement with the BBC has touched upon issues of citizenship. Randi Koppen's work on Virginia Woolf's three BBC radio broadcasts, for example, locates Woolf's interest in broadcasting in its function as "an instrument for moulding public opinion".<sup>102</sup> In light of the increasingly clamorous propaganda war being waged between Germany and Britain in the 1930s, Woolf was concerned about radio's power to persuade the public.<sup>103</sup> In this context, Koppen argues that Woolf's broadcasts "deal with questions of public communication and citizenship, the manufacture of assent and the possibility of dissent, enacting the principles of what might be called 'wireless democracy'".<sup>104</sup> All of the women in this

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<sup>102</sup> Randi Koppen, "Rambling Round Words: Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Broadcasting", in *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, ed. by Matthew Feldman, Erik Tønning and Henry Mead, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 137–154, p.141.

<sup>103</sup> In addition, Melba Cuddy-Keane considers Woolf's radio broadcasts as one part of the writer's wider agenda to promote amateur reading habits as a democratic commitment to plurality of thought that might help to prevent the rise of nationalism in Britain. See Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and "Virginia Woolf, Sound Technologies, and the New Aurality", in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. by Pamela L. Laughie, (New York, London: Garland, 2000), pp. 69-96.

<sup>104</sup> Koppen, p. 142.

thesis engage with similar themes, although they relocate them to concerns about the literary marketplace. Marson utilised public communication to develop notions about citizenship, for example, whereas Sackville-West explored the possibility of democratic dissent from the literary canon. And, while Koppen gestures to Woolf's intellectual commitment to "wireless democracy", Woolf's very limited engagement with the broadcaster renders further, systematic analysis of her interaction with radio impossible. Instead, I use the archives of women writers whose sustained involvement with the BBC provides rich material for the consideration of their changing priorities and tactics in relation to broadcasting, such as Sackville-West's choice of books to review over several years and Macaulay's criticism of BBC broadcasts across a range of forms and audiences. Although Woolf was concerned about radio's propagandist power, the women in the following pages experimented with its capacity to form and reform publics, communities, and, possibly, cultural identities during these turbulent years.

In the US, the writer Gertrude Stein was also preoccupied with the community-making potential of wireless technology. Sarah Wilson attends to the "formal corollary" that Gertrude Stein found in mid-century radio transmissions, suggesting that "Stein wrestles with the idea of radio as a kind of public sphere— a forum in which self, other, and community can be constituted through talk".<sup>105</sup> Certainly, the women of this thesis participated in defining a community through talk, specifically reviews of literature and culture: the audience of Sackville-West and Macaulay's reviews, for example, were inculcated into a shared community by virtue of listening to the programmes. Wilson then shifts her focus from Stein's radio work to the

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<sup>105</sup> Sarah Wilson, "Gertrude Stein and the Radio", *Modernism/modernity*, 11:2, (2004), pp. 261-278, p. 261. Wilson further develops her interpretation of Stein's radiophonic commitments in *Broadcasting Modernism*, pp. 107-122.

radiophonic qualities of the writer's literary production, arguing that "radio in particular acted as a powerful formal model for Stein's late writing".<sup>106</sup> Where my work differs from Wilson's and other literary critics engaged in the analysis of writers' radio work is that I do not return to the literary work of the women in this study to argue that it may or may not be radiophonic. By using their broadcasts as the primary texts, I frame these women as professional authors on the BBC's airwaves, authors who were employed to produce literary discourse and who pursued lines of debate that were sometimes aligned, sometimes disaffiliated with the BBC's expectations. This thesis is therefore not an adaptation study. Instead, it offers an articulation of how certain women writers translated their cultural capital from the publishing marketplace to the context of mass communication technology and what they did with their influence once there.

Where women writers who provided cultural commentary and women writers who wrote creatively for the airwaves during this period worked in concert was in helping the BBC to forge a unifying national culture. For example, Alex Goody has acknowledged the communicative drive that underpinned Dorothy L. Sayer's controversial 1941 BBC play-cycle depicting Christ's life, *The Man Born to Be King*. For Sayers, Goody writes, "one key intellectual function of the new broadcast technology of radio was to communicate to a mass audience the modern relevance of Christian belief".<sup>107</sup> Goody asserts that Sayers' commitment to radio stemmed from its ability to engage a mass audience, to whom the message of Christ could be revealed through modern technology and language. This was particularly important

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<sup>106</sup> Wilson, p. 261.

<sup>107</sup> Alex Goody, "Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Man Born to Be King*: The 'Impersonation' of Divinity: Language, Authenticity and Embodiment", *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, ed. by Matthew Feldman, Erik Tønning and Henry Mead, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 79–96, p. 81.



during the Second World War, when Britain was facing an existential threat. As Melissa Dinsman suggests, Sayers articulated a unified national image for Britain through her dramatisation of Christ's life, equating "the political environment of the first century with the present, thereby ensuring that her audience never forgets to connect the message of the Gospels to their own lives".<sup>108</sup> Such a message would confirm "Britain's Christian duty to win the war".<sup>109</sup> These accounts locate a woman writer in the BBC's propagandist mission to unify the nation during the war. Sayers' imaginative work of drama and the attention she paid to language are highlighted as powerful tools of inclusion in the imagined community of the British nation. Chapter 2 of this thesis builds on debates about the role of women writers in defining national consciousness during the war by discussing how Marson articulated a West Indian identity through her curation of diverse cultural tastes and political allegiances. By representing a wide range of West Indian voices on-air, Marson created a sense of national identity that mitigated 'otherness' in favour of multiplicity. Thus, the central concerns of existing scholarship on women writers and radio— citizenship, community and language— are observed in my analysis of these women writers to develop my argument that Sackville-West, Marson, Macaulay, and Bowen expanded their broadcasting remits to create dialogue with their audiences by focussing on literary topics, exchanges which were variously constructive and fraught.

What these previous, isolated accounts of women writers and radio mostly lack is an articulation of *why* the broadcaster they worked with chose to employ them as speakers on-air. In the case of Sayers and the BBC, Dinsman and Goody gesture towards the propagandist imperative that motivated the BBC's Drama department

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<sup>108</sup> Melissa Dinsman, *Modernism at the Microphone: Radio, Propaganda, and Literary Aesthetics During World War II*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 69.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

during the early 1940s, but they do not propose why it was Sayers who was chosen to write these plays, over and above an array of equally devout male writers, for example, T.S. Eliot.<sup>110</sup> By demonstrating how the BBC understood the value of literature at different moments of its history, my research seeks to embed the employment of certain women writers in a broader narrative of changing cultural values at the Corporation and in Britain more widely. This approach foregrounds questions of cultural legitimacy, cultural capital and class in debates about gender and the media across the middle decades of the twentieth century. Put another way, the women in the following pages were allowed access to the apparatus of broadcasting because of their class and literary reputations, even if they were sometimes impeded or marginalised due to their gender. This thesis engages with the written evidence of the interactions between female writers and broadcaster to interrogate why and how some women writers were utilised by the BBC, despite the absence of an aural archive of their specific contributions or a robust sense of how they sounded in front of the microphone.

One of my case studies was also frustrated in some of her broadcasting efforts due to her race. Una Marson's role as a founder of the BBC's West Indian provision has been noted by literary radio scholars and the critical narrative of the West Indies as a site for radiophonic literary connection is well-established. Glynne Griffith, Laurence Breiner, Darrell Newton, John Figueroa, James Proctor and, most recently, Ian Whittington all productively explore the role of the BBC's literary programme *Caribbean Voices* (1943-1958) in shaping and establishing a Caribbean literary

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<sup>110</sup> While I recognise that Eliot was not a dramatist in the same way that Sayers was understood to be, he is often compared with Sayers as a writer of faith at the BBC. See Goody, p. 81.

scene, physically located in London but listened to in the West Indies.<sup>111</sup> Many of these works cite Una Marson as the founder of the *Caribbean Voices* programme, and Proctor and Whittington, in particular, uncover the BBC's need for a producer with her specific skill set and array of social connections. As Proctor writes, the BBC employed Marson as a "prominent public figure with extensive West Indian connections and media contacts".<sup>112</sup> Peter Kalliney has further developed questions of social connections and media contacts in the Caribbean context. Taking the 1950s and 1960s as its focus, Kalliney's *Commonwealth of Letters* (2013) employs a global worldview that enables him to read BBC patronage of West Indian writers as an exchange of mutual benefit in the late colonial and early postcolonial period.<sup>113</sup> Caribbean intellectuals could provide the BBC with a new store of texts that would refresh its literary programming, and, in return, the Corporation provided a source of income and publicity to writers with limited publishing opportunities. My work borrows Kalliney's idea of mutual benefit between marginalised writers and the BBC, locating Marson, for the first time, in a milieu of prominent women writers who broadcast. In doing so, I trace the benefits to the Corporation and to individual women writers of collaborating on literary broadcasts, asking how gender relations offered opportunities for transmitting productive literary discourse during these years.

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<sup>111</sup> Glynne Griffith, "'This is London Calling the West Indies': the BBC's *Caribbean Voices*", in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 196-208, Laurence Breiner, "Caribbean Voices on the Air: Radio, Poetry, and Nationalism in the Anglophone Caribbean", in *Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture*, ed. by Susan Merrill Squier, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 93-108, Darrell Newton, "Calling the West Indies: The BBC World Service and *Caribbean Voices*", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 28:4, (2008), pp. 489-497, John Figueroa, "The Flaming Faith of the First Years: *Caribbean Voices*", in *Tibisiri: Caribbean Writers and Critics*, ed. by Maggie Butcher, (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1989), pp. 59-80, and Proctor, "Una Marson at the BBC".

<sup>112</sup> Proctor, p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Peter J. Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Of the remaining women, Elizabeth Bowen's radio work has also been the subject of previous scholarship. Allan Hepburn has collected Bowen's broadcasts in *Listening-In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen* (2010), and he notes that "For Bowen, radio induces a sensation of strangeness about the human voice".<sup>114</sup> The potentially gothic qualities of radio for Bowen has also been explored by Emily C. Bloom, who locates Bowen's radio work in the context of the Anglo-Irish experience of dislocation from history after the Irish civil war of 1922.<sup>115</sup> For Bloom, Bowen's turn to the aural signifies the writer's renegotiation of the present moment in relation to technological developments:

Bowen embarked on a campaign, enacted in her radio broadcasts and late novels, to retrain readers and to retrain herself as a writer in an anti-nostalgic mode that could reclaim the 'now' for a print literature that seemed increasingly relegated to the past.<sup>116</sup>

As literature contested its value in the mid-century media ecology, Bloom argues that Bowen resisted the trend towards nostalgic reading and writing that was permeating British letters after the war. Bowen used some of her Features broadcasts to dramatise dead authors, who return as "ghostly visitors" to "chastise, correct, or disrupt the expectations of their living readers", thereby unsettling or 'retraining' her listeners in their assumptions about the canon and cultural hierarchies.<sup>117</sup> While I agree that Bowen 'retrains' her listeners through her radio broadcasts, I suggest that she does this through her literary talks where she assumes the position of craftsman, rather than through the "gothic qualities" of conjuring authorial personalities that Bloom describes. What has not previously been attended to, and

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<sup>114</sup> Allan Hepburn, "Introduction", *Listening-In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp 1-24, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> Bloom, *The Wireless Past*, p. 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

what this thesis provides a new understanding of, is the relationship between Bowen's views on formal literary education and how they relate to her broadcasting engagements. How Bowen perceived and negotiated the increased academisation of literature after the 1944 Education Act is essential for understanding her motivations for speaking on the BBC's Further Education schedule.

While these isolated accounts touch upon themes of mass communication, cultural values, and education regarding the relationship of specific women writers and radio, they cannot reveal trends of institutional bias or gendered tactics of dissent that a more sustained consideration of women writers at the BBC can provide. As the first scholarly work to foreground the experience of women writers at the BBC in a concerted way, my analysis offers the original insight that the Corporation leveraged women writers' cultural capital at moments of institutional crisis. When broadcasting was still in its infancy, the BBC borrowed Vita Sackville-West's social prestige and writerly reputation to bolster the legitimacy of its role as cultural producer. At the outbreak of war, the Corporation relied upon Una Marson's social network to deliver tailored content to a strategically important audience in the West Indies despite the logistical difficulties of war. As the BBC faced the challenge of providing post-war broadcasts that would meet the needs of reconstruction Britain, Rose Macaulay was recruited to champion the new system of stratified broadcasting. Finally, as the Corporation endeavoured to maintain cultural prominence as its monopoly was dismantled in 1956, Elizabeth Bowen was commissioned to demonstrate the prestige and educational capital that the BBC could deliver for its audience. By considering these women's experience of the BBC in relation to each other, we can perceive the varying roles that women writers played at crucial moments of the BBC's history. When the selected women writers were offered an opportunity to take their place in

the roster of high-profile contributors to the BBC's airwaves, they seized it and expanded it, reshaping the form of literary discourse at the BBC in the process.

## Methodology

It is through the archival research that I have undertaken for this thesis that I am able to draw such wide-ranging conclusions. The BBC Written Archives is an overwhelming mass of administrative memoranda; letters, contracts, scripts, and, in some cases literal scraps of paper that comprise the material reality of creating radio content during the first half of the twentieth century. Created in 1931, the BBC Archives Section was initially under the supervision of a woman, Kathleen Edwin. A memo from April 1931 notes that the main categories of material that were to be saved by the Corporation were “permanent files, financial books, publications, press cuttings, photographs, literary exhibits, physical exhibits and historical precis and diaries”.<sup>118</sup> Items which were judged to have “permanent value in twenty five years” were “records...of what the BBC accomplished, the principal events in its history, its association with the names of prominent men, [and] of scientific discoveries and progress associated with it”.<sup>119</sup> From the way this official document is phrased, it appears the BBC sought to capture for posterity any aspect of its work that conferred grandeur, erudition and importance on the Corporation, a conception that was coded male in the imagination and phraseology of this memorandum. These were the qualities that the BBC saw itself as possessing and promulgating nationwide as part of its public service broadcasting ethos. In a similar way to the Corporation's use of prominent *women* writers to cultivate an air of respectable and refined intellect in its first three decades, so the BBC's archiving policy also perpetuated the broadcaster's

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<sup>118</sup> April 1931, R13/388/1, BBC Archives Section, Development 1930- 1964, BBC WAC.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

mythic self-image. From, and perhaps most explicitly at, the beginning of the BBC's history, senior staff members were careful to preserve and promote a lofty image of broadcasting in Britain. While such a policy was subject to the whims and priorities of individual staff members, the early archivists of the BBC worked in general accord to preserve the most prestigious aspects of the institution's history and that is the ideological context in which the archive on which this project is based was founded.

Relatedly, many of the principles on which paper filing was based for the BBC archive remained tied to the overriding logic of the organisation, a logic that changed as departments grew, split, and were re-absorbed, and as institutional priorities shifted to accommodate new contexts and remits. For the most part, archiving principles included dividing contributor files, such as those for the women in this thesis, into the specific department they were dealing with. As such, Elizabeth Bowen's correspondence is split between the Talks department, the Drama department, sometimes the Features department when it was a separate entity, as well as the Further Education Department, on which I draw heavily in my research. Scripts, both typescript and manuscript, are indexed elsewhere and held on microfilm in Caversham, requiring the researcher to search for the name of the programme alphabetically. There is never any guarantee that a programme's script has been retained and there is no indication as to the completeness of any remnant scripts or runs of scripts should they be found. The resolution of the microfilm holdings, derived from scanned carbon paper or real paper, is at best hazy and at worst illegible, especially if the script happens to be handwritten. Other aspects of a specific contributor's work might also be housed in the file reserved for a particular programme and it was just such detective work in following the traces of the Further Education Department's filing system that allowed me to discover the detailed

audience research reports that supplemented the few suggestions of Bowen's audience engagement that appeared in her various contributor files. In short, the BBC Written Archives diffuse information across its scattered and changing internal logic, mirroring the complexity of a communications institution that employed many thousands of people by the mid-1950s.

Moreover, the lack of an online, or indeed public index or catalogue for the BBC WAC is a significant factor in the constructedness of this specific archive. It means that, as a researcher, one tends to be unable to identify patterns or browse for intriguing file names, instead approaching all engagement with the material through the guidance and guardianship of the BBC's archivists. While their expertise and commitment to academic research is never in doubt, they are juggling numerous requests in a short timeframe, in an under-funded department of the BBC, and are therefore unable to apply the same rigour, thoroughness and capacity to entertain possibly worthless leads that an individual scholar might. Furthermore, the BBC has not tended to suitably resource the archives or always guard against the dangers posed to stacks of paper and files. Upon requesting Vita Sackville-West's Talks files, for example, File 2, 1932-37 arrived at my reading room desk with the stark note that File 1 had been "destroyed in the Blitz".<sup>120</sup> Other files occasionally arrived slightly charred or ash strewn. On the one hand, the ravages of the Blitz cannot be taken as an absolute sign of institutional neglect—bomb damage during the war was random and terrible. However, the patterns of obfuscation and absence of some prominent women employees suggest that the archive also preserves some institutional sexism

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<sup>120</sup> Sackville-West, Vita, Talks, File II, 1932-37, R/CONT 1, BBC WAC. The file also notes Sackville-West's married name "Mrs Harold Nicolson" in parenthesis, suggesting that the Corporations sought to track the female writer's private or non-professional persona alongside her professional one until at least 1937.



and prejudice. Hilda Matheson's staff file has not been retained, for example, while her contemporaries, Charles Siepmann and Mary Somerville, have extensive files and well-documented careers. Of course, both Somerville and Siepmann continued their association with the BBC for a number of years after Matheson resigned, a fact that is particularly apparent in the reams of documentation attached to Somerville's long and illustrious career. But Siepmann only worked at the Corporation for another seven years after Matheson, a time that, while not insignificant, does not fully explain the complete absence of material for one employee in comparison to a colleague and peer. It appears that the BBC rewarded the loyalty, and possibly gender, of its former employees.

All this is to say that, while the BBC Written Archives Centre presents an appearance of completeness or substantiality, there are considerable gaps in the story and very often a randomness to what has been preserved. As such, this thesis works to recreate some narratives of female labour and professionalism from the available evidence, whilst all the time recognising that there are holes or voids that cannot be filled. The most substantial of these lacunae is the absence of the sound of the broadcasts themselves, an absence that is firstly due to the nature of the ephemeral, radiophonic medium and, secondly, the lack of existing sound recordings in the archive. One of the most enthralling and philosophically intriguing aspects of radio as a form- its ephemerality- is also its greatest challenge for scholars of radio. The exact moment of broadcast can never be recaptured, especially in the pre-digital age, and neither can a comprehensive understanding of the affect a transmission has on its audience. Looking to the Written Archives, we see the fossilised shell of the process of organisation and collaboration that went into commissioning and writing a broadcast programme, but the soft tissue of conversations in the rehearsal

room and the actuality of the broadcast itself- voice, tone, timing, reception quality, mood etc.- is lost to time.

Secondly and relatedly, the omissions extant in the BBC's archives are reflected by particular omissions in this thesis. In order to develop my argument about women writers' contributions to BBC radio, I have relied upon the most consistent and substantial body of archives for each of my case studies. While this has varied in terms of the specific programme or topic for each woman writer, what unites each chapter is my reliance on written archive and the relative absence of an interrogation of sound. As stated, for the most part, sound archive does not exist in relation to these women. Where it does, in the case of Marson, for example, or Bowen, the recordings are piecemeal and mediated through a range of recording apparatus that cannot capture the actuality of broadcast in any meaningful sense. Due to this poverty of material, my analysis privileges the written voice of these professional female writers over the aural voice, or even the broadcast voice, the tone of the page substituting the texture and timbre of the embodied voice. The women in the following pages display the range and aptitude of written voice that a career in writing demands- their letters to BBC officials contrast to their more familiar correspondence, their initial scripts of broadcasts are different from the scripts they wrote once accustomed to the specific programmes they became regulars on. This thesis, then, is focussed on the textual evidence of women writer's professional voices and the institutional traces of that correspondence and crafting in the archives of the BBC.

By investigating the paper trail left by BBC producers and their women writer correspondents, I am able to show how the chosen women writers were approached by the BBC, how the writers responded to specific offers of work, and the extent to

which the final productions matched expectations. Such an approach allows us to comprehend how, when, and to what extent the women writers of this study renegotiated the broadcasting remit they were given in order to further their own intellectual and professional agendas. I also use some of the writers' personal archives to augment the institutional material, particularly Vita Sackville-West's papers, held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, and Rose Macaulay's, located at the Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge. My analysis of these archival resources renders visible the internal politics of certain productions, revealing the position of literature at the BBC at specific times. For example, in 1956, the Director of the Further Education department, Jean Rowntree, sold her managers a series of literary broadcasts with Elizabeth Bowen by emphasising the writer's academic credentials. When she approached Bowen herself, Rowntree was careful to state the department's desire for a talk about the 'craftsmanship' of the novel, rather than literary criticism.<sup>121</sup> Such diplomatic pivoting around the desires of writers and of senior management demonstrates the fault lines and points of tension in the Corporation's approach to literary broadcasting. Rowntree's negotiation of these tensions and Bowen's adaptation of the remit she was given offer just one example of female independence and rebelliousness in relation to literature and broadcasting. This thesis traces moments of conflict and collaboration that characterised four women writers' interactions with the Corporation across the twentieth century. I suggest that there was a trend towards dissent from female writers in their relationship to the Corporation's views on literary value: wireless women writers sought to open literary

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<sup>121</sup> Rowntree to Bowen, 9 July 1956, RCONT 1, Talks, Bowen, Elizabeth, File I, 1941-62, BBC WAC.

debate to the audience and push the BBC to represent their view of legitimate literary discourse.

I choose to use case studies of specific women writers' interaction with the Corporation to offer a richness of detail that can reveal particular instances of conflict at the BBC. These examples can then be extrapolated to frame general concerns about literature for these women writers and the broadcaster at certain times. In doing so, I follow David Hendy, who has suggested that the study of individuals contributions to the BBC "might offer fresh perspectives on the early history" of the Corporation.<sup>122</sup> That is, attending to the personal and social lives of those employed to work at the BBC provides a method of understanding institutional history that acknowledges the contradictions of competing motivations or capricious behaviour from individuals, while not losing site of general trends, values, or policies that are the framework for their actions. As such, my research recognises the messiness of individual writers' contributions to the BBC whilst also gesturing towards the currents of influence they responded to.

Moreover, my compilation of data from previously un-studied sources offers a new narrative of the extent to which the following women writers were involved in the curation of culture on the BBC. My consideration of Rose Macaulay's monthly radio reviews in *Time and Tide* from January 1945 to May 1946, for example, is the first sustained analysis of this aspect of Macaulay's oeuvre. By close reading her critique of BBC programming, I demonstrate the authority and expertise Macaulay wielded in relation to BBC output. As Chapter 3 details, the BBC sought to co-opt Macaulay's critical authority, an exchange which changes the received narrative of gender

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<sup>122</sup> David Hendy, "Biography and the Emotions as a Missing 'Narrative' in Media History", *Media History*, 18:3-4, (2012), pp. 361-378, p. 364.

relations at the Corporation by highlighting how the broadcaster sometimes relied on the authority of women cultural workers for its own sense of legitimisation. My analysis of Macaulay's involvement with the BBC review programme, *The Critic on the Air*, is also an original contribution to discussions of Macaulay's profile as public intellectual as her role on this programme has not previously been considered by scholars.

Utilising new or under-used archival material offers original insights into the professional work of all four of these women writers. Vita Sackville-West's BBC book reviews, for example, have never been critically examined. Her participation in broadcasting has been largely absent from existing scholarly narratives of the writer. By drawing together the content of her reviews in a systematic way for the first time, we can see patterns in Sackville-West's recommendations over several years, including a high number of books written by women, an awareness of the cost of books in the final years of her reviewing, and a significant focus on scientific texts. Thus, the texture of Sackville-West's literary engagement is revealed in a finer grain and suggests her rejection of cultural hierarchies by her admission of texts that are diverse in terms of gender, cost, and genre. Consequently, we can also discern the BBC's relationship to literature during this period more clearly by studying the statistical break-down of the kinds of books its reviewer recommended and that the Corporation, by proxy, endorsed.

This thesis has been underpinned by my commitment to capturing a range of data about these women's broadcasting careers, data which is presented in extensive appendices to this study. These new data sets are in and of themselves an original contribution to knowledge because they provide concrete evidence of the frequency,

nature, and contents of the selected women's encounters with the microphone. Statistical data has also enhanced my exploration of the demographic of Marson's "Message Parties". By compiling a data set based on available material, my analysis of the identity of speakers on *Calling the West Indies* moves from anecdotal to more evidence-based, enabling me to draw broader conclusions about the kind of West Indian identity that was being formed over the airwaves. For Rose Macaulay and Elizabeth Bowen, I provide lists of their broadcasting engagements across the first half of the twentieth century, creating a resource for researchers of these writers, of the mid-century BBC, and, more generally, for those concerned with female representation in the media in Britain.

*Wireless Women* provides the first systematic analysis of women writers' engagement with the BBC, examining how and why women writers became more valuable to the Corporation at moments of contention about cultural hierarchies. By using the BBC's written archives, bolstered by the private letters of some of the women I study, I am able to map the conversations that were happening about literary programmes onto the final productions, attending to the divergences and modifications that were an inevitable consequence of the collaborative work of radio. In this way, we can see how literary discourse was conceived of at the BBC and how it was conveyed to the listener on-air. Where the four women writers of this thesis intervened in this process, the definition of literature expanded to include a greater diversity of perspectives. The archival material I present renders these debates visible in a way that attention to the final product alone could not. Further, by compiling statistical data on the kinds of texts, authors, and voices that these women promoted, I am able to highlight where and how women writers challenged cultural orthodoxies at the monopolistic British broadcaster. The richness of these specific

case studies also offers us new perspectives on the writers themselves, locating them at the heart of a mediated literary discourse. The women in the following chapters were architects of the kinds of literary discourse promulgated on British radio, expanding the scope of what it meant to talk about literature on-air and revealing the kind of literary success required to gain admission to BBC studios. As can be seen through archival and statistical evidence, the women in this thesis were involved in debating questions of what literature was, who it was for, and why it was important on the airwaves.

## **Wireless Women**

These case studies were chosen with an awareness of the continuities and distinctions between them. The social and literary position of Vita Sackville-West was very different from that of Una Mason, for example, for reasons of class, race, literary prestige, and, not least, enduring British snobbery and its ties to imperialism. Indeed, Marson is a notable outlier in this work, being the only woman of colour and having experienced the most explicit effects of colonialization on her education, professional opportunities and daily life. Bowen's experience of empire as a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy speaks to some of the realities of Marson's position- particularly the sense of oscillation or transition between centre and metropole- but it is undeniable that the social, ideological, and intellectual journey between London and rural Ireland that Bowen regularly undertook is less profoundly dislocating than Marson's journeying across the Black Atlantic. The distances, at once geographical and cultural, are smaller for Bowen than for Marson, and ever smaller still for Sackville-West and Macaulay, comfortable members of the intellectual and cultural elite.

Where the experiences and resonances of these women tend to intersect, however, is in their location within the contemporary literary marketplace, and subsequently, the canon. All four women writers are difficult to place within dominant disciplinary categories in literary studies. They are modern, with themes such as technological development, women's labour issues, and the fading order of the Edwardian epoch prominent in their work. Yet they are rarely and inconsistently *modernist*, especially if modernist is taken to mean formally experimental and focussed on subjectivity. Bowen is most frequently included in in the category of modernist by scholars, who recognise the verbal complexity and attention to subconsciousness that her novels and short stories demonstrate. There is still some disagreement as to whether Bowen constitutes a late modernist writer, acknowledging that the majority of her work was created in the decades after high modernism, or a mid-century novelist, or something else altogether.<sup>123</sup> While Sackville-West's work has begun to appear on the syllabi of modernist university courses, Macaulay's novels from the 1920s are more likely to be characterised as hyper-realism or journalism, and her later work, including the *Towers of Trebizond* (1956), is occasionally described as post-modernist.<sup>124</sup> In my article "Making Waves: Una Marson at the BBC", I argue that Marson's engagement with the BBC and radio broadcasting was one of the key factors that precipitated the poet's change from the tired, romantic forms of her early career into a starkness of language that could be considered modernist as she approached middle-age.

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<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Sian E. White, "Spatial Politics/Poetics, Late Modernism, and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*", *Genre*, 49:1, (2016), pp. 27-50, and Maria DiBattista, "Elizabeth Bowen's Troubled Modernism", in *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899–1939*, ed. by Michael Valdez Moses and Richard Begam, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 226-245.

<sup>124</sup> Maria Stella Florio, "*The Towers or Trebizond*: Language and the Joys and Paradoxes of the Modern world", in *Rose Macaulay, Gender, and Modernity*, ed. by Kate Macdonald, (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 161-174, p. 171.



Indeed, the chronology of these women's careers is a factor in their critical indeterminacy. Macaulay was the oldest of the group, born in 1881, while Sackville-West, Bowen, and Marson were born in 1892, 1899, and 1905 respectively. Sackville-West and Marson were therefore broadcasting in their mid-thirties and at the peak of their careers, earlier, certainly, than Bowen and Macaulay, who were in their late fifties and early sixties when their BBC involvement was most intense. In this sense, the women of this thesis each represent slightly different generations of writers, with the loosely defined groups approaching the development of radio and concomitant literary productions with different concerns depending on their own sense of importance, security, and intellectual curiosity. Sackville-West is sometimes categorised as a member of the Bloomsbury group, for example, while Macaulay and Bowen also knew many of the same people but are not included in such. Indeed, Macaulay's lengthy career enabled her to encounter, influence, and be influenced by several generations of writers. Marson, again acting in a different context, helped to foster the careers of a generation of Caribbean writers who would define the late colonial/early postcolonial literature of the region— George Lamming and Sam Selvon, for example. Yet Marson herself tends to be seen as a forerunner to an established coterie, rather than a participant in such. In other words, these women writers all fall between the posts or markers of typical or established literary generations, crossing demarcations of time and allegiance that are relied upon to order twentieth century literary production.

Another type of boundary that the women in this thesis all cross is that of media and form. As professional women writers in the early twentieth century, all four of these case studies utilised the range of platforms available to them to write, publish, and, fundamentally, earn their livelihood, adapting their style and focus in return for a

viable writing career. Initially, Marson made money from writing and directing plays and later applied her ability to stage-direct to broadcasting in order to find reliable work in wartime Britain. Sackville-West published pamphlets and poetry, as well as writing radio reviews, novels and travelogues during the 1920s and 30s, taking advantage of her personal access to the owners of the Hogarth Press to publish best-selling novels with an intellectual patina. Both Bowen and Macaulay wrote for a whole range of popular publications, including *Vogue*, *Harper's Bizarre*, and the *New Statesman*, as well as *Time and Tide*, as I explore in Chapter 3. Bowen even appeared on the television programme, *Kaleidoscope*, in 1947. This thesis takes one specific aspect of the oeuvres of my chosen case studies and subjects it to analysis in the context of radio production and women's professional labour during the period. These specific women- Sackville-West, Marson, Bowen and Macaulay- qualify for such extended analysis in this thesis because they were popular, well-respected writers who talked about literature on the BBC. All of the writers in this thesis can be considered popular by the measure of their book sales or, in Marson's case, ticket sales for her play. They therefore had well-respected literary reputations and widespread recognition in the audiences that the BBC sought to attract. And target audiences differed between Marson and the rest of the case studies; the BBC consciously wanted to develop its standing in West Indian communities during the war to aid its propagandist efforts. For the other three, the audience was a broad spread of intellectual and literary people who might otherwise have been sceptical of the Corporation, and, I suggest, those members of an audience who may not have had as much access to conventional education and culture as others, specifically women and the working class. Finally, these case studies are united in as much as

they were prepared to conform to the BBC's expectations enough in the discussion and commissioning process for the Corporation to deem them 'safe' enough to hire. Indeed, while the four 'wireless women' of this thesis were exceptional for their extended engagement with broadcasting and their speaking on specific literary subjects, there were other female contemporaries who were doing similar cultural work in the fields of radio, cinema, journalism and publishing but who were not prepared to compromise with the BBC in the same way. Rebecca West, for example, met many of the criteria for a well-respected woman writer to speak on the BBC and indeed appeared on *The Brains Trust* in the 1940s, as well as speaking on-air a handful of times in the 20s and 30s. Yet it is likely that her reputation for non-conformity and her political views were too widely known for the BBC to furnish her with a regular, literary commission. Likewise, Naomi Mitchison was characterised as having "left wing tendencies" by a 1948 BBC memo, although the Corporation official admitted she "could be relied upon to give a stimulating talk".<sup>125</sup> As a result, Mitchison was only ever an infrequent contributor to the airwaves. In another vein, Winifred Holtby, was a regular contributor to the BBC-operated *Radio Times* and had given four talks and adapted nine short stories for the air. But, as Gill Fildes notes, in the weeks before her death in 1935, Holtby criticised the BBC for being "intellectually enervating" and more concerned with "respectability rather than illumination".<sup>126</sup> Some of the blame for the Corporation's intellectual paucity lay in the restricted kinds of accent that the early BBC accepted, favouring as it did Received Pronunciation. Holtby, having grown up in Yorkshire, had a respect for regional accents, although

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<sup>125</sup> From HSP to AHWRP, 31 August 1948, SC23/308/1, Naomi Mitchison, Scottish Region, BBC WAC.

<sup>126</sup> Gill Fildes, "Winifred Holtby and 'The Voice of God': A Writer's View of Radio and Cinema Between the Wars", in *Winifred Holtby: "A Woman in her Time": Critical Essays*, ed. by Lisa Regan, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), pp. 89- 112, pp. 92-93.

she herself was tested by BBC staff and found to have too aristocratic a voice— “like the Mem Sahib addressing the poor natives!”, as Holtby wrote to a friend.<sup>127</sup> Holtby was therefore involved in the BBC’s overall literary conversation through her work for *The Radio Times* yet did not acquire the same kind of on-air experience as the case studies in this thesis, partly due to ideological differences and partly due to the question of voice. Other women writers chose not to participate in broadcasting due to the tiresome and exacting nature of the bureaucratic BBC— writers including Sylvia Townsend Warner, and after a couple of initial forays, Virginia Woolf.

Finally, yet more women writers participated in a different kind of literary broadcasting, that of adapting short stories for the wireless. Olivia Manning, for example, received multiple rejections from the BBC’s Drama department when she submitted her own original plays. However, she secured a steady stream of commissions to adapt the stories of others, including *My Brother Jonathan* by Francis Brett Young and *The Card* by Arnold Bennett in 1949. Similarly, Selma Vaz Dias received a commission to adapt Dorothy Richardson’s short story, “Christmas Eve”, in December 1951, as well as a series of Children’s Hour contributions and readings of other’s work throughout the 1950s. Yet very few women writers achieved the kind of consistent, literary engagement with the BBC that the case studies in this thesis did, hence their selection and arrangement in the current work.

Chapters 1 and 2 investigate the compromises the Corporation made in its relationship with women writers as it sought to develop and expand during its early years and the global conflict of the 1940s. Chapter 1 examines the broadcasting technique that Vita Sackville-West developed as BBC book reviewer between 1929

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<sup>127</sup> Qtd in Fildes, p. 96.

and 1932. Drawing on her previously unexamined broadcasts, I argue that Sackville-West positioned herself as a dialogic and democratic reviewer who challenged accepted cultural hierarchies in literary production by providing her listeners with an eclectic reading list and introducing them to non-hierarchical modes of reading. I maintain that Sackville-West's embrace of literary reviews on-air amounted to an act of female rebellion against male cultural hierarchies. Due to Sackville-West's established reputation as a respectable writer and member of the aristocracy, the BBC tolerated subversion from the writer in the seemingly innocuous form of book reviews.

The value and position of literature at the BBC transformed with the beginning of the global conflict. In my second chapter, I consider how the BBC embraced literary values during war to harness the propagandist power of writers, especially those writers who were previously excluded from influential social and literary circles. I scrutinise the experience of Una Marson, Jamaican poet, playwright and black feminist activist, to argue that she mobilised her valuable West Indian connections and foregrounded her literary talent to create and then challenge British radio propaganda to the Caribbean. Through her curation of regular "Message Parties", which featured the voices of a diverse range of West Indians in London, Marson instantiated a heteroglot broadcasting schedule that fostered an inclusive dialogue between metropole and colony, as well as intra-colony communication. Questions of literary legitimacy and voice were interrogated by Marson and her guests to develop a collaborative conception of an inclusive West Indian identity via the airwaves of the BBC.

In Chapter 3, I examine how and why Rose Macaulay supported the stratification of BBC broadcasting after the war. I analyse her unstudied radio reviews for the feminist periodical, *Time and Tide*, and compare them to her critical work for the BBC, arguing that Macaulay advocated for the split of broadcasting along taste and class lines in order to protect intellectual women's access to the upper echelons of persistent cultural hierarchies. In a changing post-war world, Macaulay feared that the vulgar taste of "the masses" would come to dominate British culture. In Macaulay's view, the promulgation of refined literary discourse by Britain's public service broadcaster would act as a tonic for growing calls for more popular entertainment on-air. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the BBC used Macaulay to justify its new direction and she appeared as a defender of the Third Programme in the review programme *Critic on the Air*, in the *BBC Yearbook*, and in the pages of *The Listener*. The BBC was continuously renegotiating its obligations to its audience during this period and maintained a level of commitment to popular broadcasting that Macaulay was uncomfortable with. Her calls for stratification became more fervent and included requests for new highbrow radio forms. Even when she was commissioned to appear on the Home Service as a radio critic in the well-respected programme, *The Critics*, she used her platform to promote elite cultural standards and protect established cultural hegemonies in a tone that was increasingly out of step with Corporation policies.

Finally, as the British literary landscape shifted towards increased academisation in the post-war period, the BBC's notion of educational uplift became more formally institutionalised. Chapter 4 attends to the tensions and contradictions inherent in Elizabeth Bowen's 1956 *Truth and Fiction* series, developed in collaboration with the BBC's Further Education department for the inspiration and edification of adult

learners. Despite Bowen's stated resistance to the academic study of literature, she increasingly stepped into the role of literary educator, accepting lecturing positions and honorary degrees that bolstered her formidable reputation as a novelist. It was in this context that Bowen wrote and delivered *Truth and Fiction* in 1956. Yet Bowen's attempts to educate the BBC's mass audience fell short. Listener response was mixed, suggesting that the educational mission of the BBC was incompatible with an author who was so easily identifiable with the elite heights of the cultural hierarchy. This chapter contextualises changing literary values in the post-war period by examining their manifestation in listener responses. By mid-century, listeners increasingly desired educators on literary topics, rather than interlocutors, eroding the imaginative and rebellious potential that women writers had previously enjoyed at the Corporation.

Thus, *Wireless Women* considers the trajectory of women writers' fortunes at the BBC across the first decades of the twentieth century to argue that women were central to the legitimisation of programmes about books, writers, and what I have called literary values during this period. In other words, women contributed to literary broadcasting at the BBC as a means of influencing the ongoing, public conversation about what literature was and why it mattered. The BBC needed such contributions from popular writers. However, Vita Sackville-West, Una Marson, Rose Macaulay and Elizabeth Bowen were also inclined to say more than they had been asked to by the broadcasting institution— or say something else altogether. It is imperative that we consider these women writers at the BBC because of their rebellious voices, voices that were used, recorded, transmitted, received and amplified in the cause of cultivating literary discourse on the airwaves of the BBC. Freed from the established hierarchies and conventions of the publishing industry, through radio these wireless

women were able to develop relationships with producers, and to some extent, listeners, working to alter the tenor and scope of mediated literary conversation in Britain in the twentieth century.

Occupying prominent positions on the schedule, these women demonstrate the importance and potency of female aurality in the media age. They transcended numerous boundaries that were traditionally restrictive for women; national borders, categories of genre and taste, private and public spheres, media conventions and more. The ephemeral nature of radio eroded such restrictions, often leaving the women of this thesis unbound by existing expectations. As such, these wireless women explored innovative techniques for reaching out to their listeners and using words to conjure images or spark intellectual debate. By examining these innovations, we can see how productive and enriching it was to allow women writers to have access to the airwaves of the British Broadcasting Corporation. As outsiders, the selected women writers worked to expand the contours of British cultural representation on-air to include more diverse perspectives, tastes, and values. In doing so, they contributed to making the BBC a more modern, innovative, and inclusive broadcaster.



# 1

## **Dialogic Broadcasting: Vita Sackville-West's BBC Book Reviews, 1929-1932**

The British Library Sound Archives contain a digitised recording of Vita Sackville-West reading from her poem, *The Land*, in July 1931.<sup>1</sup> Crisp, patrician, and commanding at points, Sackville-West nevertheless imbues a warmth and humour in her tone, demonstrating a confidence in her own voice and a familiarity with microphone technology. Sackville-West is engaging and authoritative in the introduction to her poem, continuing, unfazed, through the disruption of what sounds like a door opening in the background. She is close enough to the microphone for the amplifier to detect every sound, yet not so close as to create distortion. Overall, this is an accomplished aural performance from a prominent cultural figure. And it is a woman writer's voice.

As discussed in the introduction, the BBC occupied an ambiguous position in debates about literary standards during this period. On the one hand, the Corporation sought to represent "everything that is best" as part of the Reithian ethos of public service broadcasting.<sup>2</sup> On the other, it tried to avoid controversy and mollify critics who claimed that the Talks department tended to lean towards the left. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the BBC was particularly sensitive to attacks about its impartiality. As a result of the *avant garde* nature of some of the best literature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Vita Sackville-West, "Reading from her Poem *The Land*", 13 July 1931, Early Spoken word Recordings, Columbia D 40192, Matrix Number AX6173-6, British Library Sound Archive (BLSA), London.

<sup>2</sup> Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain*, p. 34.

day, one flashpoint of contention at the BBC was book reviews and their influence on the Corporation's reputation as an arbiter of literary taste. Todd Avery has examined the challenges posed by the BBC to prominent male reviewers such as Desmond MacCarthy and Harold Nicolson during this contentious period.<sup>3</sup> This chapter provides an important counternarrative by outlining the influence of a female writer on early book talks. Through analysis of Vita Sackville-West's book reviews for the Corporation, I offer a recalibration of the BBC's relation to literary discourse between the wars by showing when and how Sackville-West challenged hegemonic definitions of good literature on-air.

Sackville-West embraced her role as a curator of literature during her time as a BBC reviewer. It was a novel position to be in. By the early 1930s, the British radio audience was vast; the *BBC Year Book* of 1931 claimed that the institution had 12 million listeners, or a wireless in "roughly every second home in the country".<sup>4</sup> The sheer scale of the listenership dwarfed the audience of even the most popular circulating newspapers of the day. And although there were numerous examples of women contributing to literary culture in this period, hardly any had adopted the new medium of radio. This meant that when Sackville-West approached the microphone for her bi-weekly reviews, she was one of the few people, let alone women, who addressed such a large and diverse audience on the subject of books.

With an audience of such magnitude, any act of rebelliousness or subversion from Sackville-West would be amplified by the scale of the listening public. In this chapter, I consider the ways in which Sackville-West used her role as cultural curator at the

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<sup>3</sup> Avery, pp. 39- 41.

<sup>4</sup> "Introduction", *The BBC Year Book 1931*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1931), pp. 25-28, p. 26.

BBC to offer her listeners a more modern and inclusive form of literary discourse. This assessment foregrounds the writer's involvement with contemporary debates surrounding reviewing and literary production practices in the interwar period. A significant aspect of Sackville-West's intervention was her commitment to dialogic broadcasting, the principle of engaging her audience in an exchange of ideas and values. Exploring the broadcasts Sackville-West made with prominent men, especially her husband, Harold Nicolson, I assess the extent to which Sackville-West developed her own style of conversation for the radio, in contrast to these masculine voices. Moreover, through analysis of the conversation Sackville-West fostered with her audience through her reviews, I suggest she developed a manifesto for reading over the course of her broadcasting career. This manifesto championed an inclusive approach to literature that made books and reading more accessible to listeners than that of her peer, Desmond MacCarthy.

While reviewers such as MacCarthy and literary commentators such as Nicolson battled with the BBC about its increasingly stringent reviewing policies, Sackville-West responded to Corporation edicts by gradually broadening her critical position. Such an increased eclecticism, a "poacher's pocket- with a little bit of everything stuffed into it" evidences Sackville-West's female rebelliousness on the airwaves.<sup>5</sup> Unlike her male peers, she subverted BBC policy without being penalised. Firstly, by developing a progressive, heterogeneous reading list for listeners in the face of heightened institutional scrutiny of book talks, Sackville-West promoted an anti-curricular, anti-institutional mode of reading that challenged literary orthodoxies. Sackville-West's broadcast recommendations provide a previously unexplored

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<sup>5</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 3 November 1930, Radio Talks Scripts SAC-SAL, T453, BBC WAC.

archive of authors, texts, and publishers that the writer and, by extension, the BBC promoted on its airwaves. Sackville-West worked to review a varied selection of texts that became akin to a shared reading list as her commitment to, and understanding of, her listeners developed. Secondly, these wide-ranging broadcasts negotiated changing pressures and scrutiny from various interested parties, including the staff of the Talks department, the Director-General, John Reith, and the listening public. To meet the competing demands of these groups, Sackville-West developed broadcasting tactics such as a dialogic approach to her reviews and discussion of what to read, as well as how to read. Finally, this chapter proposes a narrative of Sackville-West's increased professionalisation as a woman speaking on the airwaves of the BBC during this period.

### **Love-letters and Log-rolling: Reviewing Books at the Early BBC**

By the time the Sound Archives recording was made in 1931, Sackville-West had achieved considerable critical acclaim as a poet and writer. She had won the Hawthornden Prize in 1927 with the georgic poem, *The Land*, and produced a wide and varied oeuvre including travel writing, biography, history, and five novels, as well as several collections of poems. Her broadcasting career had begun in April 1928 with occasional talks on topics such as travels in Persia and the modern woman. In 1929, she graduated to the role of regular reviewer of "New Novels", a bi-weekly programme of about twenty minutes. Sackville-West continued broadcasting reviews until 1932, moving into the wider field of "Books in General" from 1930 until 1932, when the title of her programme changed to "Books of the Week". This period of significant public exposure coincided with the publication of two of her best-known works, the novels *The Edwardians* (1930) and *All Passion Spent* (1931). They were

published by the Hogarth Press and sold in their thousands, the publisher's runaway best sellers of the decade.<sup>6</sup> She was a popular, well-respected writer, and was to continue to produce a varied output until her death in 1962.

Moreover, Sackville-West occupied a coveted position in British literary society in the interwar period, one that the BBC were delighted to capitalise on. The only daughter of Lord and Lady Sackville-West, she represented an idealised image of upper-class Britain: cultured, well-connected, leisured. "Following the conventions of her social position", writes Sackville-West's granddaughter, Juliet Nicolson, Sackville-West was "educated at home partly by governesses but more comprehensively by herself" in the extensive library at Knole.<sup>7</sup> Sent to Mrs Woolff's day school in London at the age of thirteen, she befriended Violet Keppel, later Trefusis, who was the daughter of the King's mistress. Sackville-West's aristocracy meant that she did not need to attend university in order to make acquaintances with a network of intellectual and social elites. Instead, she married a diplomat, Harold Nicolson, and travelled Europe and Asia, publishing her impressions.<sup>8</sup> She was fashionable and charitable, giving parties for orphans.<sup>9</sup> She was friends with many influential writers and publishers, thereby becoming thoroughly enmeshed in the social networks that comprised the interwar literary world. Most famously, Sackville-West had an intimate relationship with Virginia Woolf; the period of intense desire between the women inspired Woolf's

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<sup>6</sup> Victoria Glendinning writes: "By 30 July 1930 sales [of *The Edwardians*] had topped 20,000 already." *Vita: A Life of V. Sackville-West*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 229-231. It is perhaps no coincidence that Sackville-West's popular success came at the same time as she was reading significant numbers of contemporary novels and had her reputation bolstered by regular appearances at the BBC microphone. For details of the finances of these novels, see Stephen Barkway, "'Oh Lord What It Is To Publish a Best Seller': The Woolf's Professional Relationship with Vita Sackville-West", in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. by Helen Southworth, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 234- 259.

<sup>7</sup> Juliet Nicolson, *A House Full of Daughters*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> These texts included, *Constantinople: Eight Poems* (1915), *Poems of East and West* (1917), *Passenger to Teheran* (1926), and *Twelve Days* (1928).

<sup>9</sup> "New Year's Party for Orphans", *The Times*, 8 December 1920, 42588, p.15.

novel, *Orlando* (1928).<sup>10</sup> Sackville-West's literary prominence was therefore combined with significant class privilege and access to elite social networks.

Such prominence accounts, in part, for the enthusiasm and perseverance displayed by Hilda Matheson, Talks Director at the BBC, in persuading Sackville-West to become a regular reviewer for the Corporation. As described in the introduction, this was the period in which Matheson sought to establish a progressive literary agenda in the Talks department, in line with modernist developments of the arts. However, Matheson faced increasing scrutiny from BBC managers and criticism from external parties, such as the press and right-leaning members of the public.<sup>11</sup> Other listeners celebrated these developments. Avery articulates the contradiction that the Talks department faced: "Broadcasts on literature led to moral outrage, on the one hand, and inspired hope, on the other".<sup>12</sup> The Talks department's literary programming was a discernible site of contest between progressive, leftist ideals and conservative, traditionalist politics. Literary talks became a place to dispute the concept of a shared British national culture and the toxicity of these debates was increasing.

In a society that was still deeply class-based, Sackville-West's aristocratic position was beneficial to the Talks department. The writer did not profess controversial, left-

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, Victoria L. Smith, "'Ransacking the Language': Finding the Missing Goods in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*", *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29:4, (2006), pp. 57-75 and D.A. Boxwell, "(Dis)orienting Spectacle: The Politics of Orlando's Sapphic Camp", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 44:3, (1998), pp. 306-27. Woolf's output overshadows the writing of Sackville-West and their lesbianism tends to take precedence in feminist and queer readings of the writer. See Kirstie Blair, "Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis and Virginia Woolf", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 50:2, (2004), pp. 141-166, Louise DeSalvo, "Lighting the Cave: The Relationship between Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf." *Signs*, 8:2, (1982), pp. 195-214, Elizabeth Meese, "When Virginia Looked at Vita, What Did She See: Or, Lesbian: Feminist: Woman— What's the Differe(e/a)n(ce)?" *Feminist Studies*, 18:1, (1992), pp. 99-117, Suzanne Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Karyn Z. Sproles, *Desiring Women: The Partnership of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> See Avery, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

wing opinions and could thereby be used to bolster the Corporation's standing amongst those who held more socially conservative views. Sackville-West also disassociated herself from the elite circles of Bloomsbury, despite her close friendship with Woolf. For example, writing to Nicolson in 1941, she claimed that "three experts on *auriculas* can out do [sic] the most highbrow members of Bloomsbury".<sup>13</sup> In private, Sackville-West considered experts on a type of alpine plant to have more intellectual prowess than a prominent group of the intellectual elite.<sup>14</sup> Her disavowal of the highbrow and her position of ambiguity towards the Bloomsbury group, mixed with her upper-class heritage, made her a seemingly inoffensive commentator on contemporary fiction for the BBC.

Reith and the senior management of the BBC valued markers of elite social rank in their employees and speakers and Matheson capitalised on this preference to propose Sackville-West for the reviewing role. The Talks Director was personally invested in providing more opportunities for Sackville-West to speak on-air as the women had begun a relationship after meeting at the BBC in December 1928.

Despite their personal intimacy, Matheson employed the phrasing of the BBC's mission of cultural uplift to persuade Sackville-West to work for the Corporation. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1929, she wrote:

I am more pleased than I can say that you may reconsider the reviewing job my sweet. I did hesitate a good deal before suggesting it, because I felt sure that ordinary novel reviewing would bore you stiff. But it did seem a pity (a) that my dear BBC shouldn't have the best possible of all persons (b) that Vita should have those pennies [sic], few though they were.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Qtd in Jane Brown, *Sissinghurst: Portrait of a Garden*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990) p. 158. *Auriculas* are a kind of flower that require a lot of attention and ministrations in order to grow well.

<sup>14</sup> As we shall see, Sackville-West criticised notions of the highbrow in her BBC reviews.

<sup>15</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 23 January 1929, Box 1, BRBML.

The reasoning in this letter exhibits the dual concerns of Matheson as she oversaw the upcoming Talks programming; not only would audiences benefit from the insight of an established writer of critical acclaim, but Sackville-West would increase her earning capacity. In other words, it was a mutually beneficial arrangement for the writer and the BBC. This was a time when finances were tight in the Sackville-West/Nicolson household and therefore Sackville-West was open to a wider range of professional opportunities than may otherwise have been the case.<sup>16</sup> In her lettered list of reasons, Matheson deploys the Reithian doctrine of providing “the best of everything” on-air to persuade the writer of the value of the reviewing role, reformulating it to “the best possible of all persons” to reflect the class privilege Sackville-West held.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the financial incentive and the flattery, Sackville-West did not immediately accept the reviewing role. However, Matheson was persistent. On the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1929, she wrote again:

Listen my sweet, I want to ask you quite seriously what you would feel about undertaking reviewing for the BBC. I mean I would awfully like to know how you would feel it would affect your other work and your other reviewing and whether you could contemplate a fortnightly review of new novels with equanimity and whether you would think it worth your while... I expect it wouldn't be worth your while or worth the bother, I only suggest it at all, with the uttermost diffidence as you must know because (a) I do want my BBC to have the best of everything (b) you are so adorable about it (c) because it might add a few pennies without very much time or effort.<sup>18</sup>

Although the discussion had been ongoing for a month by this point, Matheson repeats her request outright, almost exactly reiterating the lettered list of the 23<sup>rd</sup> January. By also appealing to Sackville-West's existing professional commitments,

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<sup>16</sup> Nicolson was about to resign from the diplomatic service and was looking for alternative employment, which he was to find with Lord Beaverbrook later that year. Nicolson would also supplement his earning by broadcasting on the BBC.

<sup>17</sup> Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain*, p 34.

<sup>18</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 17 February 1929, Box 1, BRBML.



“your other work and your other reviewing”, Matheson situates the act of reviewing on radio in the general milieu of Sackville-West’s work.

Eventually, Matheson’s “uttermost diffidence” paid off. Sackville-West agreed to the regular book review slot. She was to replace Mary Agnes Hamilton, a prolific writer of novels, reviews for publications such as *Time and Tide*, journalism, and biographies of trade unionists. Hamilton knew the Woolfs, Rose Macaulay and left-leaning Bloomsbury member, William Arnold Foster, and had been elected as a Labour MP in the 1929 election, therefore resigning as BBC novel reviewer.<sup>19</sup> Since 1927, Hamilton had been doing bi-weekly reviews on alternating weeks to Desmond MacCarthy, whose own talks had proven popular enough to increase the time allotted to book talks on the BBC.<sup>20</sup> MacCarthy thought highly of Sackville-West as a replacement for Hamilton, writing to Matheson that he considered the writer to have “a real gift for broadcasting”.<sup>21</sup> With the respect of her peer and given the enthusiasm from Matheson, Sackville-West looked well-placed at the BBC.

As it was, Sackville-West’s role as BBC book reviewer was a professional challenge for the writer. Firstly, reviewing as a profession was receiving vociferous criticism from various quarters in the late 1920s. The publishing industry had increased its output very significantly during this period, with British publishers releasing 11,603 new titles and 3,790 reprints in 1930 alone.<sup>22</sup> The sheer volume of new releases meant that reviewers were under heightened pressure to help the reading public comprehend the saturated market at the same time as giving authors a fair share of

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<sup>19</sup> Hamilton’s relationship with the BBC would not end here, however. In 1929, she presented the first episode of *The Week in Westminster* and in 1933, after losing her parliamentary seat in the 1931 election, she became a Governor of the BBC.

<sup>20</sup> “Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton: ‘New Novels’”, *Radio Times*, 30 September 1927, 1209, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 4 February 1929, Box 1, BRBML.

<sup>22</sup> Qtd in Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street*, (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), p. 80.

attention and assessment; an impossible balance to strike. In his exploration of the relationship between journalism and modernist writers, Patrick Collier highlights the dissatisfaction reviewers were evincing: “Book reviewing was the most visible site of mediation between readers and writers, and was widely held to be failing in its obligations to help the readers navigate an overcrowded literary marketplace”.<sup>23</sup> As gatekeepers or guides to the literary marketplace, reviewers were seen to be inadequate.

To combat fears that reviewers were unable to meet the demands of the role, some newspapers ‘cashed-in’ on the reputations of well-known writers, employing them as book reviewers. These prominent critics imbued authority in a paper’s review pages. Yet even respected writers came under fire for the validity or relevance of their reviews. One significant argument for this, Collier explains, was:

the accusation of conflict of interest or ‘log-rolling’, which had been levelled at [Virginia] Woolf..., as well as at Harold Nicolson, Leonard Woolf, Desmond MacCarthy, and others identified with Bloomsbury. The ‘log-rolling’ argument suggested that writers gave positive reviews to their friends and influential colleagues, largely shutting out new or unconnected writers.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than provide an honest guide to an overcrowded marketplace, some contemporary authors and critics thought that prominent writers simply recommended the work of their friends, reinforcing literary standards and preventing new writers from gaining recognition.

Attempts to bolster the respectability of reviews by using novelists or journalists backfired when accusations of log-rolling became commonplace, supported by the repetition of the same names and the same groups of writers in the review columns.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Frank Swinnerton, a prominent literary critic working for the *London Evening News* between 1929 and 1932, was especially dismissive:

This sort of reviewing, with...its constant sycophantic references to favoured names, its yawns at whatever sells more than seven hundred copies, its pretence that certain genteel writers belong to the class of Donne and Marvell, and that others are no more than hucksters, is a low form of politics.<sup>25</sup>

Explicitly disparaging the elitist posturing of some well-connected reviewers as damaging to the democratic integrity of the literary marketplace, Swinnerton railed against the values of the literary elite. His reference to critical “yawns” at books that achieved popular success and sold well reinforces narratives of highbrow elitism that were connected to notions of modernist exclusivity.<sup>26</sup> Collier suggests the reference to Donne and Marvell is a “stab” at T.S. Eliot, who had published on Marvell and the metaphysical poets in 1921.<sup>27</sup> More recently than that, Sackville-West had published a book on Marvell in 1929—the same time that Swinnerton was at the *London Evening News*. Surely, this text was also in Swinnerton’s mind as he castigated the praise of “genteel” writers by elite reviewers on the inside of literary networks that facilitated mutual success. It appeared that Sackville-West could be accused of such practices.

However, in her critical and journalistic work of the late 1920s, Sackville-West positioned herself as an enthusiastic amateur reader, rather than a prize-winning poet or prominent novelist. This was true of her book on Marvell. Rebecca Nagel confirms the distinct difference between Sackville-West and T.S. Eliot’s critical approach to the metaphysical poet: “[Eliot] says nothing at all about Marvell as a nature poet or even about Marvell as a once living person: all in marked contrast to

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<sup>25</sup> Qtd in Collier, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Collier, p. 86.

Sackville-West's voice as the modest common reader".<sup>28</sup> Nagel's description of Sackville-West's as a "modest common reader" is particularly apt. Her modesty not only imbued her reviews with an agreeable tone that facilitated listener discussion, but her self-effacement was in contrast to more confident pronouncements on the state of literature, issuing from other pens and publications at the time.

Certainly, Sackville-West took the criticisms of contemporary reviewing seriously. In her BBC reviews, she attempted to dispel any suspicion of log-rolling or other reviewing dishonesty. In March 1930, after favourably reviewing Mary Agnes Hamilton's new novel, *Special Providence*, she declared:

I don't want you to think that I am saying all this because Mrs Hamilton was so to speak my predecessor in office. Rightly or wrongly, people distrust authors and reviewers; there is a little word called 'log-rolling', which hints at a multitude of sins... Why it should be called log-rolling I don't know, it sounds more like a timber-camp than like literary society. However that may be, I can promise you that I never roll logs or recommend books that I don't believe in.<sup>29</sup>

Sackville-West takes pains to distance herself from the "multitude of sins" which the term log-rolling evokes. She commits to maintaining her own literary values and making her own selections, regardless of the trends of the publishing industry. Querying the metaphor of log-rolling itself, with its connotations of heavy industry and the remote, brutality of the timber-camp, Sackville-West rejects such critical behaviour. She is at pains to reassure the listener that she is chiefly concerned with her honesty and integrity as a participant in literary discourse.

Uncertainty about the most valid definition of "the best of everything" caused conflict between the BBC and its prominent literary reviewers in the early 1930s, posing a

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<sup>28</sup> Rebecca Nagel, "The Classical Tradition in Vita Sackville-West's *Solitude*", *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 15:3, (2008), pp. 407-427, p. 418. Nagel of course alludes to Woolf's 1938 text, *The Common Reader* in her phrasing here. Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1925).

<sup>29</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", 3 March 1930, Radio Talks Scripts, RYA-SAC, T452, pp. 2-3, BBC WAC.

second challenge to Sackville-West. Stringent reviewing guidelines led to controversy about the role of the BBC reviewer and the types of books they should recommend on the airwaves. In July 1930, the Director-General had written to critics stating that “the ethical content, moral influence, etc., are of at least as much importance as literary merit” when reviewing a book.<sup>30</sup> Thus, books that contravened the moral consensus of the period, including heteronormativity, modesty with regards to sexual interaction, and broadly Christian principles, were not to be mentioned, regardless of literary merit.

Such prescriptivism was galling for MacCarthy, who wanted to protect his reputation as an independent critic in the literary sphere and in the eyes of the public. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1930, he wrote to Reith, contesting the ruling:

The Resolution that no book should be mentioned or discussed which contains anything contrary to morality is, in my opinion, (A) far too wide in its reference to be a guide to broadcasters, and (B) calculated, if it is known to be the declared policy of the BBC, to bring that institution into contempt with the educated public, who are well aware that many of the best books, past and present, contain ideas and passages contrary to morality. Such an injunction would stultify education and criticism.<sup>31</sup>

MacCarthy attempted to use the public service broadcasting ethos of the BBC against Reith, arguing that the educated public would be contemptuous of severe limitations on literary reviewers. Such derision from a certain kind of public would jeopardise the Corporation’s legitimacy as a cultural institution and call into question the BBC’s ability to fulfil its mission of educating and informing the nation. As it was, MacCarthy’s appeal did not change the minds of the Governors and the policy

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<sup>30</sup> Reith to Desmond MacCarthy, 8 July 1930, Talks, Critical Programmes, Book Talks, Use of Critics, 1930-1935, R51/102, BBC WAC.

<sup>31</sup> MacCarthy to Reith, 2 July 1930, R51/102, BBC WAC.

remained. It was this policy that sparked Nicolson's "New Spirit in Literature" controversy.

For her part, Sackville-West also disagreed with Reith about the moral obligations of the BBC. She considered the Director-General to be impeding listeners' ability to choose books for themselves through an unnecessary nervousness about radical literature. In 1932, Sackville-West wrote to her son, Ben, about her admiration for the novelist, D.H. Lawrence: "It seems so ironical that the bishops and the Sir John Reiths of this age should regard him as a pornographical writer".<sup>32</sup> She casts the Director-General as easily offended and narrow-minded, using his name as a synecdoche for the sections of society who were reactionary, easily shocked and unable to appreciate art. For Sackville-West, such timidity was a sign of limited intellect and prudish dogma.

Finally, and relatedly, one of the challenges Sackville-West faced as a BBC reviewer was Reith's scepticism of her ability to review a range of texts. In June 1930, he wrote: "Novel criticism had also been done fortnightly by Miss Sackville-West... The proposal was that Miss Sackville-West should switch over to alternate with Mr MacCarthy on general books... I doubt whether Miss Sackville-West is quite up to general book criticisms".<sup>33</sup> For Reith, novel criticism is less intellectually demanding or contentious than the critique of general books. What is meant by general books is not entirely clear, but presumably the list would include history, politics, science, and philosophy. In this sense, Reith can be seen to value non-fiction above the novel form. Novels were, of course, traditionally associated with women readers so Reith might be eliding genre with gender, or casting novels as less significant due to their

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<sup>32</sup> Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 254.

<sup>33</sup> Reith to Dr. Rendall, 11 June 1930, R51/102, BBC WAC.

readership. Regardless, he suggests that this woman writer is only capable of fulfilling a limited broadcasting remit.

However, it was novels that had more potential for controversy during this period, with a number of modernist novels censored or banned by the Lord Chamberlain. Thus, Reith's reservations about Sackville-West's ability to review books in general is based on a perceived lack of expertise from the writer, despite her extensive professional acumen, rather than fear that she might cause controversy. Yet, MacCarthy himself thought Sackville-West had "a real gift for broadcasting" and Matheson cited a number of people who thought Sackville-West had "the only decent voice on the wireless of any woman".<sup>34</sup> Such doubts in the face of praise for Sackville-West from peers and listeners could suggest a level of gender bias in the Director-General's criticism, devaluing the cultural work of a woman writer when comparing her to male critics. Despite Reith's concerns, Sackville-West was granted a wider remit towards the end of her sojourn as a BBC book reviewer. She would use this expanded role to propose a reading syllabus that rebelled against a male-orientated cultural hierarchy at the BBC, challenging the Corporation's expectations about book reviewing.

## **Sackville-West's Reviews**

Having described the difficulties faced by Sackville-West in the context of her role as BBC book reviewer, I will proceed by giving a general overview of her previously unstudied reviews, before outlining the tactics she used to negotiate controversy at the BBC. On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1929, between 7.00 and 7.15 pm, Sackville-West broadcast the first edition of her review programme, "New Novels", on the London

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<sup>34</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 4 February 1929 and 23 January 1929, Box 1, BRBML.

2LO and Daventry 5XX transmitters, reaching an audience of several million.<sup>35</sup> She had been preceded by “The Foundations of Music”, featuring a piece by Bach, and was followed by a talk on China by Lord Gosford.<sup>36</sup> Sackville-West’s broadcast was published in *The Listener* on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1929.<sup>37</sup> As such, the beginning of the published version may not be what listeners heard at 7.00 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1929, but we will never know.<sup>38</sup> We only have the *Listener* versions of the writer’s “New Novels” broadcasts for 1929, which poses a methodological question when analysing these talks, due to the edited, print version of the talk that we have access to. The specific audience addressed by Sackville-West’s extant 1929 BBC reviews are the readers of *The Listener*, the literary weekly, rather than the vast and amorphous listening audience of the radio more generally. Without a copy of the typescript of the talk, we cannot compare how the printed version and the spoken version may have differed in terms of focus, length and tone. Indeed, the BBC Written Archives Centre holds copies of the original scripts for the programme from 3 February 1930 onwards, which are much longer than the 1929 articles. This is partly because Sackville-West’s allocated slot was increased to twenty-five minutes, up from fifteen, and partly because the *Listener* regularly edited and shortened broadcasts for publication. Similarly, her “Books in General” broadcasts, from September 1930 until February 1932, survive as a mixture of archival scripts and *Listener* articles. Finally, Sackville-West contributed to a programme entitled “Books of the Week” from March 1932 until October of that year, which aligned her reviews, in name, if not content,

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<sup>35</sup> “Miss Sackville-West, ‘New Novels’”, *Radio Times*, 26 April 1929, 291, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Sackville-West, “New Novels”, *The Listener*, 8 May 1929, p. 646. In it, she reviewed *Brothers and Sisters* (1929) by Ivy Compton-Burnett, *The Squire’s Daughter* (1929) by F.M. Mayor, *Room* (1929) by Herbert Asquith, and, although it had been published in February and was therefore “not an absolutely new novel”, *The True Heart* (1929) by Sylvia Townsend Warner.

<sup>38</sup> For debates surrounding the problems of adapting radio material for the literary publication of the BBC, see Debra Rae Cohen, “Intermediality and the Problem of the *Listener*”, *Modernism/modernity*, 19:3, (2012), pp. 569-592.



with Desmond MacCarthy's.<sup>39</sup> All this to say that the professional reviewing voice of Sackville-West that we are able to discern in these materials is a mixture of a conventionally published authorial 'voice', a written style or tone on the page, and a shadow of a spoken voice, the typescripts that gesture towards spoken delivery but which do not reveal nuances of tone or inflection. Once again, this is a consequence of relying on written material in the absence of sound recordings in the archive.

In terms of content, Sackville-West's reviews provide a range of recommendations, some of which conformed to the custom of contemporary book reviews— being timely, evaluative, and paying the book due attention— and others that questioned the convention of a reviewer's expertise. In November 1929, for example, she introduced "two rather unusual novels this week", *This Poor Player* (1929) by Miss Shirley Watkins and Susan Glaspell's *Fugitive's Return* (1929).<sup>40</sup> Both novels unpicked the workings of the human mind; the first set in drawing rooms and gardens of Britain, the second in Delphi.<sup>41</sup> Sackville-West's description is not complimentary:

I cannot honestly say I was very much enchanted by either of them myself, but that is no reason why they should not appeal to other people...one of them, indeed, is so desperately serious that I can only admire the author's courage in writing a book of this sort in 1929.<sup>42</sup>

Professing her dissatisfaction with the books, Sackville-West included them on the basis of their potential appeal to others. This is an act of inclusion that allows for differences in taste. Sackville-West as reviewer does not act as a gatekeeper. Instead, she is a conduit for readers to make their own choice, although they will no doubt be influenced by her critical appraisal. In other words, she does not

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<sup>39</sup> "Books of the Week" can also only be found in their published form in *The Listener*.

<sup>40</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", *The Listener*, 20 November 1929, p. 694.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

recommend only those books which conform to her personal taste but references a wide range of reading material available in 1929. Such inclusivity, of course, contradicts the statement that Sackville-West would never “recommend books that I don’t believe in”, already quoted in this chapter but made the following year, 1930. However, I suggest that Sackville-West believed someone would value these “unusual novels”, and therefore thought them suitable for inclusion. She was offering an accurate picture of the contemporary literary marketplace, rather than merely recommending the work of her friends.

Such equivocation was followed, in contrast, by glowing praise for the short story collection *Frost in April* (1929) by Malachi Whitaker. In this case, Sackville-West wrote: “I have no doubt at all that Malachi Whitaker is a born writer”.<sup>43</sup> *Frost in April* is “downright [sic], economical, unsentimental, and absolutely convincing”, the very qualities that were lacking in the previous novels.<sup>44</sup> Whitaker’s short stories, she wrote, have “the same honesty, the same refusal of effective tricks, and the same determination to make each word do the duty required of it” as Katherine Mansfield’s.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Sackville-West places Whitaker in a literary milieu that signifies quality and prestige. In this, she performs a more traditional reviewing role: recommending good books by comparing them to other well-respected works and authors. The review finished with mentions of G.B. Stern’s *Petruchio* (1929), and Gordon Stowell’s *The History of Button Hill* (1929), the imagined story of a township since 1894. A range of topics, including history, literature, manners, travel, and nature are mixed together in this review of contemporary novels.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

What is more, Sackville-West used her platform to promote more experimental work. In May 1930, she featured Eleanor Scott's *The Forgotten Image* (1930), apologising for having "overlooked her novel...at the time it came out".<sup>46</sup> This was followed by L.A.G. Strong's *The Jealous Ghost* (1930), and a searching review of J. Maconachy's *Vanishing Shadows* (1930). Her consideration of Maconachy's work is founded on an interest in novels that do something more than entertain. Maconachy, Sackville-West said, "doesn't attempt to reproduce the world as we know it; she attempts the much more difficult task, of creating a world for herself; and making it credible within her own limits".<sup>47</sup> It is the novelist's experimental endeavour that attracts Sackville-West and makes this novel worthy of inclusion:

That's why I am interested in Miss Maconachy, - more interested than in many writers of novels who succeed in simply reproducing life with photographic accuracy. We can all take photographs, provided we know the stops, but few of us can paint pictures.<sup>48</sup>

The metaphor of painting a picture in contrast to the mechanically-aided production of a photograph speaks of the skills Sackville-West valued. As a reviewer, she considered experimental worlds which were 'credible within their own limits' to be a praiseworthy achievement of literature. Novels that reproduce life are less interesting to Sackville-West than those that develop individual styles or modes of writing.

Furthermore, there is a discernible equality in the gender split of these reviews. Scrutinising the gender breakdown of all novels reviewed by Sackville-West in available "New Novels" reports, we can see that 43% of reviews were of books written by women and 55% were of books by male writers.<sup>49</sup> This is a much narrower

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<sup>46</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", 26 May 1930, p. 1, BBC WAC.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix 2. The 2% that is unaccounted for derives from writers whose gender is unknown, anthologies or multi-author texts.

margin than might otherwise have been expected and demonstrates her commitment to providing a range of recommendations. During the 1930s, Sackville-West's selections of texts grew even more diverse. The books she recommends in "Books in General", for example, include literary history, biography, film history, diaries, essays, travel and poetry. The gender ratio is not as balanced as in "New Novels", with 72.5% written by male authors and 21.5% written by women.<sup>50</sup> There is a significant 6% of books which cannot be placed in one gender category or another due to the increase of anthologies and multi-author collections that Sackville-West chose as part of her new jurisdiction. Her "Books of the Week" talks show a similar gender bias with a 73.3% male to 22.6% female split, and 4% of books fitting into neither category. These figures reflect Sackville-West's increased focus on political commentaries and recent histories of countries in Europe, especially Germany and Russia, which were overwhelmingly written by men.

In this sense, Sackville-West's reviews were a barometer of developments in society, including women's increased presence in the literary marketplace for novels and readers' growing interest in European political developments during the 1930s. She repeatedly offered for consideration books that she herself did not enjoy. But she also thought that her own taste should not prevent her listeners from hearing about them. Through this inclusive practice and her professed aversion to log-rolling, Sackville-West sought to reclaim reviewing as a humble and helpful act, serving the large audience of the interwar BBC.

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<sup>50</sup> See Appendix 2.

## Developing a Dialogic Principle in Radio Reviews

Sackville-West was committed to dialogue on the airwaves, firstly with her husband Harold Nicolson, and later with listeners to her regular reviews. In the early days of radio, the very process of broadcasting made many speakers uncertain. The experience was certainly not comfortable for Sackville-West. She describes the protocol of those first live broadcasts in a letter to Nicolson:

You are taken into a studio, which is a large and luxuriously appointed room...There are lots of menacing notices about 'DON'T COUGH- you will deafen millions of people', 'DON'T RUSTLE YOUR PAPERS', and 'Don't turn to the announcer and say was that all right? when you have finished'...One has never talked to so few people, or so many; it's very queer. And then you cease, and there is an awful grim silence as though you have been a complete failure...and then you hear the announcer saying 'London calling. Weather and News bulletin', and you creep away.<sup>51</sup>

The intimidating aspects of speaking into the void pervade this description. The BBC tried to guide their speakers with those abrupt and “menacing” signs; the capitalised words of the notice unable to convey the enormity of the audience and the reality of the airwaves. Most notably, Sackville-West is disconcerted by the lack of reciprocity that the microphone provides, the “awful grim silence” that greets her words. It is the preclusion of feedback that the medium entails, the denial of a response, the seeming impossibility of conversation with the audience, that Sackville-West struggled with in these early broadcasts. This silence forced her to adopt tactics that allowed her to overcome the feeling of being a “complete failure”.

One tactic to surmount the silence on the other side of the microphone, and a popular way for the Talks department to train promising broadcasters, was the use of discussions on the airwaves. These were pre-arranged talks by two or more speakers, who were called upon to present opposing opinions on such topics as “Is

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<sup>51</sup> Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 193.

Chivalry Dead?” and “The Best Way to Heat your House”.<sup>52</sup> All discussions were scripted and rehearsed— in part to ensure coherence and suitability for the radio and also to allow Talks producers to check for any possible controversy.<sup>53</sup> Sackville-West and Nicolson took part in a discussion entitled “Marriage” on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1929, when the couple conversed about the ingredients of a happy marriage and the challenges marriage can bring. The only record we have of their “Marriage” broadcast is the abridged *Listener* edition, published on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1929. The substantial absence of sound recordings in the BBC archives makes this broadcast particularly troublesome to unpick, as tone does not translate very clearly to the page. Without hearing the broadcast version of this talk, the mood is hard to judge. Kate Whitehead reads it straight, suggesting that “Vita’s submissive tone at the end seems to arise from boredom rather than agreement, leaving Harold to wind up”.<sup>54</sup> Whitehead endeavours to enmesh this discussion in the wider context of the Bloomsbury conversations that were taking place on the airwaves in these years at the behest of Matheson. These included Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s “Are Too Many Books Written and Published?” and Clive Bell and Desmond MacCarthy’s discussion on the theme of modern art. It was through these conversations, writes Whitehead, “that the image of Bloomsbury as a group of highbrow conversationalists, with frequently eccentric (or even progressive) views about life began to emerge”.<sup>55</sup> The value of conversation for the disparate members of the Bloomsbury group that Whitehead

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<sup>52</sup> “Note to Announcer”, 1 April 1927 and “Undated Memo”, Debates and Discussions, File 1a, Talks, 1926-1936, R1/118/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>53</sup> David Cardiff, “The Serious and the Popular: Aspects of the Evolution of Style in the Radio Talk 1928-1939”, in *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Richard Collins and others, (London: Thousand Oaks, 1986), pp. 228-246, p. 245.

<sup>54</sup> Kate Whitehead, “Broadcasting Bloomsbury”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 20, (1990), pp. 121-131, p. 127.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

analyses is, for her, the paramount driver for their involvement with the BBC.<sup>56</sup> For Whitehead, Sackville-West and Nicolson were participating in the “Marriage” discussion as committed “highbrow conversationalists”.

Yet, these conversations were not always conducted in the earnest way that Whitehead suggests. Suzanne Raitt attends to the irony imbued in Nicolson’s final assertion in the broadcast that the married couple had “never seriously disagreed” and to the nature of both partners’ homosexuality and extra-marital affairs.<sup>57</sup>

However, Raitt mostly agrees with Whitehead by reading the content as sincere:

“Their letters suggest that they took the broadcast seriously. Nicolson wrote to Sackville-West: ‘we could do a long bit about men’s and women’s professions clashing. It will be rather fun’”.<sup>58</sup> Noting an interpretive dissonance between ‘fun’ and ‘seriousness’, I suggest, rather, that the couple were performing their expected roles in an exaggerated way. Nicolson’s suggestion of a “baby-club”, for example, where either parent can drop their child on the way to the office, is couched in particularly flippant terms; “the club baby would return at 6, I mean 6 pm not six years old”.<sup>59</sup> The prominent couple were indeed having “fun”.

More significantly, Sackville-West and Nicolson’s discussion engaged other married couples in the discussion. Returning from a party in June 1929, Matheson wrote to Sackville-West:

every single person who spoke to me said that he & his wife (or she & her husband) sat up arguing till 12 or 1 after your discussion on Monday and it was the best thing they had ever heard on the wireless & and that you both

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<sup>56</sup> Notably, Whitehead includes Walpole, Sackville-West, and Nicolson in her definition of the Bloomsbury group, who she admits “would have hotly denied all but the slightest ties of geography” to Bloomsbury as it was conceived of at the time. “Broadcasting Bloomsbury”, p. 121.

<sup>57</sup> Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, “Marriage”, *The Listener*, 29 June 1929, p. 899.

<sup>58</sup> Raitt, *Vita and Virginia*, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> “Marriage”, p. 899.

sounded such terribly nice people... Jeans & his wife carried it on long after they were in bed!<sup>60</sup>

The couple had been able to pin-point and articulate differences of opinion that resonated with the kind of sophisticated public that attended the same parties as Matheson and that the BBC sought to appeal to in its early years; the cultural elite. Matheson's reference to well-respected physicist James Jeans by name gestures to the likely familiarity Sackville-West had with the guests of the party— if she did not know Jeans personally, she would have heard of him. Moreover, Matheson capitalises on an opportunity to praise Sackville-West and encourage her to keep broadcasting, for the professional advantage of the BBC and the personal benefit of its enamoured Talks Director. As such, Matheson particularly notes in this letter that Sackville-West and Nicolson had engaged listeners and potentially encouraged them to continue talking after the broadcast had ended. In this way, the talk could be conceived not a didactic piece that fell on passive ears but a more democratic address that empowered married couples to disagree with the speakers and with each other. Although the discussion did not have the veracity or solemnity that Raitt and Whitehead suggest, it started a conversation and provided Matheson with an opportunity to actuate Sackville-West's interest in broadcasting.

What is more, the success of this discussion broadcast derived, in part, from the couple's ability to follow the instructions of BBC producers. Matheson explicitly congratulates the pair on their performance:

you and Harold were so very sweet tonight- you made your voice sound so adorable and you said your bits so well- all nice and varied and everything we could ever wish. It was first class material and I do congratulate you both on a really good performance.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 19 June 1929, Box 1, BRBML.

<sup>61</sup> Matheson to Sackville-West, 12 June 1929, Box 1, BRBML.



She notes the variations in Sackville-West's voice that were the hallmark of a good broadcast and still a relatively rare find for Talks producers. It is, frustratingly, these very variations that are lost to us with only the script remaining. Nonetheless, it is clear that Nicolson and Sackville-West excelled at the style of Talk that Matheson so strongly advocated. Thiers was the kind of radio discussion described by David Cardiff as, "the art of the spoken word as a means of domesticating the public utterance, as an attempt to soften and naturalize the intrusion of national figures into the fireside world of the family".<sup>62</sup> Thus, Sackville-West and Nicolson constructed themselves as public figures who were private individuals, having a conversation on the airwaves in which the listening public at home could participate. They were adhering to BBC protocol and negotiating a new style of address.

When Sackville-West made her reviewing debut in May 1929, she was on the way to mastering the art of what I term dialogic broadcasting. This was a technique that she developed during her tenure as BBC reviewer, a style of broadcasting and reviewing which referred explicitly to listener demands and sought to address the audience as competent individuals with valid tastes and opinions. The dialogic technique cast Sackville-West in the role of the "modest common reader" that Rebeca Nagel outlines.<sup>63</sup> Sackville-West also used this technique to negotiate some of the controversies that beset the Talks department at this time. For example, her first "New Novels" programme opened speculatively: "I suppose fiction is more generally read than anything else, and probably more novels are published than any other kind of book".<sup>64</sup> We join Sackville-West musing on a topic, "supposing" general facts, and suggesting what we "probably" know. This is a conversational opening that belies

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<sup>62</sup> Cardiff, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Nagel, p. 418.

<sup>64</sup> "New Novels", *The Listener*, 8 May 1929, 17, p. 646.

any professional connection to the literary world. Immediately, the tone of Sackville-West's reviews is established and her literary expertise carefully hidden. The listener is in dialogue with the reviewer, encouraged to test her statements, and to develop a personal opinion.

The audience responded positively to such an approach and wrote in to say so.

Throughout her reviewing career, Sackville-West frequently referenced the letters she received from listeners. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1930, for example, she was happy to include lighter reading at the suggestion of her listeners, demonstrating the important influence such letters had on the structure and content of her reviews:

For those who like a lighter and less strenuous reading, I can recommend *The Gilded Cupid* by Elizabeth Murray; and *The Beguiling Shore* by D.F. Gardiner. These are both very readable novels; and in recommending them in their brief way I am following the suggestion of one of my listeners, who says "Couldn't you from time to time give us a title or two extra, even if your twenty minutes have been taken up with a more detailed description of other books?" I like these suggestions. They diminish my uncomfortable feeling of working in the dark. I like suggestions, and I like criticism; even abuse is better than silence. The worst thing that can be said of the microphone, is that it is so horribly silent. It never answers back. Therefore, when somebody writes to me...I feel encouraged. I feel that everybody hasn't switched off. And that, I fancy, is a weakness shared by every broadcaster. We do like to feel that at least one person is listening; just as you may like to feel that one person is talking to you, and trying to imagine what books you might like to read.<sup>65</sup>

The void that had so frightened Sackville-West in 1928, the "horribly silent" microphone, is diminished by the interaction she has fostered with her audience through their correspondence. She is happy to respond to their requests or accept their criticism because "even abuse is better than silence". The most important or affirmative point of contact between broadcaster and listener is the imagined, personal connection, the "one person" who is listening in dialogue with the "one person" who is talking. Sackville-West not only talks as a broadcaster; she puts

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<sup>65</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", 31 March 1930, p. 7-8, BBC WAC.

herself in the shoes of her audience and tries to “imagine what books [they] might like to read”.

This was in sharp contrast to Desmond MacCarthy’s book talks. Scheduled as they were on alternate weeks, it would not be too much to assert that these two high-profile writers were in an indirect conversation about the state of contemporary literature at this time. As such, examining their approaches to the audience is an enlightening way of considering the different literary values these broadcasters promulgated on the airwaves. Only passing consideration for the audience is suggested in the opening to MacCarthy’s book talk on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1932:

When I prepare these talks, I am ~~frequently~~ often worried about one point. Has my reading during the last fortnight been of service to anyone but myself? For what I read is decided by my own interests, and these interests may not be shared by ~~you~~ others. Yet I feel, on the whole, it is better to discuss what happens to have interested me than make a guess at what would interest ~~you~~ listeners. That is ~~so~~ too uncertain.<sup>66</sup>

Despite concerns that his reading has not been of service to anyone but himself, MacCarthy continues to discuss books that are of interest to him, rather than take the imaginative leap to “guess at what would interest” his audience. The original script has also been edited to remove elements that increase the familiarity of his tone, reducing the individualised “you” to the indistinguishable mass of “others” or “listeners”. A year before, in January 1931, MacCarthy had introduced his talk with the damning and disheartening statement: “The book I am going to mention is not likely to give pleasure” and went on to discuss, at length, the merits of August Strindberg, the obscure Swedish poet and dramatist who had been the subject of a

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<sup>66</sup> MacCarthy, “Book Talk”, 4 January 1932, T309, p. 1, BBC WAC.

recent biography.<sup>67</sup> Regardless of the opinion of his listeners, MacCarthy reviewed books based on his views about their literary merit and intellectual sophistication.

A detailed account of MacCarthy's reviewing habits is more difficult to compile than it was for Sackville-West as he did not submit his scripts to the *Listener*, nor list his chosen books in advance for BBC production staff to record, as Sackville-West did.

R.S. Lambert, the editor of *The Listener*, suggests that this was due to disquiet from MacCarthy about the reproduction of his broadcasts in printed form:

He attached so much importance to the prestige of his literary style— as exemplified in his articles in the weekly press— as to be sensitive to the appearance of his broadcasts in literary form. These talks, he said, were deliberately conversational, and would not bear appearing in print.<sup>68</sup>

For MacCarthy, the formal concessions he made to broadcast reviews would not stand adaptation onto the pages of *The Listener*. Although Sackville-West conformed to BBC processing protocols (i.e. submitting her reviews in advance and in list form to be published), MacCarthy was more in line with BBC programming practices— giving the public what they needed, rather than what they wanted.<sup>69</sup>

By contrast, Sackville-West often privileged listener suggestions over the expectations of the BBC. On 17<sup>th</sup> February 1930, for example, her review started: “Sometimes I get letters from listeners, saying that they wish there were more good novels. I wish they knew how much I wished it too. There are plenty of novels, heaven knows, but how few good ones!”.<sup>70</sup> Here she paints a picture of the frustrated reviewer picking through a mass of publications to find morsels of quality, just as the reader must pick through reviews, publisher's lists, or library catalogues to choose

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<sup>67</sup> MacCarthy, “Book Talk”, 5 January 1931, T308, p.1., BBC WAC,

<sup>68</sup> Lambert, p. 132.

<sup>69</sup> Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain*, p. 34.

<sup>70</sup> Sackville-West, “New Novels”, 17 February 1930, T452, p. 1, BBC WAC.

their next book. Having cast herself in the same position as the exasperated listener, she goes on to review E.M. Delafield, Helen Ferguson, and Storm Jameson.

Notably, in this case she turns to the output of prominent women writers of the interwar period to find “good novels”. In this way, she responds directly to listeners by promoting a female dominated syllabus. This was an unexpected action, perhaps, because the concept of a ‘good novel’ was, and is, often tied to canonical assessments that are deeply gendered, privileging male-authored books over those published by women. Prompted by listener letters, Sackville-West advances a feminist solution to a perceived lack of quality literature.

Moreover, in February 1931, Sackville-West revealed how listener letters had altered her perception of her audience and the way they engaged with contemporary literature:

I always imagined that most of my audience belonged to the lending-library public, to whom the cost of a book did not matter, since it is as easy to take a guinea book out of the library as a half-crown one; but it has dawned on me lately, in view of the letters that I receive, that there *are* people who buy books- and how grateful publishers and authors ought to be to them! - but that these people naturally tend to buy the cheaper books when they can get them. In future, therefore, I shall try always to recommend at least one very inexpensive book.<sup>71</sup>

As she confesses here, she had thought that her listeners predominantly used lending-libraries, a cost-effective way of accessing books in the early 1930s and had therefore not factored price into her reviews. Listener letters demonstrated that this was not the case. A significant proportion of people wanted to buy books, which caused Sackville-West to change her reviewing practice to include at least one affordable book per review. The average cost of a book in 1928 was 7 shillings and 6 pence (7s 6d), a modest but not insignificant figure that stands at around £17.00 in

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<sup>71</sup> Sackville-West, “Books in General”, *The Listener*, 17 February 1932, p. 245.

today's money.<sup>72</sup> As such, prompted by the audience's participation in requesting cheaper books, Sackville-West consciously made suggestions that were more economically inclusive. This broadened the potential audience for her talks even further, catering for as many purses, preferences, and reading practices as possible.

These kinds of insights were valuable to Sackville-West as a reviewer and she actively protected her right to receive letters directly from listeners. In July 1933, the BBC had offered to open and redirect any letters sent to Sackville-West via the Corporation, enabling BBC staff to deal with routine enquiries. She refused, writing "I should prefer to have letters forwarded to me unopened".<sup>73</sup> In 1934, she also wrote to the Talks Producer, Lionel Fielden: "Could you ask your correspondent [sic] department to send me my letters unopened as for some childish reason it annoys me to have my correspondence opened by other people?".<sup>74</sup> These comments suggest that Sackville-West valued having access to her audience's feedback without the Corporation applying its own categorisation or editing process to the comments.

From the unfiltered correspondence she received, she gained a greater understanding of what listeners desired from a reviewer. However, listener expectations were by no means consistent. In April 1930, Sackville-West's review began by addressing the audience, discussing the various demands they put on her, and outlining how likely it was that she would be able to meet them:

I have had a lot of suggestions showered on me by listeners recently. One is, that I should at least mention every novel published, so that all authors may

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<sup>72</sup> See Appendix 2 for details of book costs. Currency converted according to the National Archives Currency Converter for the year 1930 compared to purchasing power in 2017. <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>> [accessed 6 June 2019].

<sup>73</sup> Sackville-West to BBC, 24 July 1933, Vita Sackville-West Talks File II, 1932-37, R/CONT 1, BBC WAC.

<sup>74</sup> Sackville-West to Fielden, 20 January 1934, R/CONT 1, BBC WAC.

be sure they have received due consideration. I wish I could comply with this request; but as it takes about three hours to read a novel of ordinary length, even if one skips, I should have to read for thirty hours out of the twenty-four in order to oblige my correspondent. Another, that I should indicate books suited to people with 'old-fashioned' tastes. With this request, I may say, I have every sympathy...Another listener wants more thrillers. Yet another asks why do I waste my time and his on recommending thrillers? Yet another asks why I always talk about new novels and never old ones? He has evidently overlooked the title of my talk.<sup>75</sup>

Discursive, open, honest, Sackville-West fully commits to this conversation about the best way to review novels for the BBC's listening audience. She admits her limitations, reveals her personal preferences or "old fashioned" tastes- and gently teases the bind of contradictory requests and a question from someone who has not paid enough attention. She allows her listeners to offer their own positions on the role and value of a book reviewer at the BBC, facilitating discussion between listeners as well as with herself. The section is omitted from *The Listener* article of the talk, which appeared a few days later, meaning that the experience was only shared between Sackville-West and the audience of the live broadcast. Attending to their comments and using their suggestions to inform her talks, Sackville-West is in dialogue with her audience.

## **A Manifesto for Reading**

Not only was Sackville-West mindful of her audience's tastes and competing views on reviewing, she also sought to provide them with different approaches to reading texts. Such hints and suggestions were in addition to the recommendation of titles and the brief overview of contents that most book reviews contained. In her first "New Novels" broadcast in May 1929, for example, Sackville-West does "not pretend," that Ivy Compton-Burnett's *Brothers and Sisters*, "will suit everyone's

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<sup>75</sup> "New Novels", 14 April 1930, T452, p. 1, BBC WAC.

tastes; it will not".<sup>76</sup> Instead, she offers a method for overcoming any barrier to understanding that the reader might encounter:

...if you will think of it as a chessboard, on which the author has invented a purely artificial game- as chess is- and if you will think of the characters as chessmen, being moved about by the hand of their creator in queer, stilted, conventional moves...then you will see, I think, that the characters of this book have an existence and a significance entirely their own.<sup>77</sup>

*Brothers and Sisters*, Sackville-West argues, can be appreciated if one admires the patterns and the "significance" of the writing, instead of focussing on its lack of verisimilitude or plot. Through her chess analogy, she suggests a way of reading difficult or challenging texts. She thereby enables the brave listener and subsequent reader to take control of their own comprehension of literary texts by proffering a novel method of reading.

Yet these reviews do not unquestionably accept complex or more experimental literature as superior to other forms of books available in the interwar literary marketplace. Sackville-West often professed a distaste for overtly difficult books and subjected some 'modern' texts to severe scrutiny. In July 1931, for example, Sackville-West declared; "I hate cleverness...; I hate *mere* cleverness, with its power of falsifying all our sense of true values. Cleverness is the modern dragon which, were I the modern Saint George, I should like to slay".<sup>78</sup> Sackville-West speaks out against 'cleverness' in contrast to 'intelligence'. She advises her listeners not to be impressed by cleverness alone. Her repeated reference to the 'modern' suggests that she is thinking of the *avant garde* experiments in writing that were being made in this period. She juxtaposes such allusions with the archaic imagery of St George and the dragon, playfully distancing herself from some contemporary literature. In this

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<sup>76</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", *The Listener*, 8 May 1929, p. 646.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 5 August 1931, *The Listener*, p. 220. Italics in original.



sense, the literary discourse that Sackville-West participates in has a patina of respectability for the BBC, disavowing as it does many modernist principles.

As a reviewer, Sackville-West demonstrated a nuanced approach to reading, which the audience could model for their own understanding. In November 1931, Sackville-West recommended Gerald Heard's *The Emergence of Man* (1931) and Julian Huxley's *What Dare I Think?* (1931), books about human evolution and contemporary philosophical thought. She suggests that she would rather read these quite dense scientific books than any "etherealised highbrow literature".<sup>79</sup> She goes on:

I feel I ought to amplify that last remark. I like and I enjoy etherealised highbrow literature. I relish the effort that they cost more. When I have got the better of them, I feel that I have conquered a new province. ... But still, such books leave me with a sense of emptiness. They are too fiddling, too personal, too petty. They take the personal view...When all is said and done, the problems of science and biology are more urgent and more far-reaching, though less immediate, than the problems of the individual heart.<sup>80</sup>

Here, Sackville-West is clear about the limited value of highbrow literature. On the one hand, it is important to challenge oneself as a reader and to delve into new provinces of experience. On the other hand, new provinces may leave one with "a sense of emptiness" due to the fiddling, personal qualities of the modern novel with its trend for introspection. Therefore, "etherealised highbrow literature" must also be read alongside science, philosophy, traditional poetry, history, essays etc. Sackville-West professes her own reading preferences here, but she also works against a general assumption that only difficult books qualify as "good literature".<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 11 November 1931, *The Listener*, p. 825.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> For further discussion of difficulty in modernist literature, see "Difficulty/Obscurity" in *Modernism: Keywords*, ed. by Melba Cuddy-Keane, Adam Hammond, Alexandra Peat, (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), pp. 63-68.

Be that as it may, the manifesto for reading that Sackville-West proposed required commitment from the reader to embrace books beyond their comfort zone. Her listeners were being encouraged to develop their own preferences, beyond the edicts of book reviews and library catalogues, and to have an insight into current trends in contemporary literary discourse. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1930, for example, Sackville-West articulated the slow process by which the reading public came to accept such changes:

Many of the best novelists today are trying to get away from the conventional forms of fiction- or, to put it rather differently, they are trying to get away from that mere reproduction of the things which are already familiar... Unfortunately, this attempt exacts some degree of effort on the part of the reader- it is always difficult at first, to follow the innovations of an original mind... It always takes some time before we can adapt our vision naturally to the vision of the experimental artist, whether writer or painter or musician; it has always been so, and no doubt always will be; that is what people tend to forget, when they start deriding Stravinsky, or Edith Sitwell or Duncan Grant. They come round to them in the end, and forget that they ever jeered.<sup>82</sup>

A long view is proposed here— an acknowledgement that cultural and artistic tastes evolve slowly and are always met with resistance that will be overcome. In this particular case, Sackville-West also advances a modernist manifesto; she includes prominent modernists in music, literature and art (Stravinsky, Sitwell, and Grant) to showcase her familiarity with contemporary culture and suggest their influence on artistic production. As a reviewer, she walks the line between acknowledging the inclinations of a socially conservative or reserved readership and encouraging them to embrace newness and literary experimentation.

In any event, Sackville-West's championing of a diversified catalogue of literature contrasted with the increasingly reactionary attitudes to literature of senior managers at the BBC in the early 1930s and her reviews were occasionally amended to reflect

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<sup>82</sup> Sackville-West, "New Novels", 7 July 1930, p. 2, BBC WAC.

such views. In the original script of the July 1930 review, Sackville-West's "homily" on modernism comes immediately before a discussion of William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* (1930). However, any mention of Faulkner was excised from the broadcast. We cannot be sure from the archival evidence but Sackville-West's description of the novel as "not an agreeable book" suggests that BBC staff edited the review to remove reference to a potentially offensive or controversial book. As a result, Sackville-West's invitation to the reader to adapt their taste to the "vision of the experimental artist" now comes, jarringly, before a review of the extremely popular and inoffensive *Very Good Jeeves* (1930), by P.G. Wodehouse.<sup>83</sup> Still, the progressive intent that Sackville-West sought to convey in her "New Novels" programme is unmissable. Building on the rapport Sackville-West had already established with her audience, the listener is gently guided towards literary experimentalism without being forced to abandon traditional preferences. This manifesto for reading is a democratic invitation that moves from "jeers" of uncertainty through to an understanding and then celebration of new texts. But it requires effort on the reader's part. Most importantly, brave decisions must be taken by institutions such as the BBC in order to begin the process of readerly appreciation by promoting a wide range of texts.

## **Female Rebelliousness on the Airwaves**

Initially employed by the BBC to provide 'genteel' talks on novels, in the autumn of 1930, Sackville-West used her increased autonomy to curate an eclectic selection of texts on-air. Her reviews amounted to an anti-institutional syllabus that equipped listeners to make their own choices about the value of books. On 1<sup>st</sup> September

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

1930, Sackville-West introduced a new review programme, "Books in General", with an enthusiastic exclamation:

Books in general! What a wide and generous field! Hitherto I have been confined to fiction, so far as the wireless was concerned, - and I can assure you that it left me with very little leisure for other reading, of the sort I like better, - but now I am free to range over books in general, which means that I can bring anything except fiction under my heading: travel, history, biography, essays, criticism, poetry; even metaphysics, science, and philosophy are not forbidden to me except by diffidence. The term 'books in general' may include old books as well as new; in short, I am checked by nothing except Mr Desmond MacCarthy's choice for the preceding week. I may well count myself lucky; and I do.<sup>84</sup>

Sackville-West was now allowed to indulge her passion for a variety of genres.

Although she stated that she would no longer cover fiction, her previous disregard for BBC remits was in evidence once again, and by January 1931 she was reviewing detective fiction.

Part of Sackville-West's ebullience for her new-found remit stems from a recognition of the freedom she had been granted by being permitted, even encouraged, to make her own, idiosyncratic selections. And Sackville-West made the most of such freedom. In November 1930, her review began:

This week I have a mixed bag of books as usual. I always feel that my fortnightly bag of books is rather like a poacher's pocket- a little bit of everything stuffed into it. Today, for instance, I have biography, poetry, travel, science. But how can I help it? The books sent to me are so various, and many of them so attractive, that I can do no less than pass as many as possible on to you.<sup>85</sup>

Rather than act as a gatekeeper, admitting only the worthiest of books into her reviews, Sackville-West offers a "poacher's pocket- a little bit of everything stuffed into it", a liberatingly eclectic mix of books that are various and attractive. Mary Ann Caws sees such varied choices as evidence of the writer's feminism. She writes:

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<sup>84</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 1 September 1930, T453, BBC WAC.

<sup>85</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 3 November 1930, T453, p.1, BBC WAC.

“[Sackville-West] is a true representative of critical excitement, of creative passion, and of female rebelliousness against masculine-set mores”.<sup>86</sup> By reviewing books in eclectic, idiosyncratic combinations, Sackville-West rejected a narrative of masculine rationality applied to the classification of books and literature in general. Moving away from a prescriptive view of worthy books as perpetuated by the BBC and other institutions of education, Sackville-West expanded her broadcasting remit in order to celebrate her taste for variety. Her poacher’s pocket is therefore emblematic of a female rebelliousness against patriarchal definitions of what is worthy of reviewing or reading. In other words, it is a challenge to traditional canon formation.

As such, the writer’s later reviews include some bold choices. On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1930, for example, Sackville-West casts her eyes to the heavens and reviews Sir James Jeans’ recent astronomy book, *The Mysterious Universe* (1930), published by Cambridge University Press. She does not deny that this is a difficult and challenging book. Instead she celebrates its academic achievement:

Surely there can be few occupations more fascinating than reading books of which we understand only one half, - one third, - one quarter. The occasional glimmerings of comprehension are worth more, are more exciting, than the total understanding we get from an easier book.<sup>87</sup>

Fully admitting the limitations of her own understanding, Sackville-West nevertheless encourages listeners to embrace the “glimmerings of comprehension” that outshine the more consistent light of an “easier book”. She re-states her manifesto for reading complex texts with a humbleness that allows for gradual appreciation.

Sackville-West’s reviews also included texts that sought to inform audiences about the art of reading. She acknowledged that many people struggled with poetry and

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<sup>86</sup> Mary Ann Caws, “Introduction”, in *Vita Sackville-West: Selected Writings*, ed. by Mary Ann Caws, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-15, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Sackville-West, “Books in General”, 10 November 1930, T453, p.1, BBC WAC.

admits that she had been told by numerous people that; “they would like to read poetry, they would like to enjoy it, but they are at a loss to know what beauties to look for”.<sup>88</sup> She therefore recommended several poetry guides over the course of her reviewing career, including *Poetry and the Ordinary Reader* (1930) by M.R. Radley, *Common-Sense About Poetry* (1932) by L.A.G. Strong and *The Discovery of Poetry* (1932) by Hugh Lyon. Sackville-West equips those listeners who wished to understand poetry but did not feel suitably educated to approach it. This demographic would, of course, include many women and listeners from lower-income classes, marginalised groups that could benefit from the radio’s inclusivity.

As the 1930s progressed, Sackville-West featured more political books in her reviews, specifically regarding the situations in Russia and Germany. In July 1931, for example, she suggests Max Murray’s travel book, *Long Way to London* (1931), stating that “the part of his book that really interested me was the part about Moscow: but then I do not see how anybody can fail to be interested in the spectacular and stupendous experiment which is taking place in Russia today”.<sup>89</sup> A year later, Sackville-West is still interested in the political situation in Russia as she contradicts Paul Cohen-Portheim’s argument in *The Discovery of Europe* (1932): “Russia, again, he says, can teach Europe nothing; though there I disagree with him”.<sup>90</sup> Although the BBC sought Sackville-West as a reviewer due to her upper-class credentials and relatively centrist politics, she introduced an analysis of communist Russia to her broadcasts that problematised the BBC’s efforts to disprove accusations of a left-leaning bias in the Talks Department.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Sackville-West, “Books in General”, 22 July 1931, *The Listener*, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> Sackville-West, “Books of the Week”, 20 July 1932, *The Listener*, p. 97.

<sup>91</sup> The BBC’s Talks department was occasionally accused of holding left-wing views. See Lambert, p. 69 and Avery, p. 41. Moreover, the BBC was an institution that monitored the political affiliations of its

Sackville-West's politically engaged programmes continued through to the following year. In March and April 1932, she reviewed the rise of Nazism in *Thoughts on Germany* (1932) by R. von Kuhlmann, an ostensibly unbiased view of Italian politics in *Modern Italy* (1932) by Cicely Hamilton, and Sir Arthur Salter's *Recovery* (1932), which explained the causes and consequences of the Great Depression.<sup>92</sup> As well as trying to inform those of her listeners who had not had an extensive formal education with the ability and the resources to read poetry, Sackville-West also quite deliberately educated them about the wider political context of contemporary Europe and America. She is concerned for her audience's poetic and political understanding, beyond what the BBC considered to be its commitment to the edification of the nation. This is an act of female rebelliousness against an educational mission that privileged men and excluded women or less affluent members of society. Sackville-West ensures that access to such knowledge is provided on the airwaves.

Such careful curation of specific topics suggests that Sackville-West was aware that texts or authors could have social and political resonance. In December 1930, for example, she compiled a talk on influential female writers. She began, "I want, this evening, to talk principally about four remarkable women of the last century;

Christina Rossetti, Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Bronte, and Elizabeth Gaskell".<sup>93</sup>

Articulating the networks that connected these women, their friendships and mutual

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staff in order to prevent the influence of those who held communist views. MI5 vetted the Corporation's potential employees from as early as 1933 until 1990. See Paul Reynolds, "The Vetting Files: How the BBC Kept Out 'Subversives'", *BBC News*, 22 April 2018, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-43754737>>

<sup>92</sup> Sackville-West, "Books of the Week", 7 March 1932, 4 April 1932, and 20 April 1932 respectively. See Appendix 2.

<sup>93</sup> Sackville-West, "Books in General", 13 December 1930, T453, BBC WAC. Although Florence Nightingale tends to be remembered primarily as a nurse and campaigner for better health standards, her later career was characterised by prolific writing, often on medical topics. Lytton Strachey devoted an entire chapter to her in his 1918 book, *Eminent Victorians*, which, as James Southern suggests, offered readers of the 1920s and 1930s opportunities to see Nightingale in an almost feminist light. James Southern, "A Lady 'in Proper Proportions'? Feminism, Lytton Strachey, and Florence Nightingale's Reputation, 1918–39", *Twentieth Century British History*, 28.1, (2016), pp. 1–28, p. 6.

admiration, Sackville-West highlighted the relevance of these nineteenth century women writers for contemporary audiences. In her own way, Sackville-West begins the process of rectifying a canonical history of literature that tends to exclude women, utilising her access to a new medium to do so. Rather than explicitly stating this argument, however, Sackville-West provides an opportunity to recognise the work women writers produced in previous centuries. By contrast, the week before, Desmond MacCarthy had reviewed *Liaison, 1914* (1930) by General Spears and the *Centenary Edition of the Work of Tolstoy* (1930) by Alexander Nazaroff— a war book and a book of literary criticism on one of the most esteemed and well-established writers of the previous century. They were typical, safe, and unchallenging choices. For Sackville-West, however, her reviewing remit of “Books in General” was an opportunity to make unconventional choices. She proposed an alternative, heterogeneous canon to her listenership, one that offered, amongst other things, an understanding of poetry, socialism, and feminism.

## **Negotiating Controversy**

The culmination of Sackville-West’s dialogic approach to reviewing, her provision of specific reading techniques for her audience, and her rebelliousness against patriarchal definitions of quality literature resulted in the inclusion of texts in her BBC reviews that the Corporation may have found controversial. However, her approach to reviewing ensured that Sackville-West did not face the kind of outright censorship that her husband Nicolson had experienced in his “New Spirit in Literature” talks. I argue that the relationship she built with her audience and her gradually widening literary remit enabled Sackville-West to negotiate controversy with listeners themselves. This intellectual contract of sorts protected her from complaints to the



BBC Talks department when a controversial book or author was mentioned, which would have caused her to be removed from the air.

As early as 1929, Sackville-West wrangled with the issue of appropriateness or offence on-air. In a “New Novels” review from December of that year, she stated her concerns about her integrity as a reviewer and its incompatibility with BBC edicts:

Some of you may remember that a little while ago I spoke of a certain difficulty connected with the reviewing of novels over the wireless. I said that I was always particularly careful not to recommend any book which for one reason or another might offend anybody’s susceptibilities...At the back of my mind, however, I could not help foreseeing the day when a real problem would arise: I foresaw, in fact, that some novel might appear whose merit and importance would absolutely preclude the possibility of totally ignoring it, even at the risk of drawing attention to a work which to some people would be distasteful.<sup>94</sup>

By this point in her reviewing career, Sackville-West had established a rapport with her audience that enabled her to discuss challenging topics. She had been considerate to more conservative views in the past but felt able to handle the potential for offence when reviewing a text that could not be ignored. To refuse to review a novel of “merit and importance” was to fail in her commitment to providing a full account of contemporary literature. Therefore, she must review it.

The book in question was Ernest Hemmingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

Sackville-West addresses the issues that might cause offence explicitly:

Perhaps by this preamble I have given you a wrong impression, and have led you to believe that *A Farewell to Arms* is far more offensive than it actually is. Personally, I do not see that it is offensive at all; on the contrary, I think it a most beautiful, moving, and human of books...It is, rather, the central situation which has made me hesitate to speak about it; for there is no denying that Henry and Catherine, the two central figures of the story, have omitted to get married.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Sackville-West, “New Novels”, 4 December 1929, *The Listener*, p. 761.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

She hesitates but overcomes her concern about the listening public's sensibilities, asking listeners to be considered and balanced in their judgement. This was in contrast to the stipulated BBC policy that "no book should be mentioned or discussed which contains anything contrary to morality".<sup>96</sup> Notably, Sackville-West appeals to her private view of the novel as "beautiful", "moving", and "human" to validate the legitimacy of a novel that might be considered "unwholesome". It is her belief in conversation, in treating listeners as informed interlocutors, rather than easily offended reactionaries, that allows her to review a controversial novel.

Sackville-West was also prepared to discuss controversial authors more generally. In particular, she repeatedly referred to D.H. Lawrence. In July 1932, seven months after Nicolson's "New Spirit in Literature" series had ended, Sackville-West reviewed *Savage Pilgrimage* (1932), Catherine Carswell's biography of Lawrence. Her dialogic principle is apparent again as she opens the discussion with her audience:

I am well aware that the mention of D.H. Lawrence makes some people shudder in righteous indignation, and I have consequently had some hesitation in recommending this book to you...I can assure you that you can read this book without the slightest fear of offence, and that you will find in it only the portrait of a loveable, idealistic, suffering man.<sup>97</sup>

Rebelling against the well-known "righteous indignation" that had attached itself to Lawrence's name, Sackville-West argues that reading about the writer will not offend. Further, it might "dispel many of the misunderstandings" which surrounded him.<sup>98</sup> And, if listeners are still worried, she concedes, "it is perfectly easy to avoid reading those among his works which might give offence; there are plenty of others to choose from".<sup>99</sup> Although she does not actually mention any of his more

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<sup>96</sup> As discussed above and specifically referred to in MacCarthy to Reith, 2 July 1930, R51/102, BBC WAC.

<sup>97</sup> Sackville-West, "Books of the Week", 20 July 1932, *The Listener*, p. 97.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

provocative or controversial works by name, the well-documented censorship of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in February 1932 would have been at the forefront of listeners' minds, causing significant potential for controversy. The BBC's desire to suppress any mention of works of literature that were contrary to morality was subverted by Sackville-West in this review.

By her final "Books of the Week" review in October 1932, Sackville-West rejects all censorship of controversial work by Lawrence. Reviewing his recently published letters, Sackville-West says of the writer:

[His] loathing of promiscuous love led him into his frank expressions of love, sexual love, which shocked so many people and set the machinery of the English law in operation against him. That is an old story. You know that his third novel, *The Rainbow*, was suppressed. You know that his paintings were seized by the police; and that the manuscripts of some of his poems were seized in the post.<sup>100</sup>

By explicitly naming *The Rainbow*, Sackville-West contravenes BBC protocol and directs listeners' attention to specific books that were widely considered "contrary to morality". She outlines how Lawrence was "set down by the majority of ignorant and hypocritical people as purveyor of pornographical novels".<sup>101</sup> Of course, Sackville-West had already maligned the Director-General as "the bishops and the Sir John Reiths of this age" who "regard [Lawrence] as a pornographical writer".<sup>102</sup> Therefore, this review suggests that she also considered senior BBC management to be ignorant and hypocritical. Sackville-West rebels against the paternalistic nature of public service broadcasting because she is convinced that certain novels and topics need to be discussed and that their artistic merit warrants their inclusion in widespread literary discourse.

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<sup>100</sup> Sackville-West, "Books of the Week", 26 October 1932, *The Listener*, p. 610.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 254.

In this, her final review, Sackville-West does not propose a dogmatic approach to literature. Instead, she deploys a dialogic approach that involves the listener in the conversation, offers a manifesto for reading that supports introspection and complexity, and demonstrates a female rebelliousness that challenges institutional orthodoxy and masculine set mores with regards to the categorisation and value of literary texts. She says: “That, I suppose, must be enough about Lawrence. I only plead with you to give this truly great writer a chance, and not condemn him on the strength of other people’s opinions”.<sup>103</sup> After four years as BBC reviewer, Sackville-West hopes her listeners’ reading habits are independent and curious. She pleads with them to make informed choices based on their own preferences and values, rather than the opinions of others— including herself. The polite, discursive verb “suppose” is there at the end as it was at the beginning when her first review opened, “I suppose fiction is more generally read than anything else”.<sup>104</sup> She still advocates the reading of fiction but in combination with texts from different genres and disciplines, in order to create a well-rounded reading experience.

There is nothing in the archives to say why Sackville-West stopped reviewing for the BBC in the spring of 1932. However, by that time, her best-selling novels, *All Passion Spent* (1931) and *The Edwardians* (1930) may have eased the financial pressure on her household. Her relationship with Matheson was also coming to an end, reducing her personal motivations for associating regularly with the BBC. With her 1933 publication of her *Collected Poems*, she would go on to win the Hawthornden Prize for a second time.

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<sup>103</sup> Sackville-West, “Books of the Week”, 26 October 1932, *The Listener*, p. 610.

<sup>104</sup> Sackville-West, “New Novels”, 8 May 1929, *The Listener*, p. 646.

Finally, then, by communicating with the listener and catering for their needs and tastes, at the same time as gradually broadening the literary horizons of her audience, Sackville-West engaged with controversial topics and books without drawing too much criticism or censorship from the BBC itself. She negotiated a middle way between the paternalistic inclination of a hesitant BBC management and the progressive idealism of the Talks department. It is through her commitment to the listeners, to their requests, opinions, and expectations that she was able to find a broadcasting style that accommodated conflicting expectations. Her female voice prominently and authoritatively shaped reading tastes in Great Britain during the interwar period. Vita Sackville-West sought to change the public's approach to literature, and in doing so, expanded her broadcasting remit to present an inclusive literary discourse at the still male-dominated BBC.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> From May 1931 until the end of 1931, Clemence Dane and Michael Sadleir conducted new novel reviews. Only non-fiction reviews continued from 1932. See "Critics", n. date, R51/102, BBC WAC.

## 2

### **Who's *Calling the West Indies?* Una Marson's "Message Parties" at the BBC**

At the outbreak of war in 1939, the BBC's mode of operation changed. As discussed in my introduction, women with knowledge of strategic nations or communities began to be valued by Corporation officials for their social contacts *and* their geographically specific expertise as broadcasting priorities became global. Many of the concerns about literary controversy that had permeated Vita Sackville-West's tenure at the BBC were subsumed in the urgent expansion of the Corporation's morale-boosting mission.<sup>1</sup> The onset of hostilities was accompanied by the growth of the BBC's Overseas Service, which was tasked with bolstering international support and countering Nazi propaganda.<sup>2</sup> If questions of curation, literary tastes, and cultural hierarchies in broadcasts had proved irksome for the aristocratic writer of the last chapter, they were even more challenging for the colonial writers who were employed by the BBC to support increased radio output to British colonies around the world. This was particularly true for the first black woman employed full-time by the BBC, Una Marson.

An increase in programming to the West Indies caused Marson, the Jamaican poet and playwright, to become an essential member of staff at the Corporation. The Colonial Office and the Ministry of Information became aware of the strategic and

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<sup>1</sup> Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> See Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, iii: The War of Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 442-50.

ideological importance of developing British broadcasting to the West Indies at a time when Britain was demanding more resources and support from its colonies. These governmental departments, described by Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff as “official clients” of the Corporation, advised the BBC on key propaganda issues, while the broadcaster reserved control of the presentation of programmes and, for the most part, recruitment of staff.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in March 1941, Marson was employed full time as a programme assistant on *Calling the West Indies*, the umbrella term for several programmes broadcast to the Caribbean basin on the North American network of the BBC’s Overseas Service. From 1941 until 1946, Marson would write scripts, source guests, book bands, edit messages, and tirelessly aspire to produce high quality radio output for the scattered and diverse islands and colonies that came under her broadcasting remit.

She was born in 1905 to middle-class parents in rural St Elizabeth, just outside Kingston, Jamaica. Though now recognised as a central figure in networks of West Indian nationalism, Caribbean literature, Pan-Africanism, and black feminism, Marson was marginalised in early accounts of these movements. Her position as a black woman in an imperial patriarchy has rendered much of her contribution invisible in historiographies of Caribbean and Pan-African postcolonial struggles. Marson’s commitment to multiple progressive causes may, in fact, have contributed to her scholarly neglect. As Anna Snaith writes, “a key reason for Marson’s lack of any kind of critical incorporation is the numerous contexts in which her work operates”.<sup>4</sup> As such, the recuperation of Marson’s reputation has emerged from

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<sup>3</sup> Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, “Broadcasting and National Unity”, in *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media and Power in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by James Curran, Anthony Smith, and Pauline Wingate, (New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 157-174, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 153.

various fields over the last few decades. In the 1980s, an increased focus on black feminism led to work by Honor Ford-Smith and Marson's biographer, Delia Jarrett-Macauley.<sup>5</sup> Since then, Paul Gilroy's networked theory of *The Black Atlantic* has recognised the movement of people, ideas, and goods across the Atlantic as a fraught, productive and complex flow of exchange.<sup>6</sup> Through such work, Gilroy has reconceptualised territoriality to reject the limitations of nations, regions, and cartographies, breaking down rigid canons and reforming them to accommodate multiplicity in such a way that enables the recognition of Marson's intellectual contributions in Jamaica, in Britain, and later in her life, in the US. As a result, scholars have increasingly recognised the pivotal role Marson played in instantiating dialogue between black communities of the West Indies and the British empire, using the airwaves of the BBC. Mary Lou Emery and Peter Kalliney, in particular, have argued that Caribbean intellectuals capitalised on the meritocratic nature of modernist literary and media networks to showcase their talent and advance the case for greater equality between black and white cultural workers, a development that would not have been possible without Marson's efforts to create a platform for West Indian literary talent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Honor Ford-Smith "Una Marson: Black Nationalist and Feminist Writer", *Caribbean Quarterly*, 34:3/4, (1988), pp. 22-37, and Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-65*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (London: Verso, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> See Mary Lou Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters*. For a more detailed analysis of Marson's role, see Anna Snaith, "'Little Brown Girl' in a 'White, White City': Una Marson and London", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 27:1 (2008), pp. 93-114 and *Modernist Voyages*, Imaobong Umoren, "'This is the Age of Woman': Black Feminism and Black Internationalism in the Works of Una Marson, 1928-1938", *History of Women in the Americas*, 1:1, (2013), pp. 50-73, and Alison Donnell, "Una Marson: Feminism, Anti-Colonialism and a Forgotten Fight for Freedom", in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. by Bill Schwarz, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 114-131.



In recent years, the growing Radio Studies field has produced accounts of Marson's engagement with the BBC, in particular James Proctor's analysis of her impact at the Corporation and my previous work on the influence of broadcasting on Marson's poetry.<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Ian Whittington has examined the "ways in which the imperial networks of the BBC offered [Marson] a means of voicing previously unrepresented identities" for the West Indies and a transnational black Atlantic.<sup>9</sup> Whittington charts the multivalent development of West Indian broadcasting, attending to instances of transatlantic cultural exchange. This chapter builds on Whittington's analysis of the poetry and interview programmes on *Calling the West Indies* by focussing on Marson's curation of "Message Parties" as a site of national identity-formation. These involved ordinary West Indians coming before the microphone to send messages to friends and family in the Caribbean. Bridging the categories of the literary and the popular, imperial and nationalist, these programmes established an inclusive West Indian identity that would serve the islands when peace came. Additionally, this chapter diverges from Whittington's work by being the first to place Marson alongside the narrative of other women writers who were engaged in broadcasting at the BBC. In doing so, I foreground the intersection of race, class and gender in debates about literary legitimacy as they shaped Marson's interaction with a broadcasting institution that was still socially conservative.

At the time of Marson's broadcasts, the British West Indies constituted eight colonies, including the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, the Windward Islands and the Leeward Islands. It also included the

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<sup>8</sup> See Proctor, "Una Marson at the BBC", Leonie Thomas, "Making Waves: Una Marson's Poetic Voice at the BBC", *Media History*, 24:2, (2018), pp. 212-225, and Whittington, *Radio War*, pp. 153-184.

<sup>9</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 154.

territories of British Guiana and British Honduras on the South American continent. Thus, the geographical space covered some three thousand miles of the Caribbean basin.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the inhabitants of these colonies were diverse in their ethnic and cultural backgrounds as a direct result of, first, the importation of African slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then economic migration from the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth century. The white, plantation classes consistently maintained power, despite increasing signs of civil unrest from the non-white population.<sup>11</sup> In addition to racial hierarchies structuring economic advantage across the region, the West Indies was beholden to British cultural values. The diverse cultures of the indigenous people of the Caribbean, as well as the customs of African slaves and Indian indentured workers, were diminished and disregarded.<sup>12</sup> British poets were taught in schools and English was the dominant language. West Indian citizens claimed the cultural heritage of British mainland citizens, an association that the imperial government utilised at the commencement of war when Britain requested support from its Caribbean colonies in the form of money, goods, and labour in both industry and active service. This resulted in a conscious effort on the part of the British authorities to emphasise what Anne Spry Rush calls “the bonds of empire” between the imperial homeland and its territories in the Caribbean basin in the early 1940s.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I follow Whittington in using the term “West Indies” to refer to the political conglomeration of British colonies and the “Caribbean” to refer to the geographical space of the archipelago. In this way, scholarship “recognise[s] the layered historical and geographical identities of the region and its inhabitants”. Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 183.

<sup>11</sup> Dissatisfaction with British rule sometimes manifested itself as labour riots, which broke out across the region in 1934 and 1939. Marson responds to these events in her poetry, particularly *The Moth and the Star*, (Kingston, Jamaica: self-published, 1937).

<sup>12</sup> Marson explores the legacies of African tribal cultures in West Indian culture in her 1937 play, *Pocomania*, collected in *Pocomania and London Calling*, ed. by Alison Donnell, (Kingston: Blouse and Skirt, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> See Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 2-5, and Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, p. 5, and p. 111-112.

Given the historical and geographical heterogeneity of the West Indies, the notion of a stable and coherent cultural identity for its inhabitants during this time was problematic. The very concept of 'West Indian-ness' was a colonial construct bred from administrative logic, rather than emergent as a felt identity, affiliation or, in Benedict Anderson's term, an "imagined community".<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the term "West Indies" has always been an unstable referent. Rosanne Adderley describes the ambiguity that was a result of imperial intervention in the region:

the phrase 'West Indies' distinguished the territories encountered by Columbus and claimed by Spain. ...The term 'West Indies' was eventually used by all European nations to describe their own acquired territories in the Americas... The concept of considering British Caribbean colonies collectively as the 'West Indies' had its greatest political importance in the 1950s with the movement to create a federation of those colonies that could ultimately become an independent nation known as the 'West Indies'.<sup>15</sup>

Forged in response to Europe's colonial ambitions, the term "West Indies" eventually came to represent an intra-island nationalist movement in the region, which culminated in the formation of the short-lived West Indian Federation (1958-1962). As such, the adjective and signifier "West Indies" was simultaneously an imperial concept and a term of agency and independent identification. Adderley goes on to note that "the adjective 'West Indian' usually referred to a person of African descent in the twentieth century", whereas the adjective was "quite commonly used to describe white colonial residents of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries".<sup>16</sup> Unstable and replete with connotations of imperial power, "West Indies" was a contested term.

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>15</sup> Rosanne Adderley, "West Indies", in *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, ed. by Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzalez, and Ana M. Lopez, 3 vols, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), vol. i 'A-D', pp. 1584.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

The tension inherent in the terminology can also be seen in the BBC's broadcasts to the region. Marson's efforts to create a schedule of programmes that amounted to a cultural offering of unity are an instance of a colonial subject partaking in imperial discourse, whilst simultaneously adapting and challenging dominant paradigms at the level of the individual programmes. In other words, Marson was complicit in the propagandist efforts of the BBC's broadcasts to the West Indies, but the programmes she created four times a week also contained numerous contradictions, dissenting voices, and alternative narratives that challenged British cultural hegemony in the region. During this period, the BBC was invested in articulating an inclusive notion of "Britishness" to its colonies to maintain their morale and support as part of the war effort. Consequently, the Overseas Service required the expertise and contacts of colonial subjects who did not, and could not, straightforwardly accept the status quo of imperial hierarchy. As such, the employment of Una Marson and her contribution to and curation of BBC broadcasts introduced complex tensions between imperial unity and nationalist sentiment to the BBC's airwaves, under the banner of regional representation, or "Calling the West Indies".

For the duration of the Second World War, Marson was the curator of West Indian cultural representation within the BBC. This chapter examines the way in which Marson used her BBC-sanctioned role as representative of the British West Indies to enact a multi-valent and inclusive ideal of a nascent West Indian national identity. While Whittington considers the content of Marson's irregular interview broadcasts as "voicing previously unrepresented identities", I argue that a potent site for such identity formation was the "Message Parties" she curated throughout her career.<sup>17</sup> Through analysis of the composition and content of these messages, I suggest that

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<sup>17</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 153.

Marson instantiated a heteroglot broadcasting schedule that fostered an inclusive dialogue, from which reconstruction and peace-time development in the colony could grow. Moreover, it was Marson's experience as a playwright that enabled her to stage-manage such programmes. As such, this chapter begins by exploring Marson's early articulation of West Indian national consciousness in her 1937 play, *London Calling*. I use Marson's literary work as a way of exposing the concerns it foreshadowed about the complexity of West Indian identity, especially with regards to speech. I then assess how the war changed the practical and ideological underpinning of BBC broadcasting to the West Indies, particularly the interplay between imperial propaganda, articulation of nationalist sentiment in the colonies, and a commitment to the anti-fascist cause. These tensions became apparent in the *Calling the West Indies* output that Marson oversaw. Drawing on archival resources, this chapter addresses questions of Marson's contradictory position as someone who was both complicit in imperial efforts to maintain ties between the West Indies and Britain but also advocated racial equality and West Indian independence. By considering the literary and cultural content of *Calling the West Indies*, as well as the contradictions the programmes contained, I argue that Una Marson cultivated a literary discourse that encouraged West Indians to participate in the British war effort, while developing a national consciousness that would be further explored in the late 1950s and 1960s. This, in turn, led to a collaborative conception of a West Indian identity that embraced literariness and multiplicity, thereby laying the theoretical foundations for the success of the influential poetry programme, *Caribbean Voices*, in the post-war period.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Caribbean Voices* was the literary programme edited by first Marson and then Henry Swanzy, broadcast on the BBC General Overseas Service from 1946 until 1958. It was described by Kamau Braithwaite as "the single most important literary catalyst for Caribbean creative and critical writing in

## London Calling

By the time Una Marson began her association with the BBC in 1939, she had already travelled widely and worked in some of the most prominent institutions of the twentieth century, including the League of Nations from 1933 to 1936. She was a published poet and had run the women's magazine and official organ of the Jamaican Stenographer's Union, *The Cosmopolitan*, making her the first black woman to edit a magazine in Jamaica. She had consistently advocated for the cultural and social importance of gender equality and had demonstrated her commitment to ending racial oppression in both Jamaica and Britain through her cultural and charitable work.<sup>19</sup> Marson first travelled to London in 1932, buying a ticket for the journey with the profits of her play, *At What Price* (1932), which she had staged in Kingston's Ward Theatre that year. Once in London, she became involved with the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), which had been founded in 1931 by the prominent equality campaigner, Harold Moody. She contributed to *The Keys*, the LCP's magazine, and met numerous influential thinkers of Caribbean and African origin, including C.L.R. James and, in 1934, Prince Nana Ofori Atta from the Gold Coast. Her experience of the increasingly visible community of West Indians and West Africans living and working in London in the interwar period went on to inform her conception of a diasporic West Indian community when she returned to London in 1939, after two years in Jamaica. The range of contacts that Marson established

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English". Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*, (London: New Beacon, 1984), p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Marson campaigned for gender and racial equality in her work for *The Cosmopolitan*, in her column in the Jamaican newspaper, *Public Opinion* (1937-1942), as part of her membership and participation in the British Commonwealth League and the Women's International Alliance, and as part of her work with the Jamaican branch of the charity, Save the Children. See Ford-Smith, p. 27 and Umoren, pp. 51-3.

in both London and Jamaica contributed significantly to the expertise that the BBC recognised and rewarded with her employment in 1941.

Returning to Jamaica in 1937, Marson completed a script she had begun writing in London; the play *London Calling*. Exploring the fraught, painful, and sometimes comically uncomprehending relations between black colonial students and a white British family, the play foreshadows some of the tensions and hostility that would be experienced by West Indian service men and women in Britain during the Second World War. Recruitment from the colonies meant that black colonials would live alongside white communities in previously unexperienced numbers and across the island of Britain, at RAF bases and hospitals, lumber farms and naval ports located away from the relatively cosmopolitan metropole of London. While critic Elaine Campbell casts the play as “a romantic comedy”, Anna Snaith and Imaobong Umoren have articulated the significance of the work in the context of race relations in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Marson’s play dramatises the difficulty of inter-racial contact in the pre-Windrush context. In doing so, Marson also explores the competing voices that were laying claim to a West Indian identity in the late 1930s, voices that would grow louder and more clamorous in the context of war.

*London Calling* focusses on the experiences of brother and sister, Sydney and Rita Rae, and their friend Alton Lane. They are from the island nation of Novoka, a non-African crown colony of Britain that evokes the islands of the West Indies.<sup>21</sup> As students in Britain facing daily racism, they decide to alleviate the boredom of a damp London winter by performing an exaggerated native sketch at the invitation of

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<sup>20</sup> See Elaine Campbell, “The Unpublished Plays of Una Marson,” in *Anglophone- Karibik-USA*, ed. by H. M. Hoenisch and R. Capelleveen, (Hamburg: Redaktion Gulliver 30, 1991), p. 111, Snaith, “Little Brown Girl”, p. 98, and Umoren, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Snaith, *Modernist Voyages*, p. 157.

the International Society, a well-meaning organisation that encourages international friendships. Their friends, Frank and Prince Alota, an African prince based loosely on real-life Prince Atta, help them dress up in pseudo-Novokian outfits with beads and blankets.<sup>22</sup> We learn that Novoka does not have any exotic tribal customs due to the influence of British imperialism, so the students imitate West African dress with the blessing of Alota. Alton states, “as we only have English customs in Novoka we want to borrow from you”.<sup>23</sup> The students adopt a more clearly “Othered” identity from Alota, gesturing to a growing feeling of affinity with Africa as the ‘homeland’ of uprooted West Indians of African descent, a feeling that would be catalysed in the Pan-Africanist movement.

The students’ adoption of faux-African customs can be read as a subversive act of re-appropriation. Snaith argues that: “[t]he mirroring created by performing as they are seen, parodies and defamiliarizes the stereotypes by which they have been defined”.<sup>24</sup> In other words, by performing in the way the imperial audience of the Society expect, the students create a slippage or disconnect between the stereotypical prejudice which externally defines them and their own sense of identity. Blind to their parody, the International Society is impressed by the performance, and the students are invited to stay at Lord and Lady Burton’s ancestral home, Stonehurst. The Burtons have a liberal-minded daughter, Elsie, and a racist, reactionary son, Douglas, incorporating a spectrum of British attitudes on stage. The Burtons’ uncle and the students’ friend, Larkspur, organises a prank with the press, which results in the publication of photographs that show white aristocrats mixing

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<sup>22</sup> Una Marson, “London Calling”, *Pocomania and London Calling*, intro. by Alison Donnell, (Kingston: Blouse and Skirt Books, 2016), pp. 70-143, p. 84. (From now on referenced as LC.)

<sup>23</sup> LC, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Snaith, *Modernist Voyages*, p. 157.



with black colonials, to the outrage of the Burtons. In this, Marson articulates the prejudice of the British elite that she was meeting and working with in the League of Nations in the 1930s and foreshadows some of the challenges she would face at the BBC. Umoren reads *London Calling* as a warning to Marson's "predominantly Afro-Jamaican audience" about the racist attitudes still found among British conservatives, "who viewed African and Afro-Caribbean subjects as little more than small backward children".<sup>25</sup> By parodying the British characters, Marson encourages her West Indian audience to recognise the hypocrisy of colonial rule and equips them for potential encounters with the colonial rulers.

A major site of contestation between colonised and coloniser is that of language. Accordingly, vocal multiplicity and playfulness are foregrounded throughout the play. For example, outspoken Alton imitates the speech pattern of Alota: "Most damnable black magic, as Prince Alota himself would say".<sup>26</sup> Marson takes the utterance from Alota and allocates it to another character, highlighting the contingency of individual idioms. Alton is also most attuned to accents, rejecting Frank's offer of help in the prank by stating: "Go on, the minute you open your mouth you shout yankee no matter what you say".<sup>27</sup> Although Frank is also from Novoka, Alton highlights the Americanisation of his accent, which Frank corroborates with a discerning use of the Americanism "swell" a few lines later.<sup>28</sup> Frank's adoption of US slang gestures to the challenge America posed to British imperial power during this period, both politically and culturally. American radio signals were stronger and more reliable than the intermittent shortwave broadcasts of the pre-war BBC so West Indian citizens often

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<sup>25</sup> Umoren, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> LC, p. 84-85.

<sup>27</sup> LC, p. 86.

<sup>28</sup> LC, p. 87.

turned to the newer nation for information and entertainment. Therefore, American linguistic markers were familiar to West Indian audiences. The white characters also have distinctive, almost stereotypical, vocal registers. Douglas, the bastion of British racism and class prejudice, uses the public-school colloquialism “I should be ragged to death” and confirms his familiarity with British institutions through use of the patronising jargon of the Civil Service, referring to the Novokians as “subject peoples”.<sup>29</sup> His last, banal, appeal to social mores, that “it just isn’t done” is rejected by his father, Lord Burton, with a string of indicative clichés: “Isn’t done? Isn’t done? An Englishman’s home is his castle. What he does there is well done. We have arranged to have these people and there’s an end to it”.<sup>30</sup> Although these stock phrases are well intentioned and deployed to mitigate his son’s racism, the inclusion of the distancing and dismissive “these people” undermines any professed progressivism on the part of the older generation. Finally, Elsie conveys the platitudes of the sympathetic but ineffectual. She challenges Douglas’s previous reference to “subject peoples” with the rhetoric of benign progressivism: “It’s time we thought about people as human beings rather than as subject peoples”.<sup>31</sup> Domesticating the debates that were happening in Britain regarding the role and importance of the colonies and representing differing opinions through opposing vocal registers in the white siblings, Marson provides her West Indian audience with an aural guide for engaging with the coloniser.

It is during the final scene that Marson dramatises the competing factions of “West Indian” identity. The assorted cast converges on Rita’s flat, each separately and somewhat secretly, before a “conventional” reveal that Rita and Alton are to be

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<sup>29</sup> LC, pp. 92-93.

<sup>30</sup> LC, p. 94.

<sup>31</sup> LC, p. 93.

married.<sup>32</sup> However, after Rita accepts Alton's proposal, the script unites Larkspur, Douglas, Elsie, Sydney, Frank, and Alota (in that order) as uttering one, incredulous "WHAT?" that concludes the play.<sup>33</sup> Through this heteroglot utterance Marson parodies a range of vested interests in the lives of black colonials, including the African solidarity of Alota and the Americanisation of Frank, the well-meaning but ineffectual white organisations that Elsie was part of, the progressive, but still somewhat predatory white male privilege of internationalists such as Larkspur, and the economically imperial and oppressive young aristocracy of Douglas. All factions feel the right to speak about Rita's decision and are united only by their confusion at her agency. It is a cumulative cry that represents the contested subjectivity of being a black West Indian woman in London in the 1930s. Not only are these voices raised in incredulity about Rita's choice to marry Alton, they assume that they are uniquely placed to advise Rita on her decision. Their simultaneous "WHAT?" dramatises the pervasive patriarchal and imperial hierarchies that surround Rita, challenging her autonomy as a black woman to articulate her own identity in the colonial centre.

Yet, in the final act, Marson also indicates a possible method for navigating these competing demands on a colonial woman. As guests begin to arrive at the flat, Rita performs the role expected from each individual visitor, for example indulging Larkspur and challenging Douglas. However, each visitor is interrupted as Rita chooses to accept another guest into her flat. Larkspur is hidden behind a door, Douglas pushed under a divan, Elsie tucked behind a screen.<sup>34</sup> In this way, Rita is the orchestrator of the situation. She organises her audience for the final reveal. By maintaining a balance of voices in the flat, Rita ensures that she can navigate

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<sup>32</sup> Snaith, *Modernist Voyages*, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup> LC, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> LC, pp. 137, 139 and 141.

through the contradictory, competing demands made on her. This carefully managed staging reflects Marson's own agency as a playwright and, later, as cultural curator of West Indian programming at the BBC.

Marson's dramatic representation of West Indian identity, as demonstrated by an instance of vocal multiplicity, is a performance of complex identity formation.

Identifying the component influences on the imagined, Novokian identity, and rendering them multiple and simultaneous through a single, equalized utterance, Marson explores the difficulty, or undesirability, of finding a single voice for the Caribbean archipelago. The question of who speaks *for* the West Indies is shown to be as contested and complicated as that of who might speak *to* the West Indies on the BBC's airwaves. Colonial voices, such as the dominating Douglas or conciliatory Larkspur are united by self-interest, and their inclusion in the heteroglot "what" an uncomfortable reminder of ongoing imperial participation in national debates. The Novokians, however, are divided by their different cultural loyalties and affiliations. Frank and Sydney, for example, are equally Novokian, but they speak with different inflections: one American, one closer to the dialect of the Caribbean island. Marson refuses to provide one identity with more authority or legitimacy than the other. Yet, in addition to performing vocal multiplicity in *London Calling*, Marson also demonstrates a method for overcoming or embracing the heteroglot nature of West Indian cultural identity and demarcating those voices that lay claim to the region. By allowing multiple people to speak in a non-hierarchical way, or choreographing them into positions of equality, Rita rehearses the curatorial choices that Marson would make at the BBC. The next section explores how Marson achieved success at the Corporation and examines the way technological and literary networks influenced her work.

## Networked Expert

An awareness of the multiplicity of cultural environments in this region enables us to have a more nuanced conception of how West Indian colonial subjectivity was formed during the pre-independence period. Not only were West Indians enmeshed in networks of imperial administration across the islands, but literary, social, and media networks were also influential. Mary Lou Emery articulates the ramifications of theorising communicative multiplicity for late colonial theory, exploring the influence of Indian writers such as Pandit Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore on Marson's early poetry. She writes:

This complex relay of cultural influence, "Eastern" and "Western", "high" and "low", from colony to metropole to colony, and also across colonies, offers a model for understanding the cultural formation of colonial subjectivities far more complex than that found in the usual postcolonial focus on relations between colonizer and colonized, however ambivalent they may be envisioned.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, recognising the broad cultural influences that informed Marson's writing and broadcasting practices helps draw to the fore a model of inter-colonial connection that challenges the prevalent imperial/colony dichotomy in postcolonial literary criticism. The postcolonial citizen's subjectivity emerged from multiple networks, in constant, unstable, flows.

Such a "complex relay of cultural influence" was heightened during Marson's time at the BBC. Bush House, the headquarters of the Overseas Service that would transform into the World Service in 1965, has long been hailed as a contact zone *par excellence*, fostering connections between intellectuals of many nations and languages from 1941.<sup>36</sup> Marson's experience of meeting numerous influential figures

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<sup>35</sup> Emery, *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> See Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds. *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932-2012)*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

of various nationalities through her role at both the LCP, the League of Nations and the BBC means that she was influenced by a broad international milieu.

Furthermore, as a consequence of international regulation of wavelengths, BBC programmes for the Caribbean were transmitted via the North American service, discernible by audiences in Canada and the US.<sup>37</sup> The programmes could also be picked up in some areas of West Africa, and later in the 1940s, by countries as diverse as Malta and Palestine.<sup>38</sup> Thus, BBC broadcasts to the West Indies were both the result of and catalyst for a complex relay of cultural influence that moves away from a binarized notion of imperial power and colonial periphery and reveals a web of trans-colonial connections. Marson, in her role as organiser of West Indian programming, was at the centre of this network.

As might be expected of a colonial institution, the BBC was invested in a limited definition of West Indian identity, one that privileged British cultural connections.

Anne Spry Rush writes:

Empire builders... had created for most Britons a mind-map in which the British West Indies... was understood to be one region, a region that, by virtue of its British ownership, was imagined as entirely apart from other Caribbean lands. BBC officials—clearly accepting this mind-map—imagined for themselves that the culture that would naturally emerge in the region would be shaped in this British West Indian image.<sup>39</sup>

The BBC's official approach to broadcasting to the West Indies was to assume a shared culture based on the "British-ness" of these London administered colonies.

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<sup>37</sup> Such regulation was agreed by International Committees to prevent competition and wavelength 'jamming'.

<sup>38</sup> Palestine and Malta would be included in the Colonial Service along with the West Indies and South Africa, under the oversight of African Service Director, John Grenfell Williams. Grenfell Williams was Marson's manager during this period.

<sup>39</sup> Rush, p.178

It was a policy that would lead to questions about Marson's authority as representative of West Indian culture at the BBC. Senior colonial officials wanted West Indian programmes to represent an indisputable level of 'British-ness'. In January 1943, Director of the Overseas Service, R.A. Rendall, noted in a memo to the African Service Director, John Grenfell Williams, the criticism of colonial administrators relating to programming. Sir Frank Stockdale, the Financial Comptroller of the West Indies, had complained about the BBC's output:

Stockdale's impression was (and although he made no claim to frequent listening he seemed to be well informed) that we were inclined to overdo the West Indian participation in special broadcasts and were not doing enough of a general educational nature. He also repeated the usual criticism about "Too much Jamaica, too much Una Marson"...He particularly asked us to avoid putting any stress at all on the African connection, which was not welcome...<sup>40</sup>

Despite admitting to infrequent listening, Stockdale encouraged programmes with a "general educational nature", along similar lines to the Home Service schedule during this period, therefore aligning the Overseas Service output with what British listeners heard on their radios. Furthermore, he asked the BBC to downplay instances of colonial specificity, considering them potentially inflammatory, as manifest by his indictment of "too much Jamaica, too much Una Marson". Finally, his request that the BBC avoid any mention of West Indian affiliation or connection to Africa is a clear instance of British imperial logic rejecting inter-colony identification or transatlantic affiliation. These were the instructions issued to the BBC by a senior government official.

Yet, through Marson's continued involvement with *Calling the West Indies*, the broadcast of "British-ness" to the West Indies was problematised at the BBC.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> R.A. Rendall to Grenfell Williams, 2 January 1943, Countries: West Indies, Broadcasting in W. Indies, File 1a, Sept 1940-1942, E1/1294/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>41</sup> During the war, the question of the BBC's relationship to the government was contentious. While censoring protocols ensured thorough vetting of scripts and a 'kill switch' was installed in studios, the

Marson was simply too valuable an employee for senior BBC staff to dismiss. This was, in part, due to the Corporation's urgent need for employees with the cultural capital of Marson, who was well-connected in both London and the West Indies.

James Proctor notes:

Marson's particular appeal for the BBC was apparently less as a literary specialist than as a prominent public figure with extensive West Indian connections and media contacts both at home and in London—as somebody, in short, who could command, or commandeer, a substantial Caribbean audience.<sup>42</sup>

As with other women writers employed at the BBC during this period, the Corporation saw Marson's value as lying in who she knew and how she could leverage her network for the Corporation's gain. As such, Marson's employment performed a dual role for the BBC: she utilised her social network and brought specific expertise to bear on a strategically important audience, thus justifying her position as an influential female employee.

Just as Vita Sackville-West's value as a female broadcaster was predicated on her class and therefore social capital, so Una Marson's employment also functioned in the context of class relations. Marson's literary accomplishments in Jamaica and, importantly, Britain, qualified her for what Rush calls the culture of "respectability" that underpinned the BBC's broadcasting to the West Indies.<sup>43</sup> For Rush, the BBC's very mission was class-based and no service was exempt: "in the Colonial Service (and likely in all the BBC's broadcasting services, imperial and domestic) egalitarianism was conditioned by a strong devotion to ideas of respectability that stemmed from employees' identification as members of the middle class".<sup>44</sup> The

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BBC's desire to report truthfully and perform a moderated form of propaganda caused conflict between the Colonial Office and the Mol. See Nicholas, *Echo of War*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Proctor, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Rush, p. 174.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.



hegemony of class in the BBC's Colonial Service, or at least the appearance of uniformity, ensured that the Corporation was broadcasting a consistent message of egalitarianism during the war, a message which supported British efforts to leverage colonial support during the conflict. As previous chapters have asserted, literary accomplishment was one of the most prominent markers of middle-class alignment for senior staff at the BBC. And for colonial subjects, literary production was one of the few routes open to them for increased respect and prominence in the metropole. As Peter Kalliney delineates in *Commonwealth of Letters*, the level playing field of literary production became increasingly important for Caribbean writers during and after the war: "If colonials were treated as second-class imperial subjects in most contexts, the literary world was one of the few areas in which racial discrimination and political subordination were not necessarily the orders of the day".<sup>45</sup> Indeed, at mid-century, West Indian writers were well respected in British literary circles, making them experts in their field.<sup>46</sup> Marson was therefore invested in using her social network at the BBC, as Sackville-West had done, but also required to demonstrate her literary expertise and specialist knowledge of the West Indies, as late-colonial writers would do. She performed the role of a networked expert that the BBC found essential.

As such, Marson was able to bring together not only different cultural identities, but also destabilise traditional categories of 'high' and 'low' culture. Michelle Hilmes argues that, in a transnational context, radio is a fundamental site for national cultural reflection due to "both high and low culture's deep imbrication with the national, political, economic, and transnational forces that shape all definitions of

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<sup>45</sup> Kalliney, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

culture and cultural production, whether recognized or not”.<sup>47</sup> The deep imbrication of radio’s reach across borders and boundaries is central to understanding the ways it affects national culture in contact with other cultures and Hilmes recognises the influence radio has on all aspects of the cultural spectrum. Such destabilisation of cultural standards enables national involvement across a wide range of cultural production. The emergent nature of national identity as an “imagined community” is also relevant here. Anderson influentially argues that national consciousness emerges from shared cultural mores and practices, often disseminated by print or broadcast media, that create a sense of unity between a large group of people who have not and, necessarily, can never meet.<sup>48</sup> While imagined communities can identify with certain hierarchies of cultural production, transnational broadcasts were a contested site of overlapping cultural influences that made such stratifications equivocal and temporary. Marson’s work at the BBC concomitantly established national cultural traditions across the West Indian colony *and* questioned hierarchical definitions of ‘good’ culture through the inclusion of diverse voices and cultural tastes.

The resulting programmes of *Calling the West Indies* blended aspects from across the cultural spectrum. In August 1941, Marson described the programmes that constituted *Calling the West Indies*:

This Tuesday night regular programme is called Roundabout + its supposed to be jolly music and messages- a sort of Party. On Thursdays in our “Things that Endure” programme we do serious music, on Saturdays we do a West Indian News Letter & on Sundays a couple [sic] talks or interviews under the heading “Close Ups”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hilmes, *Network Nations*, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 37- 46.

<sup>49</sup> Marson to Moultrie Kelsall, 3 August 1941, SC19/28, *Calling the West Indies*, Scottish Region File, BBC WAC. Kelsall was the Assistant Scottish Programme Director.

The range of content on the *Calling the West Indies* schedule privileges social connections, appreciation of elite art forms, such as serious music, and political education via news and commentary. It also included 'jolly music and messages' to enliven the schedule and maintain a broad listenership. The programme was therefore both a product of and producer of social networks, as West Indians tuned in to hear other West Indians relate their experiences of the imperial centre. The features themselves occasionally changed name. By 1944, for example, "Roundabout" was called "West Indian Party" and, in addition to music and messages, featured reports from regular contributors about the activities and circumstances of West Indians in Britain under the titles "Girl About Town" and "Man about Town". These features amounted to extensive lists of West Indians spotted in London and details of how they were getting on, providing listeners at home with a tangible sense of connectedness to their loved ones in Britain. All programmes were broad in their scope, accommodating shifts in emphasis or interest from programme makers and audiences, as well as being able to adapt to the changing availability of West Indian contributors in Britain.

One facet of programming that was subject to availability and questions of cultural taste was music programming. There were numerous dance bands and musicians hailing from the region who played the clubs of the capital before the war and gained a greater following with the influx of colonial labour during the early 1940s. As a producer, Marson was not satisfied that only dance music should be played on *Calling the West Indies*. In May 1941, producer Joan Gilbert wrote of the music choices Marson had made for the programmes:

At Una Marson's suggestion, I understand we are to drop Edmundo Ros [s Rumba band] altogether, at any rate as a series, and that the big bands might be replaced by small ensembles, drawn possibly at your suggestion from the

personnel of the new Empire Music Unit as a change...It is tentatively suggested that we might have a Variety programme alternating with the "Party" programme, when we could use artists such as Dennis Noble, Van der Gucht, and others...and also an occasional Coleridge Taylor programme... At Una Marson's wish, it is agreed to put in an occasional record programme of popular operas explained in an easy way.<sup>50</sup>

Marson had significant say regarding the musical content of the programmes and her choices were eclectic and reflected an aspirational sensibility. They ranged across the spectrum of cultural production, appealing to a wide audience. The more classical and operatic elements were complimented by a regular show featuring the London Negro Choir, conducted by Norris Smith, and lighter popular music from Jack Payne's dance band. By 1944, the programme included regular bands such as Harry Gold and the Pocomaniacs as well as guest singers and musicians. This selection of music, and Marson's insistence that opera and classical music be as much a part of West Indian broadcasting as it was on the airwaves of the Home Service, suggests a decision to promote high quality and diverse music to the colonial audience.

### **"Poetry in Times of War": Aligning to a British Cultural Identity?**

If music choice was conflicted for the Jamaican producer, the selection of literary texts held dual importance. Firstly, the texts Marson chose to broadcast on the airwaves functioned as a symbol of her own intellectual prowess and cultural authority, both for her BBC employers and her West Indian listeners. Secondly, as *Calling the West Indies* began to create a unified West Indian cultural context, the texts featured on the programmes became facets of that cultural identity. Her ability

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<sup>50</sup> Gilbert to Madden, 13 May 1941, R46/92, REC. GEN. *Calling the West Indies*, Files 1&2, 1940-1950, BBC WAC. Dennis Noble was a prominent British opera singer, Jan Van der Gucht was a singer with the Harmonic Society and Coleridge Taylor was a black British composer of the nineteenth century. See "Music in the Provinces", *The Musical Times*, 83:1187, (1942), pp. 28-30, p. 30 for evidence of Van Der Gucht.

to participate meaningfully in such literary discourse was a key justification for Marson's prominence on-air. What is more, as part of her role at the BBC, Marson was occasionally asked to create programmes for domestic British audiences. In 1940, she presented a poetry programme entitled *Talking It Over*, which I will analyse before moving on to examine her attempts to introduce poetry for a West Indian audience.

On Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 1940, at the pre-*Children's Hour* time of 4.00 pm, Marson gave a talk on the Home Service called *Talking It Over*. This programme, designed for and broadcast to a British wartime audience, is an early example of Marson's curatorial preferences. Specifically, it gives us an indication of her commitment to poetry as a valuable tool for maintaining morale during wartime, but also as a literary form inextricably linked to notions of imperial and national un/belonging. The talk opens with Marson situating herself in the emotional context of war:

I am one of the nervous and fretful people who get all weak in the knees and sick at heart about this gigantic tragedy – war. But in one thing I find a real source of comfort and consolation and I am going to tell you what it is and how I discovered it. It is Poetry [sic].<sup>51</sup>

Poetry is offered as a restorative solution to the physical and emotional distress of war. As such, the poems that Marson goes on to read can be seen as her choice of remedial incantations that dispel the anxiety she felt during the war. They provide “comfort and consolation”, a collection of familiar ideas and aesthetics that soothe. Yet this familiarity is explicitly linked to concepts of British national identity. Marson continues:

You know that's the way thousands of West Indians get their first glimpse of your country- through your poetry and history and indeed have those same

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<sup>51</sup> Marson, *Talking It Over, Home Service*, 11 July 1940, T328, Radio Talks Scripts MARS-MART, p. 1, BBC WAC.

books that you used in your childhood. Of course the best in your literature and history has survived and has come to us. That's why we come here with beautiful mental pictures and great expectations. Perhaps too it's why you're so firmly established in our hearts and minds. A common language, a common tradition and even blood relationships are real enough bonds so perhaps I've some right to try and interest you in these bonds forged by you.<sup>52</sup>

Speaking directly to a British audience, Marson is explicit about the influence British imperialism has had on West Indian culture, describing the cultural understanding of those who have shared “those same books that you used in your childhood”. But she is also aware of a level of disinterestedness in this shared cultural heritage on the part of the British public; she justifies her explanation of the literary connections and asserts her “right to try and interest” the audience in the bonds of colonialism that their nation had forged.

She goes on to elucidate those literary bonds, choosing predominantly Romantic and Victorian poets to explicate her imaginative links to Britain. Quoting from Alfred Tennyson, William Wordsworth, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, amongst others, Marson compiles a poetic topography of Britain that conforms to ideals of British nationalism through both rural imagery as portrayed by Longfellow, in “The Village Blacksmith”, and military bravery, evoked in Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade”. She treats these poems reverentially, acknowledging their aesthetic prowess and describing them as “a fortress against the fever and fret of life”.<sup>53</sup> There is no archival evidence, either written documentation or remaining sound archive, to indicate whether or not her vocal performance changed when speaking to a British audience. Where this broadcast does notably differ from the tenor of the *Calling the West Indies* oeuvre is in its evident rebuke of the British audience for excluding colonial subjects from participating fully in British culture. In particular, she highlights

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.8.

the contradiction between her respect for canonical British poetry and her marginalisation from the cultural identity such poems conjure: “The point is that we children learnt these poems and loved them without any thought that they came from a land where people thought us a very different race”.<sup>54</sup> Marson suggests that under the cultural influence of British poetry, West Indians considered themselves to be the same race, or at least the same nation, as those in the land from which the poems derived. She evokes the dissonance theorised by Frantz Fanon, who argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* that: “The black man is unaware of it as long as he lives among his own people; but at the first white gaze, he feels the weight of his melanin”.<sup>55</sup> Marson reformulates this experience of racial othering to reflect her disassociation from British poetry upon arrival in Britain and her exclusion from literary society in the early 1940s. Through her work on the Overseas Service and in her plays, Marson forewarns her countrymen and women of the racial prejudice they are likely to encounter and uses her platform on the Home Service to challenge her white audience for its hypocrisy. Moments of such a clear articulation of disenfranchisement from British culture are rarer on *Calling the West Indies* due to the overt propagandist nature of the programmes, an imperative that Marson broadly supported, as will become clear further on in this chapter.

Oblique critiques of British imperialism, such as the above, escaped the censor. By contrast, Marson’s attempt to re-balance narratives of literary production between periphery and metropole were edited from her *Talking It Over* broadcast. In a section

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, trans. by Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 2008), p. 128.

that was cut from this talk, Marson promotes a West Indian, or specifically Jamaican, literary tradition:

I have been talking to you about your own poetry. You may be wondering if we have poets in Jamaica and if so what our poetry is like. We now have many poets and some good poetry has been written in recent years. It is all very much in the English tradition...But that is another story.<sup>56</sup>

Marson asserts the existence of a Jamaican literary canon, but one that is “very much in the English tradition”. This position is in contrast with Caribbean literary theorist, Kamau Brathwaite, for example, who regards Caribbean poetry as being defined by different metres to English poetry because of its origins in African oral and musical traditions.<sup>57</sup> Through these remarks, Marson sought to claim West Indian literature’s continuity with the English poetry she was commissioned to reflect on in this broadcast and broadens the scope of her talk to acknowledge the poetry of late colonial writers. In this instance, however, Marson was unable to expand her broadcasting remit to the extent that she desired. In the typescript of this talk, the above section is anonymously cut from the final programme. Due to the ambiguity of the archival material, it is unclear whether Marson herself cut the section for any reason, including time constrictions or a sense that it was inopportune to introduce Jamaican poetry tradition so briefly, or whether BBC staff made the editorial choice to cut it.. Either way, the consequence of the excision of the above excerpt meant the talk was focussed solely on British poetry, a familiar experience for Home audiences, but a mutilation of Marson’s initial conception of the programme. Her script shows a narrative arc that moves from Romantic poetry through to an emerging literary tradition in Jamaica, connecting the two movements and locating Jamaican poetry in a British literary framework. This transition was removed at some

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<sup>56</sup> *Talking It Over*, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> See Braithwaite, *History of the Voice*.



point and by some actor in the process of creating the broadcast, thereby obfuscating the transatlantic flow of cultural production that was taking place.

Marson's selection of texts instead worked to reaffirm a prevailing British national identity and sense of imperial unity.

Derived, in part, from her experience at the BBC, an understanding of the power of a national literature shaped Marson's approach to the *Calling the West Indies* schedule. She went to great lengths to ensure a prominent literary emphasis in the programmes. The script indexes held on file at the BBC Written Archives Centre show a string of literary programmes commissioned by Marson, including a programme on Rabindranath Tagore in October 1941, a series presented by Robert Spaight on "The Bible as Great Literature" in January 1942, and another series of talks on Pushkin by Dr A. Guershon in March 1944.<sup>58</sup> The predominance of literary and cultural topics across the schedule embedded a literary element in regular BBC broadcasts to the Caribbean, thereby laying the groundwork for subsequent programming, such as *Caribbean Voices*. These series were interspersed with other talks of an edifying nature, often with a gendered focus, for example the seven-part "Women Maintain the Home Front" series in 1943 and a celebration of International Women's Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1944. Prominent West Indian figures in Britain also came before the *Calling the West Indies* microphone, including Learie Constantine, the cricketer and Labour Minister, who spoke in September 1943 and Harold Moody, who gave a New Year talk in 1944.

What is more, a selection of West Indian and other black intellectuals bolstered the legitimacy of the *Calling the West Indies* broadcasts. Ian Whittington notes

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<sup>58</sup> See Appendix 3.

appearances from Harold Moody's brother, Ronald, a modernist sculptor, as well as American journalists and labour unionists, suggesting that "Marson wanted to build a transatlantic community of thinkers and cultural producers in the service of progressive causes of all kinds".<sup>59</sup> Marson used her position at the BBC to provide visibility to a range of causes that West Indian listeners might engage with. In addition, Whittington is clear about the ideological implications of the West Indian poets Marson began to feature in her broadcasts. He cites Calvin Lambert, Tom Redcam, J.E. Clare MacFarlane, Vivian Virtue, and Constance Hollar as appearing across the schedule.<sup>60</sup> Although much of this poetry "was formally and politically conservative", Whittington argues that "these poems were a means of building up a sense of literary tradition in the West Indies, and could thereby serve as exercises in nation formation".<sup>61</sup> For the West Indies to establish a shared culture, Marson included poetry of all kinds on the BBC's airwaves, careful not to alienate listeners with more conservative tastes from the project of gradual national identity formation. One way in which Marson could carve space in the schedule for a sense of literary tradition was through the judicious use of respected British writers. During the early spring of 1942, for example, she commissioned the British writer and broadcaster L.A.G. Strong to present a six-week series of talks entitled *Poetry in Times of War*. According to Jarrett-Macauley, "Una developed a productive relationship with Strong", and, "understanding her requirements for West Indian broadcasts", Strong "tailored his material accordingly".<sup>62</sup> Jarrett-Macauley cites a letter of Strong's that reassures Marson about his choice of poems for the series: "we can add any further

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<sup>59</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 170.

<sup>60</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 174. For more analysis of the presence of Constance Hollar's poetry on *Calling the West Indies*, see Leonie Thomas, "Making Waves", p. 222.

<sup>61</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 174.

<sup>62</sup> Jarrett-Macauley, p. 160. Strong wrote the introduction to Marson's 1945 collection of poetry, *Towards the Stars*, published by the University of London Press.

explanation that may be needed or repeat a poem”.<sup>63</sup> Jarrett-Macauley reads Strong’s openness to explain selected poems as a commitment to his West Indian audience and their understanding of his programmes. Yet, close analysis of Strong’s script shows that he did not attend to the cultural and educational contexts of his audience with much precision. In the first episode, for example, he describes the pronunciation of Medieval poetry as “something between North of England and Lowland Scots”.<sup>64</sup> Whilst there was a history of Scottish emigration to the West Indies and Strong himself spoke with a Scottish accent, it is safe to assume that the majority of the audience would have limited knowledge of the accents and vowel structures of Northern English and Southern Scottish dialects. Thus, Strong abrogates his duty to the geographical specificity of the West Indian archipelago by maintaining an imperial attitude that considers British accents to be universally recognised.

Only in the final moments of the last programme does Strong address his West Indian audience directly. He signs off the series thus:

Well, that is the end of my series of talks. Poetry, we all can see, is alive and in our midst today, as much as it ever was, and has its message for us and its inspiration. Goodbye to you now- West Indies. Goodbye.<sup>65</sup>

This direct address to the listener, via the general present participle referent “West Indies”, is the first instance of conscious consideration of the audience in Strong’s talks. He also imaginatively connects the location of his audience with the “midst” of the British cultural hegemony, the poetry he has described which is as alive today “as it ever was”. He reaffirms the colonies’ imaginative relation to the imperial centre

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>64</sup> L.A.G. Strong, “Medieval Poetry”, *Poetry in Times of War*, T521, Radio Talks Scripts, STREE-STRO (Microfilm), p. 1, BBC WAC.

<sup>65</sup> Strong, “Poems of the Present War”, *Poetry in Times of War*, T521, p. 6, BBC WAC.

even as he gestures towards the inspiration that might spark more West Indian literature. What Strong means by the nomenclature “West Indies”, however, is unclear, contestable, unlike the literary heritage of Britain that he had delineated in his programmes.

### **Sending Messages: “Greetings to Jamaica”**

The use of “West Indies” as a mutable term of address is also one of the most prominent features of the messages read by West Indians in London on *Calling the West Indies* party programmes. How Marson found and curated these messages therefore outlines her conception of a West Indian identity that is more complex than the cultural “Britishness” that was assumed by BBC officials and writers such as Strong. However, the first instance of such programming was only addressed to one island. On 26<sup>th</sup> September 1940, Marson compered “Greetings to Jamaica”. Even in this early, stand-alone edition, Marson and her Jamaican guests display the verbal techniques that would typify subsequent “Message Parties”. The tone is informal and effusive. Those giving messages are keen to emphasise the positive aspects of their experience in Britain and display a commitment to upholding an ideal of British imperial unity. In this, they mostly adhere to the BBC and Mol objectives for such propagandist programming. As Whittington suggests, instances of “genuflection” to Empire by message contributors “fits awkwardly with the established post-war canon of anti- or post-colonial literature from the region”, which may explain why these earlier programmes have not received sustained critical attention.<sup>66</sup> Certainly, the performative harmony of some messages is striking. George Edwards of the RAF, for example, describes his base as “one great big happy family, loyal and devoted to

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<sup>66</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 156.

duty” and “[expects] it is the same everywhere”.<sup>67</sup> His representation of seamless inclusion and familial ties connects the distant listeners with the residents of Britain through a shared bond of loyalty and devotion that negates any racial tension. Egbert Gordon, also of the RAF, assures the Jamaican audience that the authorities are pleased with the quality of the servicemen the colony is providing, noting that: “...within two days we had passed our Medical, and by the way they complimented us on our splendid physical fitness”.<sup>68</sup> Gordon is proud to be contributing his physical strength to the British war cause and his conspiratorial “by the way” acts to include the audience in the same pride. Yet such veneration of the bodies of colonial subjects uncomfortably evokes echoes of the transatlantic slave trade that structured the power dynamic between periphery and metropole in the first place. Power dynamics permeate the cheerful greetings.

Beyond Whittington’s claim that they were assertions of imperial loyalty, the messages also convey a sense of Jamaican community in Britain. This community demonstrates its own strengths and values in the face of imperial indifference or hostility. For example, Marson was “especially pleased” to introduce May Morris to the show “because I found her rather unhappy in her clerical job and helped her get into nursing which she loves”.<sup>69</sup> Marson assists Morris to find new, better employment, providing a tangible example of the benefit of social networks for women. In addition, Marson enables Morris to fulfil a desire to communicate with home. Morris says: “I think one of my greatest dreams has come true- to be able to speak so that you all can hear my voice again, though separated by such a vast

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<sup>67</sup> “Greetings to Jamaica”, *Overseas Service*, 26 September 1940, T328, p. 2, BBC WAC.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

expanse of water”.<sup>70</sup> Morris’ voice traverses the space of the Atlantic, providing a brief aural homecoming for the nurse. Morris’s connection to home is fostered by both the technology of radio and the support and community provided by Marson and the other Jamaicans gathered in the studio.

One of the most notable differences between “Greetings to Jamaica” and later programmes is that in this case the voices are united for the audience of one island. As such, the specifics of the island come to the fore. Marson introduces trainee stretcher bearer, Stafford Barton, as “Buzz Barton to you!” and remarks “I can just see his news editor daddie sitting up to listen to his boxer son. A fine stretcher bearer Buzz must make”.<sup>71</sup> The effect is to radically contract the social space of the island, ensuring all listeners are included in the community of those who can imagine Barton’s father sitting up and listening. Marson herself clearly identifies as specifically Jamaican in this programme, concluding her own message with a dual emphasis on the island’s importance. Firstly, she reassures listeners that “I am trying to keep the flag flying for dear old Jamaica in my own little way here”, underscoring the broadcast itself with a modest explanation of her efforts.<sup>72</sup> Finally, she gestures towards the possibility of equal dialogue between the colony and the metropole: “Before I say goodbye, I must take the opportunity of congratulating you on your Broadcasting station. Won’t it be a thrill to hear Jamaica calling London one of these days”.<sup>73</sup> Marson aspires to connect Jamaica to the global broadcasting dialogue on

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 9. The broadcasting station she mentions was a long-planned technical development in the region that benefitted from the increased funds allocated to radio technology by the British Government during wartime. The Jamaica Broadcasting Company eventually began commercial broadcasting in 1950.

an equal footing with Britain and enact a conversation, rather than simply occupying the position of recipient of imperial broadcasting.

Even within this celebration of specifically Jamaican achievement, one guest begins to steer the sentiment of the programme towards the broader ideological position that *Calling the West Indies* would inhabit. Fernando Henriques, billed on this programme as a volunteer for the Auxiliary Fire Service, states: “During the course of my rather wide and varied studies I have come to the conclusion that there is a great future not only for Jamaica, but for the entire West Indies”.<sup>74</sup> Here, patriotism for Jamaica is elided with commitment and investment in the collective space of the West Indies more broadly. This statement of affiliation or federation is spoken on the airwaves of the BBC by a black Jamaican student and serves to foreshadow the identity that *Calling the West Indies* sought to convey: educated, politically engaged, multi-racial, and finally, “West Indian”.

### **Sending Messages: *Calling the West Indies***

During her tenure at the BBC, Marson oversaw hundreds of West Indians deliver messages to their families and friends via the airwaves. The organisation of these messages became a key site for the formation of West Indian ‘national’ space through the geographic markers that the speakers themselves used. Through curating the messages each week, Marson created a narrative of a heterogeneous West Indian nation out of the propagandist programming of the BBC. Such heteroglossia would later be celebrated in the literary programme, *Caribbean Voices*. Before that programme could exist, however, Marson had to negotiate BBC

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

stipulations about message party presentation. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1942, Marson wrote to a colleague in Scotland, describing the form of messages:

About messages: these are usually 50 words long, and should be quite personal, and I would be grateful if you would introduce them. We usually just say something like this: "Calling British Honduras. Here is a greeting from John Brown to his Mother or Wife at Belize", and then repeat his name. I expect you know the censorship rules about place names and all that. I am not pressing you for a large number of these messages, as it is a job getting them down and recording them.<sup>75</sup>

Within the confines of war censorship, West Indians were encouraged to share their "personal" experiences in Britain and of the war. The emphasis on the speaker's geographical provenance is notable. Repetition of names and places were necessary for audiences to know who was speaking on the unreliable shortwave signal. But they also become talismanic, grounding the message giver in their own biography and reaffirming their island identity.

In some messages, the specific locale of Britain is effaced, overwhelmed by the identities of West Indians and the censorship of war. A. Lewis of Jamaica, for example, lists his fellow Jamaicans:

I am at present in London and am certainly having a wonderful time. Along with me are several Jamaicans serving with the REME. They are: George Waite of Coleyville, V. Morris of Spanish Town, C.O. McCann of Mavis Bank, Forbes, Carby, Courbrey, Brown A.F., Brown V.C., and Bernard of Kingston, Jamaica.<sup>76</sup>

Working for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Lewis and his comrades are identified by their specific hometowns in Jamaica. By contrast, when Lewis describes his training, he is much less geographically specific:

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<sup>75</sup> Marson to A.P. Lee, 27 October 1942, SC19/28, BBC WAC.

<sup>76</sup> "West Indian Party", 7/8 November 1944, MAR Scripts, p. 4. BBC WAC. As the programmes were often broadcast between 11 p.m. and 12.30 a.m. to account for the time difference between Britain and the Caribbean, the script records both of the dates that the programme straddled.



Prior to my leave, George Waite and myself went to one of the big Cities on a ten weeks Engineering Course, and in the Final test, we did well, thanks to our training at home in Jamaica. Most of our friends in the R.E'S are overseas at present and doing well.<sup>77</sup>

The location of his training must be left vague due to censorship rules, reduced from specific locale to “one of the big Cities”. The whole theatre of war that British troops were engaged in is diminished to the imprecise “overseas”. This message wholeheartedly supports British war efforts, and conforms to the censorship rules, but the enthusiasm and specificity of the message centres on a West Indian identity, quite apart from British imperial citizenship.

Finding and maintaining a balanced representation of message givers from across the islands of the West Indies was of central importance to Marson during her time at the BBC. On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1941, she wrote to producer, Joan Gilbert, outlining the message programme for that week: “I already have seven messages, students and ambulance people etc. I think we could do with four soldiers and two airmen, and I think it would be a good idea to try and get these from the different islands”.<sup>78</sup>

Marson shows awareness of the political significance of gaining representation from across the islands, as well as balancing the occupations and military affiliation of those West Indians working in Britain. In the early message programmes, Marson was responsible for sourcing students and nurses, whilst Gilbert contacted the relevant authorities in the Army, Navy, and Airforce to persuade them to permit men to travel to London to broadcast. After limitations of requesting two men per month were placed on the BBC, the forces were generally co-operative and willing to send men.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Marson to Gilbert, 16 June 1941, R46/92, BBC WAC.

<sup>79</sup> See correspondence March-July 1941 between Gilbert and Forces, R46/92, BBC WAC.

Joan Gilbert's attitude as a white British woman employed by the BBC led to some friction with Marson throughout their working relationship, particularly with regard to race representation on *Calling the West Indies*. Many of the West Indian servicemen who Gilbert sourced for message programmes had made initial contact with the West India Committee, an informal organisation with white, planter interests that acted as a social hub for West Indians in Britain. Gilbert's close contact with the Committee, and the demands the Committee occasionally made, caused conflict between Marson and Gilbert, particularly when the Committee gave the BBC selective lists of West Indians. For example, in March 1941, the Committee sent Gilbert a list of twenty-five names of West Indians in Britain, organised under their home islands, with notes about their status and personal connections. Next to Neville Junor from Jamaica, for instance, someone has noted that he is the "nephew of Mr Percy Junor who recently gave £10,000 for a hospital in Jamaica".<sup>80</sup> Others are described as "a keen rifle shot", and another, "one of the first Barbardians to arrive in England for enlistment".<sup>81</sup> Although the list provides details of island affiliations, the document is not an explicit indication of the racial background of these speakers. However, the interests of the West India Committee and the philanthropy of Junor's uncle suggest that the servicemen were mostly white.

Marson's efforts to redress this balance became a major point of contention between her and Gilbert. In late March 1941, Gilbert wrote to their manager, Cecil Madden:

Actually, I think she was first annoyed because I went to see the West India Committee people, and she realises from the list they've sent me, that they are submitting ~~English~~ [sic] white West Indians as well as coloured. Una maintains that the 'whites' are not West Indians, and really wants all coloured people where she can get away with it. The West India Committee on the

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<sup>80</sup> Secretary, West Indian Committee to Gilbert, 19 March 1941, R46/92, BBC WAC.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

other hand, strongly submit that the programmes should be fifty/fifty white/coloured where possible.<sup>82</sup>

Marson's commitment to the racial component of a truly "West Indian" identity becomes apparent here as she reportedly refuses to accept that white people are authentically West Indian. Gilbert herself elides ethnicity with citizenship by describing white West Indians as English, before correcting herself in her memo, revealing her own prejudices about who was more closely aligned to full British citizenship. Marson's dispute of the list of West Indians that the West India Committee sent demonstrates her aversion to a white-washed West Indian identity, one that is dominated by a British, or English, culture. As James Proctor has noted, the Committee was invested in a racially specific form of West Indian-ness- the white planter set. Proctor outlines the semantic opposition between Marson and the Committee regarding the definition of a West Indian identity:

Where for Marson West Indian is deployed as part of an anticolonial rhetoric that registers and reveals the late colonial prejudices of the West India Committee, for the West India Committee it is mobilized as a means of appealing to the political status quo of late colonial culture at the metropolitan center.<sup>83</sup>

In other words, the Committee and Marson fundamentally disagreed on the definition of West Indian as an identity term. Therefore, the compositional make-up of the "Message Parties" became a central battleground for articulating the contours of West Indian-ness. Gilbert accuses Marson of misusing her position as a BBC employee to project an 'all-coloured' West Indian identity 'where she can get away with it', suggesting that Gilbert saw Marson's actions as subversive.

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<sup>82</sup> Gilbert to Madden, 25 March 1941, R46/92, BBC WAC.

<sup>83</sup> Proctor, p. 15.

Yet, white West Indians *did* broadcast messages back home. And a range of West Indians were included in the *Calling the West Indies* aural milieu, thereby meaning that the imagined West Indian identity became more inclusive and diverse than Marson's initial conception of what West Indian-ness meant. A survey of archival documentation of message senders during the spring and summer of 1941 shows that the *Calling the West Indies* team achieved a broad representation across the various geographical areas of the Caribbean.<sup>84</sup> Over 36% of message senders were Jamaican, but British Guiana received a 20% share of representation, Barbados had 16% and Trinidad, 13%. Tobago, St Lucia and British Honduras averaged 2.9%, with Dominica, Montserrat, St Kitts also featuring in this four-month sample. Marson herself recognised the relative success of her efforts to represent a wide-range of West Indians: "We usually have a good mixture- white, brown, black- and the number of white lads keeps up and is a good percentage when we realise only 3% are white in the West Indies".<sup>85</sup> Although Marson is explicit about the population discrepancy of white West Indians, she professionally supports an inclusive West Indian identity through the broadcasting of voices representing the full range of West Indian ethnicities and island affiliations.

Although the majority of West Indians in Britain at this time were men due to the demand for troops, many women were also represented in the "Message Parties". The data for statistical analysis of the island affiliation of speakers is not available for later years as the lists from the West India Committee and other sources stop appearing in the archives. This suggests that Marson gained more autonomy to recruit message givers as the format became more established. By utilising the

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 4. Statistics compiled from documents found in R46/92, REC. GEN. *Calling the West Indies*, Files 1&2, 1940-1950, BBC WAC.

<sup>85</sup> Marson, 1942, Qtd in Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 179.

BBC's extensive Programmes as Broadcasts lists, which document the details of all programmes on all BBC airwaves, it becomes clear, however, that the speakers for a similar period in 1943 contains more female representation. 25% of messages given in May and June 1943 were women, perhaps reflecting an increase in recruitment of nurses and WAAFs from the West Indian colonies.<sup>86</sup> A boost in the number of women speakers indicates that Marson was attempting to bring as diverse a group of people to the microphone as possible.

The multiple identities that constituted West Indian identity could be heard throughout the *Calling the West Indies* schedule in the voices of the comperes and contributors to the programme. The affiliation and associations of these contributors offers a picture of "West Indianness" at the BBC that complicates an established narrative of West Indian broadcasting history, one which privileges anti-colonial commitment from its actors. June Grimble, for example, became an essential addition to the *Calling the West Indies* team after her first report on air-raid shelters in May 1944. Grimble was the daughter of the Governor of the Windward Islands, Arthur Grimble, and therefore a white woman with access to privilege and influence. Regardless, Marson recognised her skills and commitment to the West Indies, writing to African Service Director, John Grenfell Williams in August 1944 on Grimble's behalf:

Perhaps I ought to add that she had applied to the Corporation for a job, and I expect the matter will be referred to you. She has lived in the West Indies, and I think that she could be very useful, even in an acting capacity in the West Indian section while I am away.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 4. WAAF stood for Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Statistics for 1943 compiled from Programmes as Broadcast Logs, 1 May 1943 to 22 June 1943, BBC WAC.

<sup>87</sup> Marson to Grenfell Williams, 16 August 1944, *Calling the West Indies*, BBC WAC.

While Marson does describe Grimble as having “lived in the West Indies”, rather than as West Indian, her support of Grimble’s participation in the West Indian broadcasts is a significant indication of Marson’s openness to multiple West Indian identities.

Although Gilbert accused Marson of privileging speakers of colour, Marson demonstrated herself to be open to the inclusion of white West Indians when strategically beneficial for the quality of the programme. It is possible that Marson recognised the cultural capital Grimble brought to the team.

And Marson used her regular contributors as sounding-boards for the suitability of programme content for West Indian audiences, including her most famous development– *Caribbean Voices*. Proctor discusses the complicatedness of dating the start of *Caribbean Voices*, noting that the majority of accounts give 11<sup>th</sup> March 1945 as the official date, with some following Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s “typographical error” of 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943.<sup>88</sup> However, “piecing together” more evidence from the archive, Proctor claims that *Caribbean Voices* was first aired on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1944, a period he considers significant because it “reveals is just how closely the inauguration of *Caribbean Voices* coincided with the request for Marson to step back from the microphone (August 1944), her bouts of leave, and her subsequent breakdown the following year”.<sup>89</sup> Proctor acknowledges that *Caribbean Voices* began around the time that Marson’s health began to decline due to the stress of her work, compounded by the BBC finally conceding to repeated personal attacks on Marson from various parties.<sup>90</sup> While this timing certainly contributes to Marson’s initial erasure from the history of the programme in that her name stops appearing on the *Caribbean Voices* scripts, it does not reflect the full gestation of the idea. I have

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<sup>88</sup> Proctor, p. 24.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> See Thomas, “Making Waves”, pp. 218-221 for how this decline affected Marson’s poetry.

unearthed new evidence that demonstrates that Marson had been talking about a programme of Caribbean poetry as early as 1941. In September 1941, Fernando Henriques, then at the University of Oxford, wrote to Marson regarding one of the West Indian newsletters he was compiling. In a previously unpublished postscript, he writes: “By the way did the idea of poetry and literature programmes ever get any further? I’d like to know as it’s something I’m very interested in”.<sup>91</sup> It seems as though conversations were being held in the Caribbean community in Britain about creating programming that featured poetry and literature, although this specific source is unclear as to the extent of Marson’s involvement in such discussion or the imagined format the broadcasts might take. I argue that the “Message Parties” Marson curated were an important forerunner to *Caribbean Voices* because they were an opportunity to rehearse the organisation of diverse West Indian voices into one coherent programme. When the title “Caribbean Voices” appeared, it was as a segment in the broader *Calling the West Indies* programme schedule, certainly from December 1944.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, “Caribbean Voices” was in the same position as the “Message Parties” on the schedule; it was one of the multiple strands of broadcasting that Marson oversaw.

Moreover, the development of *Caribbean Voices* itself was more ethnically diverse than is usually understood. The archive shows that June Grimble was heavily involved in the early years. Covering the literary broadcasts during Marson’s absence of leave from the BBC to tour the West Indies in early 1945, Grimble compered the “Caribbean Voices” segment of *Calling the West Indies* on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1945. By September 1945, Grimble was choosing extracts and writing the

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<sup>91</sup> Henriques to Marson, 25 September 1941, Henriques RCONT File, BBC WAC.

<sup>92</sup> See Appendix 3.

script, according to the payment slips that were signed by Marson's secretary, Miss Thwaites.<sup>93</sup> Thus, "Caribbean Voices" contained a diversity of compering voices from its very inception.<sup>94</sup>

The experience of hearing the voices of citizens from their islands on the BBC had a significant impact on Caribbean listeners. The West India Committee gave the BBC a glimpse of the reception that the *Calling the West Indies* message programmes were receiving in the region:

The eight recent arrivals from the Windward Islands, and several others whom Miss Marson was able to fit in this week were all delighted, especially the two boys, McCoy and Alleyne, from Dominica. You may perhaps recollect a letter from Mrs. Neill, Government House, Dominica, some few months ago (which Lady Davson showed you when you called here) containing rather a pathetic description of the people gathering at the street corners hoping to hear the Overseas Broadcast and perhaps the name of Dominica. That it has proved possible to give their two recent recruits 2 ½ minutes each on the air will have given the greatest pleasure to this colony.<sup>95</sup>

For the audiences at home in the Caribbean, the possibility of hearing their island mentioned on the BBC airwaves was met with great anticipation. For residents of their island to be allocated minutes of BBC time to speak to them was an occasion for "greatest pleasure". Although couched as "rather a pathetic description" by the employee of the West India Committee, the fervour of reception is palpable. The West Indian audience embraced any acknowledgement of their specific island, whilst also absorbing a broader representation of voices from across the archipelago. In this way, *Calling the West Indies* recognised the specific locals of the islands at the same time as furthering a unified notion of "West Indian" identity.

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<sup>93</sup> "Payment Slips", 24 September 1945, RCONT 1, June Grimble Regular Contributor File, BBC WAC.

<sup>94</sup> Other regular contributors included Ernest Eytel, a Guyanese lawyer who would go on to become a well-known cricket commentator, and Morris Cargill, a white Jamaican solicitor who worked for the Jamaican newspaper, *The Gleaner*, before being elected to the parliament of the Federation of the West Indies in 1958.

<sup>95</sup> Longdon, West India Committee, to Gilbert, 23 July 1941, R46/92, BBC WAC.



By the end of 1944, the “Message Parties” had become the weekly “West Indian Party”. This programme included music and features, as well as fewer messages, collected under the “Services Spotlight” heading, which became a synecdoche for West Indian diaspora during the global conflict. The “West Indian Party” of the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> November 1944, for example, opened with an inclusive call to all West Indian listeners: “Hello West Indies, and all you West Indian servicemen and women wherever you are listening”.<sup>96</sup> This immediate acknowledgement of a dispersed West Indian audience was a familiar strain in later *Calling the West Indies* programmes. On the 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> March 1945, for example, Marson begins: “Hello West Indies, and hello you West Indian service fellows who somehow manage to get around a loud speaker to West Indian Party from London [sic]. Like the brook we go “merrily along” always looking forward to this get-to-gether [sic] on Tuesdays”.<sup>97</sup> The imagined community of listeners to these programmes had grown to include active service personnel stationed across the globe, their access to the programme was recognised as contingent and complicated, they “somehow manage[d]”, to be present. West Indian identity was being formed by BBC broadcasts for those recruits fighting for Britain as much as for audiences at home.

Indeed, the “West Indian Party” began to function as an almost aural homecoming for the servicemen and women in combat. Marson introduced the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> April 1945 programme with the sentiment that “every Tuesday brings us one Tuesday nearer home”, or at least “I guess that’s what you West Indian Service chaps are thinking every time you hear us say a big hello to you from London”.<sup>98</sup> The regular broadcasts marked the passage of time towards armistice and united the diasporic servicemen

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<sup>96</sup> “West Indian Party”, 7/8 November 1944, MAR Scripts, p. 1. BBC WAC.

<sup>97</sup> “West Indian Party”, 27/28 March 1945, MAR Scripts, p. 1. BBC WAC.

<sup>98</sup> “West Indian Party”, 17/18 April 1945, MAR Scripts, p.1. BBC WAC.

of the West Indies. Her assumption would be corroborated in late January 1945, upon the receipt of a letter from Corporal Eustace Eudoxie, which Marson introduced on the show:

I just want to say a big hello to you, Corporal Eustace Eudoxie in the Azores. I must say that all of us here at West Indian Party are thrilled to know that you get our programmes every Tuesday so clearly, and that the West Indian Colony there has been reinforced by two Jamaicans. And now, for you in the West Indies who are listening, I had better tell you what Corporal Eudoxie says. He writes "I was very glad to listen to the broadcast at Christmas and the New Year, and I was pleased to hear that St Lucia was well represented at the Christmas Party. I always look forward to Tuesday night, 9 p.m. out here, and always feel that I am also taking part".<sup>99</sup>

Eudoxie's first-hand account of the positive impact these broadcasts were having on West Indians on deployment is couched in terms of inclusion and participation: "[I] always feel that I am also taking part". Marson actively frames Eudoxie's comments in relation to the home audience: "And now, for you in the West Indies who are listening", including the more coherent community of home listeners in the sentiment of this serviceman. Again, the tension between loyalty to a specific island- in this case St Lucia- is contrasted with the warm spirit of collaboration that the "West Indian Party" fostered.

Contradictions in Marson's commitment to representation of West Indian identity are introduced here when we consider Marson's extensive use of Eudoxie's praise. His letter was mentioned in the previous party broadcast on 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> January 1945, with Marson mis-naming him as Sergeant Eudoxie, rather than Corporal, and she also references his letter anonymously in the following month, during the party of the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> February. This protracted use of one West Indian's praise for the programme speaks to Marson's need to bolster the appearance of popular support for the

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<sup>99</sup> "West Indian Party", 30/31 January 1945, MAR Scripts, p. 5. BBC WAC.

broadcasts. In this, she can be seen to use the kinds of propaganda tactics that the BBC was deploying more generally on the Overseas Service; the exaggerated use of diverse supporting voices to represent colonial consensus.

It is Marson's inclusion and curation of multiple West Indian identities in these programmes that enables the flexibility and theoretical slipperiness to accommodate dual loyalties in this way. The "Services' Spotlight" messages featured in November 1944, for example, were all pre-recorded, ensuring Marson could weave stories and voices together. Although often patriotic and fervently pro-British in tone, the specifics of the island speakers problematise the imperial logic of the broadcasts. For example, Leading Aircraftsman Charles McLean, from British Guiana, states: "On June 6<sup>th</sup>, or D-Day as the world knows it, I had the privilege of being one of thousands of young men who found ourselves off the French coast preparing to disembark to settle accounts with the 'pure Aryan race'".<sup>100</sup> The almost jingoistic phrase "settle accounts" and the sarcasm of "pure Aryan race" is indicative of McLean's full participation in and acceptance of a British imperial rhetoric against the enemy. However, his phrasing is significant in that it foregrounds the racial element of the enemy, suggesting that the Guyanese aircraftsman sought to redress racial "accounts" as well. McLean's bravado is further tempered at the end of his message by the following supplication:

Let me not forget, and I hope you in the West Indies and British Guiana will not forget, the few, but greatly honoured West Indian and Guianese airmen who have made the supreme sacrifice in this war. I would mention one in particular, a great and well esteemed friend, Flight/Sargent Dick Amery of Georgetown, British Guiana.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "West Indian Party", 7/8 November 1944, MAR Scripts, p. 3, BBC WAC.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

A combination of imperialistic morale-boosting sentiments, such as the use of the phrase “the supreme sacrifice”, is combined with details of the local and specific; the commemoration of Dick Amery of Georgetown. Thus, the overarching narrative of imperial British war efforts is woven into the individual, lived experience of this representative of the West Indies and expressed in his message home. Whittington characterises the dual position of such West Indians as “an intermediate construction” of a “quasi-nationalist West Indian consciousness”.<sup>102</sup> Such a measured approach to West Indian independence “both projected a cultural community that had yet to find full political expression, and reflected the mingled affinity and heteronomy many West Indians felt under British rule”.<sup>103</sup> In other words, the messages sent by *Calling the West Indies* contributors enacted the mid-point between colonial subjugation and full nationalist consciousness, a kind of fraternal affiliation that would be leveraged by organisations such as the Commonwealth in the years following independence. Marson’s production of these “Message Parties” is another instance of the same inclusive tactics that were dramatised in her play, *London Calling*. Her commitment to multiplicity of voice enables her to orchestrate a ‘measured approach’ to West Indian identity through the curation of ordinary West Indians.

Finally, for Marson, a patent alignment to British patriotic values in the context of the war effort was nothing less than a racial imperative. From the very start of her career at the BBC, Marson was able to articulate the threat of the Nazi enemy. In an early talk on the Overseas Service from April 1940, Marson is explicit about the urgency of fighting fascism: “For me there can be no motive to live when my individual rights as

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<sup>102</sup> Whittington, *Radio War*, p. 169.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

a human being are taken away. And as far as my race is concerned there is no question as to our fate under a Nazi regime".<sup>104</sup> Marson connects her liberty as a black woman with the consequences of a Nazi victory. She goes on: "Our young and virile race must not be chained again to the galleys. And believe me if Britain and France lose their war our prospects will be grim. More and more I find myself bound up in the universal struggle for freedom".<sup>105</sup> Eliding the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade with the fate of the imperial powers that instigated it, Marson unites all listeners with the call to arms to the "universal struggle for freedom". Race is at the very forefront of her argument, but she maintains her commitment to the British empire as the means of defeating a greater threat. Finally, Marson gestures towards the power of the machinery of British dominance that she has access to, the airwaves of the BBC:

I am just one very small voice in the great world of steady brilliant voices, but I am proud to think that my voice can reach out to you in the far corners of the earth and I can say let us be courageous, we do not struggle in vain.<sup>106</sup>

Conjuring the imagined community of speakers and listeners, voices, across the world, Marson unites the colonial audience in line with British imperial values. The inclusive first-person pronoun "we", and her very act of speaking as a black woman on the BBC, ensures that the call to arms is inclusive of those marginalised by race and gender.

## **The Lonely Londoner**

On New Year's Eve 1944, Marson presented a programme that contained elements of the "West Indian Party" with its patriotic messages and *Caribbean Voices*, the

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<sup>104</sup> Marson, "The Empire at War", *Overseas Flow III*, 1 April 1940, T328, p. 2. BBC WAC.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

platform for West Indian literature. Marson had been focussing on the organisational side of programmes throughout 1943 and 1944 so she embraced the opportunity of a fifteen-minute broadcast to the West Indies with enthusiasm: “It’s more than a year since I have had a heart to heart talk with you, and I can’t tell you what a great joy it is to me to be able to do so on this last day of 1944”.<sup>107</sup> She reflects on the year in a pensive tone, considering the impact of the messages on friends and families at home, wondering at the power of radio, and discussing the consequences of war. In the final few pages of the script, Marson reads an untitled, multivalent poem, which functions as a kind of curatorial climax that also gestures towards the poetic emphasis of *Caribbean Voices*. She suggests that, if all the West Indian servicemen and women in Britain could unite “with one voice tonight” and speak to the listeners “from across these thousands of miles”, this is what they would say:

We never knew how much we loved you and  
How much you meant to us  
Until we left you.  
We are learning and we are working  
As we promised we would do.  
But we’re thinking of the days  
When we’ll return again to you.  
You are doubly blest to dwell so far  
From total war and all the dread it brings.  
We trust you all, not just the few  
But each must lend a hand  
To make of the West Indies-  
Those lands to which we’ll come-  
Through toil and love and Labour,  
Through sacrifice and honour-  
Lands in which with joy we’ll struggle  
For the only life worth living  
For which daily men are dying.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Marson, *Calling the West Indies*, 31 Dec/1 Jan 1944/1945, *Calling the West Indies* script files, p.1. BBC WAC.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

Combining all the West Indian voices she has heard over the years, Marson synthesizes their concerns into poetry, distilling a commitment to the multiplicity of the West Indies: “We trust you all, not just the few”. She proposes a manifesto for the post-war effort to create a fair society in the West Indies; “Through toil and love and Labour” West Indians will work to create a democratic future. West Indian identity is couched as inclusive here, defined in part by the perspective of diaspora: “We never knew how much we loved you and/How much you meant to us/Until we left you”. Most importantly, it is polyglot and literary. This is Marson’s legacy for West Indian broadcasting at the BBC.

In this New Year’s Eve broadcast, Marson’s efforts at the BBC are clearly focussed on the post-war world. She is trying to find a language through which to begin the reconstruction of the West Indies in a peacetime context and to understand how society, broadcasting, and literary culture might change at the end of hostilities. For Marson, this was the hope of a more democratic future. Unfortunately, peace did not bring all it promised for the poet. After years of strain and long hours at the BBC in the face of racism, sexism, and amidst the danger and deprivation of war, Marson’s mental health deteriorated and she was hospitalised in early 1946. She was forced to return to Jamaica in September of that year to be cared for by her family, although the BBC continued to pay her throughout her illness and for three months after her departure.

Despite Marson’s personal trauma, the legacy of her work at the BBC lived on in the form of *Caribbean Voices*, the influential literary programme. Produced by Henry Swanzy from Marson’s departure in 1946, *Caribbean Voices* provided West Indian writers with a platform from which to disseminate their work across the Caribbean

archipelago. Broadcast from London, *Caribbean Voices* was a significant source of income for writers in the islands who sent their work to be read and for those West Indians in London, who were paid to read it. Thus, the careers of Sam Selvon, George Lamming, Derek Walcott, John Figueroa and many more were nurtured and encouraged. This was the kind of collaborative outcome that Marson had worked to instil through her efforts to represent an inclusive West Indian cultural identity on the BBC's airwaves.

Late colonial and early postcolonial intellectuals still faced obstacles to their full inclusion in the literary and cultural landscape of post-war Britain. One of which was the reactionary attitude of some British intellectuals, such as Rose Macaulay, to the changing dynamics of power, education, and cultural taste. Whereas Marson had sought to problematise the cultural hierarchies of the interwar period through her cultivation of multiple voices on the BBC, Macaulay advocated for vocal hegemony across the Corporation's domestic output. The inclusivity of the literary culture Marson had fostered in one corner of the BBC during the war was anathema to Macaulay. As I will explore in the next chapter, Macaulay was motivated by her fear of increasingly diverse cultural producers gaining access to elite aspects of British national culture, in the way that Marson had. Indeed, she used her access to the microphone to reassert interwar definitions of good culture— definitions that excluded colonial and working-class voices— in order to maintain her cultural authority at the post-war BBC.



# 3

## Defender of the Third: Rose Macaulay as Post-War BBC Radio Critic

From cafes and squares loud speakers blared across the water to us the eternal Turkish erotic whine, I dare say no more erotic than the British kind that you get on the Light Programme, but more eternal, for the Light Programme sometimes has a change, though it loves and whines much more than the Home Programme does, and on the Third they scarcely love and whine at all, which is why those whom aunt Dot calls the Masses very seldom turn this programme on.

Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond*<sup>1</sup>

In her last and most popular novel, *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956), Rose Macaulay pauses in her account of a young woman's travels in Turkey to satirise the characteristics of the mid-century BBC's three broadcasting streams: the Light Programme, the Home Service, and the Third Programme. Devised in the context of the Second World War, the tripartite structure of the BBC was intended to honour the democratic ideals that had been fought for by the British public. These involved access to culture and education for all, regardless of income. With the introduction of the Third as a supplement to the Corporation's existing programmes, the BBC hoped to provide the best in literature, music, science, and drama free at the point of access. When it was launched in September 1946, the Third symbolised the end of the Reithian principle of mixed broadcasting by the BBC and offered the British listener more choice of programming than ever before.<sup>2</sup> As BBC producer and

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<sup>1</sup> Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond*, 1956, (London: Futura, 1981), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to the war, the BBC had been limited to the National programme and an array of Regional schedules. For pure entertainment, British listeners could also attempt to tune into the BBC's main commercial competitors, Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg, broadcasting from the European continent. These stations closed during the war, with Radio Luxembourg restarting in 1946.

cousin to Vita, Edward Sackville-West wrote in *Picture Post* in November 1946, “the Third Programme may well become the greatest educative and civilising force England has known since the secularisation of the theatre in the sixteenth century”.<sup>3</sup> Hopes were high.

As it transpired, however, the BBC and many other influential cultural institutions, such as the fledgling Arts Council, maintained pre-war definitions of what constituted high culture. Thus, the split of broadcasts into Third, Home and Light overwhelmingly worked to perpetuate an existing cultural hierarchy. Elite social classes still dominated debates about ‘good’ culture and lower- or working-class preferences for popular forms of dance music, comedy, and variety programmes were castigated as ‘vulgar’. Hence, when aunt Dot notes that “the Masses” rarely listened to the Third Programme, she acknowledges the class hierarchy that underpinned conceptions of the audiences associated with each of the BBC’s programmes. Through aunt Dot, Macaulay lays bare the widely held view that the mid-century BBC was, what I term, ‘stratified’ along class lines.

While the many continuities of cultural and social elitism from the inter-war to the post-war periods appear clear in retrospect, for those at the time, peace brought the anticipation of seismic changes on an unprecedented scale. The country had been fighting for freedom and democracy— the people demanded more equality.<sup>4</sup> The same was true for many of the dominions and colonies that had contributed to the war effort. As we saw in the previous chapter, the changed priorities of wartime led to increased access to the cultural apparatus for those who were excluded from elite social circles due to their ethnicity, class, and gender. While colonial intellectuals

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<sup>3</sup> Qtd in Carpenter, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939-1945*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 433.

such as Marson benefitted from and contributed to the diversification of opportunity in cultural institutions such as the BBC in the war and post-war period, others had more to lose. For the privileged white women who were the first generation to receive the vote and have access to higher education, the stakes were particularly high. Thanks to changing social values, female intellectuals such as Vita Sackville-West and Rose Macaulay had been accepted, however tenuously, into male-dominated cultural spheres. By 1945, the kinds of women writers featured in this thesis had become, to borrow a phrase from W.E.B. DuBois, “co-worker[s] in the kingdom of culture”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, with the rising cultural capital of working-class and late-colonial intellectuals in the post-war period, well-educated women stood to lose their elevated status in the cultural hierarchy.

For Rose Macaulay, cultural institutions such as the BBC were a bulwark against rapid and possibly disastrous social and cultural changes. In August 1945, three months after VE Day, Macaulay wrote: “In the tide which seems likely to overwhelm Europe, those two twin lights, freedom and culture, must not be drowned; the BBC has a great part to play”.<sup>6</sup> The writer had a genuine belief in the Corporation as a protector of Western, liberal culture. For both this reason and to preserve her own cultural authority, Macaulay applied herself to supporting the post-war BBC and becoming a champion of its tripartite structure. She was ideologically aligned to the newly devised mode of cultural uplift, i.e. stratification, because it clearly demarcated, and therefore protected, the existing cultural hierarchy. Yet, through her unyielding advocacy for cultural stratification, Macaulay critiqued the BBC in more stringent ways than it had anticipated, particularly in the fields of music, drama, and

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<sup>5</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903, ed. and intro. by Brent Hayes Edwards, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> “July on the Air”, 4 August 1945, *Time and Tide*, p. 648

language, subjects that educated women had a significant influence over. In this way, Macaulay expanded her broadcasting remit beyond the bounds of the BBC's critical agenda.

In what follows, I will outline how Macaulay's early writing career positioned her in such a way as to become a suitable champion for the post-war BBC, paying attention to her conception of the possibility of differentiated publics as they were addressed by the diverse publications of the interwar period. In 1945 and 1946, Macaulay reviewed BBC output for *Time and Tide*, a body of work I turn to in order to examine how Macaulay demonstrated her commitment to stratified broadcasting to the audience of the literary weekly. The writer's argument for splitting broadcasting into categories of taste also manifested itself in a critique of the popular panel programme, *The Brains Trust*, her analysis of drama, and her contempt for crooning music. In the second half of this chapter, I consider what the BBC hoped for when they employed Rose Macaulay as a radio critic of the Third Programme and the Home Service and where her reviews diverged from the Corporation's expectations. My analysis establishes that a one major area of contention between the broadcaster and the writer was the frequency, prominence, and rigour of literary discourse on both the Third and the Home schedules. As such, this chapter supports my overall thesis that the prominent women writers in this study sought to complicate literary discourse at the Corporation— I suggest that Macaulay instantiated elitist literary conversation across the Corporation's output to meet her own high standards for radio broadcasting.

## What the Public Wants

Throughout her career, Macaulay was attuned to multiple publics. Born in 1881 into what Noel Annan described as the “intellectual aristocracy” of the Macaulay, Conybeare, Arnold, and Huxley families, Emilie Rose Macaulay studied history at Somerville College, Oxford, from 1900 to 1903.<sup>7</sup> Well-connected and well-educated, she may have been expected to marry a don, as the daughters of intellectual leaders often did. Instead, Macaulay forged a literary career that amounted to twenty-five novels, two books of poetry, fourteen non-fiction texts, and innumerable columns and articles for such publications as *The New Statesman*, *Horizon*, and *Time and Tide* over a fifty year period.<sup>8</sup> The audiences for such an array of work differed greatly. Popular novels such as *Potterism* (1920), *The World My Wilderness* (1950), and *Trebizond* sold well and often met with critical praise— *Trebizond*, for example, won the James Tait Memorial Prize in 1956. Her more esoteric works, such as her literary biographies, *Milton* (1934) and *The Writing of E.M. Forster* (1938), were always intended for more discerning readers. When, in 1931, the Hogarth Press published Macaulay’s scholarly work, *Some Religious Elements in English Literature*, they made a slight loss.<sup>9</sup> The audience for that particular book was very specific indeed. After Macaulay’s death in 1958, her friend Rosamond Lehmann wrote that the writer was “[f]orever in transit...physically, intellectually, spiritually”.<sup>10</sup>

The peripatetic nature of Macaulay’s intellectual interests marks her as a writer who transgressed the cultural divides that shaped the literary marketplace between the

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<sup>7</sup> Annan, pp. 304–41.

<sup>8</sup> See Jane Emery, *Rose Macaulay: A Writer’s Life*, (London: Murray, 1991), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Diane F. Gillespie, “‘Woolfs’ in Sheep’s Clothing: The Hogarth Press and ‘Religion’”, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. by Helen Southworth, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 76-100, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Qtd in Alice Crawford, *Paradise Pursued: The Novels of Rose Macaulay*, (Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press, 1995), p. 13.

wars. These years were marked by “the battle of the brows”, in which cultural hierarchies were questioned by popular authors and mainstream readers and defended by more elite, highbrow authors, often associated with modernism.<sup>11</sup> Melissa Sullivan contends that Macaulay positioned herself in these debates as “a reputable and popular public intellectual” who sought to “expand the sphere” of the middlebrow by “defending the tastes of a heterogeneous reading public”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Sullivan frames Macaulay’s stratified oeuvre as that belonging to a sprawling middlebrow career, rather than seeing her output as separate strands of intellectual work.<sup>13</sup> In the post-war period, Sullivan suggests that the new landscape of state-sponsored elite culture, as embodied by the Arts Council and the BBC’s Third Programme, allowed Macaulay to “push, challenge, or glide alongside significant changes in distinction, reading publics, and aesthetic tastes...without disavowing her commitments to middlebrow culture”.<sup>14</sup> In other words, Macaulay’s association with the middlebrow in the interwar period could be usefully leveraged when debates about cultural hierarchies were reformulated along educational and democratic lines after the war, leaving Macaulay well-placed to develop her professional career in a new social climate.

Although Sullivan maintains that Macaulay’s ultimate loyalty was to middlebrow culture, other critics have questioned whether the writer can be so easily classified. As Nicola Humble notes, Macaulay was never “squarely middlebrow”, but a shifting, mercurial writer who moved between and across the delimitations of interwar cultural

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<sup>11</sup> See Brown and Grover.

<sup>12</sup> Melissa Sullivan, “A Middlebrow Dame Commander: Rose Macaulay, the ‘Intellectual Aristocracy’, and *The Towers of Trebizond*”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 42, (2012), pp. 168-185, p. 168-9.

<sup>13</sup> Melissa Sullivan “The Middlebrows of the Hogarth Press: Rose Macaulay, E.M. Delafield and Cultural Hierarchies in Interwar Britain”, in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. by Helen Southworth, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 53- 74.

<sup>14</sup> Sullivan, “Middlebrow Dame”, p. 170.

hierarchies.<sup>15</sup> Sarah Lonsdale locates Macaulay in the “hazy and contested zone between highbrow and middlebrow, the intellectual and the popular”, citing the writer’s fascination with newspapers as evidence of this cultural blurring.<sup>16</sup> Lonsdale suggests that Macaulay occupies another cultural sphere between the highbrow and the middlebrow, a hazy liminal space that resists identification with any of the ‘brows’. Applying Lonsdale’s analysis to the audience of Macaulay’s work, Cecily Garber argues that Macaulay’s ambiguous approach to the middlebrow can “challenge readers, can acknowledge high, low, and in between spaces of interwar culture and expose readers to a number of diverse perspectives”.<sup>17</sup> In reading Macaulay’s writing in its various iterations, the reader can themselves move across categories of taste, cultural status, and in some cases, class perspectives.

But the reader is rarely, if ever, in contact with the entirety of Macaulay’s output. As such, individual readers are confronted by the cultural markers of the specific work they are reading. Thus, Macaulay may have been seen as a low, middle, or high-brow writer by different publics. This is a quite different critical position to Sullivan’s, who contends that Macaulay’s engagement with multiple publics is what qualifies her as middlebrow. Rather than expanding the remit of the middlebrow, as Sullivan suggests, I argue that Macaulay’s diverse writings worked to reveal the limits, borders, and indeterminacies of the established cultural hierarchy by consciously addressing the appropriate audience for each piece. She made her readers more aware of cultural stratification by adopting and adapting the tropes of the low, middle,

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<sup>15</sup> Humble, pp. 24–25.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Lonsdale, “‘Imprisoned in a Cage of Print’: Rose Macaulay, Journalism and Gender”, in *Rose Macaulay, Gender, and Modernity*, ed. by Kate Macdonald, (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 57-74, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Cecily R. Garber, “Fiction-Criticism in Interwar England: Judgement, Gender, and the Pluralist Public Sphere”, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014), p. 32-33.

or high where relevant, foregrounding cultural divisions rather than eroding or expanding them. By imitating the conventions of a range of forms, she demonstrated her skill as a writer and showcased her intellect and learning— accomplishments that qualified her for ongoing participation in elite culture. As the contours of class and gender relations shifted throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Macaulay sought to maintain her membership of the social and intellectual elite by reinforcing cultural distinctions along ‘brow’ lines.

Furthermore, Macaulay understood that divisions in audiences were almost arbitrarily called into being by discursive mechanisms, many of which were located in the mass media. In the early 1920s, when she was reliant on commissions from newspapers for much of her income, Macaulay saw how audiences could be subdivided at the whim of an editor. For example, columns that she wrote for *Nash’s* magazine, such as “Problems of a Woman’s Life”, “Problems of a Writer’s Life,” and (though she was herself unmarried) “Problems of Married Life” spoke to different imaginary readers, stratifying them into the categories of gender, occupation, or marital status. Such interpellation of readers into specific identities is redolent of Michael Warner’s theory of publics and counterpublics, in which different audiences exist “*by virtue of being addressed*”.<sup>18</sup> The column headlines function as a “hail” to the relevant readers, an authoritative demarcation of identity of the kind articulated by Louis Althusser.<sup>19</sup> Headlines make visible the social divisions that are established in the body of the publication: if you are not a woman, a writer, or married then this piece is not *really* for you. And, while these are specific examples from Macaulay’s

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics (Abbreviated version)”, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88:4 (2002), pp. 413-425, p. 413. Emphasis in original.

<sup>19</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)”, in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, ed. by Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 86-111, p. 105.



oeuvre of addressing distinct audiences, I am using them to draw larger-scale interpretations of the professional woman's engagement with print media because the very nature of that engagement was diffuse and disconnected. These examples suffice to give an idea of the kinds of experiences Macaulay had with addressing specific audiences before she began reviewing the radio and, finally, speaking on air.

In her work as a journalist, Macaulay experienced how different publics were addressed by various cultural actors, such as newspapers, radio, or publishers, and she became critical of arbitrary delimitations of taste or interest. In a 1925 essay titled "The Press and the Public", Macaulay warns of the power that newspapers had to dictate ideology and identity to their readers: "Newspapers have us in the hollow of their hands, out of which we meekly eat; we are not particular".<sup>20</sup> Taste is not inherent to the public, who are "not particular", but it is decided by cultural arbiters. In "What the Public Wants" from 1924, Macaulay goes further by suggesting that "the public" might not exist at all, except as "that strange, hungry, rapacious creature, the public as seen, or imagined, by the newspaper and magazine editor".<sup>21</sup> Those with power over the cultural apparatus could begin to shape the public in an image they desired. Such a prospect was intriguing for the young Macaulay. In her essays and journalistic novels of the 1920s, Patrick Collier asserts that Macaulay:

[rehearsed] the ways in which various institutional viewpoints- those of the police, politicians, newspaper editors, book publishers, and theatre critics-construct competing visions of the public. This strategy reveals "the public" to be not a unitary entity but a series of potentially overlapping but not entirely compatible fictional conglomerations produced and determined by these viewpoints.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Rose Macaulay, "The Press and the Public", in *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 201-204, pp. 203-4.

<sup>21</sup> Rose Macaulay, "What the Public Wants", in *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 205-208, p. 206.

<sup>22</sup> Collier, p. 154.

When Macaulay highlighted the divisions of taste that structured the cultural hierarchy of the twenties by aping their conventions, she recognised that their differences were manufactured by cultural commentators such as magazines, newspapers, and latterly, the BBC. Such knowledge would prove invaluable in the new cultural context of the post-war period, when the writer herself had more access to the levers of cultural arbitration. For the most part, Macaulay thought different tastes should be catered for. The question was not *if* the cultural sphere should be stratified, but *how*.

As this thesis demonstrates, for the BBC the question of catering to the nation's tastes whilst providing the "best of everything" had always been a challenge.<sup>23</sup>

During the Blitz, Macaulay's work as an ambulance driver exposed her to some incompatible tastes in radio listening that only arose in communal spaces. In 1939, she wrote to her sister complaining that:

My experience of the taxi-drivers at the Ambulance station is that they like [the wireless] on, but don't listen- they play cards all through the News, however important it is, and talk loudly through it too, which prevents other people hearing".<sup>24</sup>

The confined space of the ambulance station cannot accommodate the range of interests that are present among the volunteers, with those who are disinterested in the broadcasts frustrating any hopeful listeners with their loud talking. Thus, the ambulance station functions as a metaphor for the nation more generally, where one faction of the population prevents another from gaining the enjoyment or edification they desired from the BBC. It is also evident that Macaulay's criticism has class connotations: it is not just other people who talk over the News, it is taxi-drivers in

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<sup>23</sup> Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain*, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Rose Macaulay to Jean Macaulay, 12 October 1939, ERM/9/83, WREN.

particular. By drawing this distinction to the fore, Macaulay implies that different listening tastes were, at least to some extent, predicated on class.

The writer's comments about the BBC were in keeping with a national discussion concerning the remit of the Corporation at war. In the same letter, Macaulay recounted a Parliamentary debate on the subject of the BBC:

I liked best the M.P. who said, let them give the best music etc at stated times each day, and keep the whole thing from being vulgarised to suit the vulgarist tastes, which is what happens now. Others said it need be more vulgar i.e. more variety, and the news and talks more 'light &... Brotherly', which sounds like an Oxford Group meeting. The fact is we can't get on with 2 programmes—it's like setting us all down to read the same books.<sup>25</sup>

Fearing that vulgarity was already in the ascendancy at the Corporation, Macaulay advocates for more than two programmes to accommodate the broad range of the public's tastes.<sup>26</sup> She explicitly compares radio listening choices with literary preferences. The simile of radio listeners being given 'the same books' exaggerates the impossibility of such limited choice in the literary field. Macaulay seeks to see the stratification of literary tastes that characterised the interwar period mapped onto BBC output— a reassertion of the 'culture wars' in a new medium. The question remained— how should the BBC divide itself?

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Labour MP Arthur Greenwood had actually called for the output to be "less brief, more bright and more brotherly". Ministry of Information and Broadcasting", House of Commons Debate, *Hansard*, 11 October 1939, Vol 352. Cc 376-484. The Oxford Group was a Christian group dedicated to the spiritual development of its members through discussion of personal matters in informal settings. It was not affiliated to a specific denomination of Christianity.

<sup>26</sup> The MP in question was Andrew McLaren, Labour representative of Burslem, Stoke-On-Trent. He called for the BBC to "take those cockney Americans who give us this brainless crooning, on to the high roof at Langham Place and... push them off", a sentiment Macaulay would echo in her *Time and Tide* reviews where he fervently objected to 'crooning'. Andrew McLaren, McLaren, Andrew, "Ministry of Information and Broadcasting", House of Commons Debate, *Hansard*, 11 October 1939, Vol 352. Col. 376-484, c 415.

## Haley's Pyramid

In the immediate post-war period, the BBC's audience was consciously split. The established 'National' programme, complimented by 'Regional' programming that had existed before the war, had been renamed the Home Service in 1939. The Home, as it was often called, was a national service that provided unified programming and was intended to prevent enemy bombers from using radio signals to navigate. The Home Service was complemented by the Forces Programme from January 1940, a channel designed to maintain the morale of troops abroad and at home. While the Home Service continued to pursue the policy of 'mixed broadcasting' that had been advocated by Reith, the Forces Programme focussed on popular culture programmes such as comedies, variety, and dance music.<sup>27</sup> The huge popularity of the Forces Programme amongst domestic listeners demonstrated to the BBC that 'mixed broadcasting' was ultimately untenable.<sup>28</sup> To maintain a listenership, the BBC had to give the people what they wanted, which, for the most part, was plenty of popular programmes. However, the Corporation's public service ethos meant it also had to find a way of serving those listeners with minority or specialist tastes.

The new Director-General of the BBC, Sir William Haley, understood British culture to be organised in a "pyramid with a lamentably broad base and a lamentably narrow tip".<sup>29</sup> When the BBC adopted 'Haley's pyramid' as a broadcasting model, it sought to introduce the mass audience of popular entertainment in the 'base' to more

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<sup>27</sup> As previously noted, 'mixed broadcasting' was the provision of a range of programmes to meet the spectrum of cultural tastes across the nation.

<sup>28</sup> Carpenter, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Qtd in Charlotte Higgins, "After 70 years, Radio 3 needs a rethink. Its time to unleash the composers", *The Guardian*, 23 September 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/23/70-years-radio-3-rethink-unleash-composers>> [accessed 5 December 2018].

intellectual and improving broadcasts through the inclusion of regular programmes that were suitable to the channel above. As the war ended, the popular Forces Programme was renamed the Light Programme, and the Home Service maintained its position in the middle of the pyramid. In September 1946, the pinnacle of BBC programming was introduced: the Third Programme. Through a policy of inserting the occasional elite programme in each service, Light listeners, it was hoped, would be tempted to listen to the Home, and Home listeners would move 'up' to the Third. Haley's post-war vision for BBC broadcasting reflects the contradictory nature of British reconstruction in the years after 1945. On the one hand, the new Labour government under Clement Attlee set about fulfilling its mandate of social change, proposed in the 1942 Beveridge Report, that would instantiate the welfare state. This included the transformation of industry, healthcare, and educational provision; the development of the latter will be discussed in relation to Elizabeth Bowen and the BBC in the following chapter. As Kenneth O. Morgan describes, cultural institutions were also incorporated in the new plans: "The formation of the Arts Council in 1945, soon after VJ day, testified to the wider involvement of central agencies, backed by state funding, in matters of the mind and the spirit".<sup>30</sup> The new Britain was expansive, democratic and increasingly state-directed in cultural matters. Morgan quotes a former Chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Goodman, as using the "language of the time":

I believe that the last thirty years in this country has demonstrated a profound social change. Within our society, there is now a widespread feeling that the provision of drama and music and painting and culture in all its broadest aspects is no longer to be regarded as a privilege for a few but is the democratic right of the entire community.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kenneth, O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Goodman's quote was from the *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Arts Council*, 1968-9.

In the political discourse of post-war Britain, culture became a 'democratic right' and, through its vast listenership and relatively affordable licence fee system, the BBC was a significant provider and protector of that right.

Although access to culture was democratised, definitions of 'high' or quality culture from the interwar period endured. As Alan Sinfield writes, "the traditional concept of 'high' culture persisted, but now with state validation, within the story that it was for all the people".<sup>32</sup> Elite cultural forms, such as opera, modernist literature, classical music, experimental theatre, and painting were privileged over the music hall, cinema, and variety performers of popular acclaim. Morgan sees this hierarchy of cultural taste in markedly class-based terms:

...the pattern of leisure pursuits, the revival of drama and opera for the middle class contrasted with the communality of the working-class holiday at Skegness or Filey, the careful graduations on BBC radio between the popular entertainment of the 'Light Programme' and the culture for the literati on the new 'Third Programme', all had obvious class implications.<sup>33</sup>

Morgan asserts that the 'mixed programmes' the BBC scheduled in the pre-war years "to straddle tastes and classes" were "explicitly abandoned", confirming the Corporation's role as "an instrument of middle-class hegemony".<sup>34</sup> Although culture was now supposedly for all, the kind of culture that was celebrated was still middle- and upper-middle-class in nature, in effect excluding other audiences through its residual exclusivity.

Moreover, Michael Tracey describes Director-General William Haley's view of culture as derived from interwar class assumptions:

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<sup>32</sup> Sinfield, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Reading the speeches of Haley one sees his roots in traditional Arnoldian middle-class values about culture and leisure, combined with a rigid view of different cultural levels, good to bad...<sup>35</sup>

For Haley, classical texts and music were good and light entertainment was bad. As such, the provision of so-called democratic culture was perceived through the lens of interwar class categories. The stratification of BBC output into popular, middlebrow, and intellectual served to reassert class-based cultural hierarchies in the post-war period, rather than deconstruct them in the context of a promised liberal democracy. In a coincidence that shows the close social and intellectual interweaving of BBC management and the woman writer of this chapter, William Hayley and Rose Macaulay would both receive honorary Litt.D's from the University of Cambridge on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1951.<sup>36</sup> Both the writer and the Director-General were committed to preserving cultural hierarchies and were recipients of the academic honours that reaching the pinnacle of such a hierarchy bestowed.

As the tripartite structure came into effect, questions of who would listen to the new programme occupied the Corporation. So too did the question of who would listen to the new service. In her history of the Third Programme, Kate Whitehead notes the inherent class-bias in the adjectives the Corporation used in discussions of the anticipated audience, including “‘educated’, ‘cultured’, ‘sophisticated’, ‘alert and receptive’, ‘selective’”, and “‘intelligent’”.<sup>37</sup> “The obvious distinction which becomes apparent even from this cursory list,’ Whitehead writes, “is that between those characteristics which are clearly acquired (i.e. the property of an already privileged minority), such as education, culture, and sophistication, and those characteristics

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Tracey, *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> Emery, *Rose Macaulay*, p. 309.

<sup>37</sup> Whitehead, *Third Programme*, p. 48.

less directly associated with a pre-existing elite, such as alertness”.<sup>38</sup> The hoped-for audience could be split into those who had already acquired the necessary cultural training to appreciate highbrow content, the socially elite, and those who had an interest in them, the alert.

Nevertheless, Whitehead is sceptical of the BBC’s commitment to “the most intelligent, receptive people in all classes” because the founding principle of the Third was that it would not ‘dilute’ culture for the uninitiated.<sup>39</sup> As the new Controller of the Third, George Barnes, wrote in a 1946 introductory article for the *Listener*, “there will be few ‘hearing aids’ for listeners to the Third Programme”.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, anyone who was not already familiar with the language and forms of ‘high’ culture, anyone not already comfortable with middle and upper-middle-class cultural productions, had to cultivate enjoyment and understanding on their own.

Scholars have argued that this elite approach to the transmission of cultural productions consciously exacerbated class distinctions. As Stefan Collini describes, “charges of intellectual and social exclusiveness were hard to disentangle”.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly the press saw the new programme as a distinctly elitist endeavour: “The terms ‘highbrows’ and ‘intellectuals’ appeared constantly in the early press comment, the more popular versions of which were sharply critical of the new service’s relentless seriousness and its lack of appeal to all but a tiny fraction of the population”.<sup>42</sup> Tracey is more graphic in his description of the tensions that plagued the service: “To a more populist eye the Third Programme was an aural

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> George Barnes, “The Aims of the Programme”, *The Listener*, 26 September 1946, 36:924, p. i, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AnaNT8>> [accessed 3 July 2019].

<sup>41</sup> Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 439.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



formaldehyde in which were preserved the values of a disappearing culture. To its adherents the Third Programme was alive and capable of growth, the very sperm bank of western culture".<sup>43</sup> Whether or not one thought the Third was alive or dead depended largely on the extent to which one could access or enjoy the programmes it broadcast. More damningly, Paddy Scannell remarks, "very few people chose to listen".<sup>44</sup>

Many at the BBC, however, subscribed to the Reithian vision of cultural uplift that saw such elitism as anathema to their work. One employee remembered:

The Third Programme was founded on Labour England. Its imagined listener was a hard-working, Labour-voting schoolmaster in (say) Derby, who was interested in international theatre, new music, philosophy, politics, and painting, and who listened selectively to all these things on the Third. That's what everyone believed in'.<sup>45</sup>

The missionary zeal to which some staff at the BBC subscribed, including Director-General Haley, was in keeping with the liberal democratic hopes of peacetime Britain. The Third could be imagined as the democratisation of culture for all, in line with the introduction of the National Health Service, for example. But these utopian ideals were articulated by BBC employees in retrospect. The staff in charge of the Third did not always share such sentiments. Harman Grisewood, Controller of the Third from 1948 to 1952 reflected: "we'd all been brought up by Reith to think that working men should appreciate Beethoven and that kind of thing, but I knew it was a load of balls".<sup>46</sup> Those responsible for the programming of the elite service were accepting, even encouraging, of the stratification of cultural tastes that accompanied social class during this period. As Morgan notes, "Culture, allegedly 'nationalized' in

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<sup>43</sup> Tracey, p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, (Chichester: Wiley, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Goehr interviewed in 1996, qtd in Carpenter, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Qtd in Collini, p. 438.

the aftermath of military victory, was now being compartmentalized and segregated as rigorously as before the war".<sup>47</sup>

And audience listening figures confirmed such assertions. Whitehead relays the findings of the first Listener Research Report into the Third Programme audience, published in February 1947.<sup>48</sup> Itself divided by class, the report records that 77 percent of the upper-middle-class who were surveyed were willing to listen to the new programme, in contrast with 41 percent of the working-class.<sup>49</sup> In practice, this meant that many more working-class people were listening to the elite programme than upper-class, because the total number of working-class was a far greater proportion of the population.<sup>50</sup> However, the BBC chose to stress the class-based differences in listening, rather than divide the audience along different lines, such as region or indeed gender. By 1948, Listener Research quoted a representative reply from a listener when asked about the Third's content: "I would prefer the Third Programme to be a little more on familiar ground. After all, we are not all University Students...(Unemployed Miner)".<sup>51</sup> Although an unemployed miner was listening to the Third, thereby affirming the lofty ideals of democratic cultural uplift as promulgated by the Corporation, he also expressed awareness of his and many others' exclusion from such cultural provision: "we are not all University Students". Who could, who did, and who was supposed to listen across the range of the BBC's tripartite schedule was still uncertain. As we will see in her radio reviews, Macaulay

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<sup>47</sup> Morgan, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Whitehead, *Third Programme*, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* Whitehead also acknowledges that there were persistent signal problems, meaning many parts of the country received patchy or no reception for the Third.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Whitehead, p. 58.

was invested in maintaining dominant access to ‘the best’ cultural productions for ‘the best’ audiences: the elite.

### **“1945 and 1946 On the Air”: Rose Macaulay’s *Time and Tide* Radio Reviews**

The literary weekly, *Time and Tide*, for which Macaulay wrote monthly radio reviews between January 1945 and May 1946, was the only female-controlled literary periodical of the period.<sup>52</sup> Due to its unique blend of feminist campaigning, domestic satire, and wide-ranging, respected cultural criticism, it commanded a unique female-dominated readership between the wars and for a number of years after 1945. In her monograph on the periodical, Catherine Clay describes how *Time and Tide* sought to balance its intellectual aspirations with the concerns of its loyal readers:

at the very same time that the periodical was seeking access to the highbrow sphere (literary and political), and working to rebrand itself as a general-audience intellectual weekly, its Miscellany section defended and promoted middlebrow culture and operated to attract, and sustain its relationship with, its core female readership.<sup>53</sup>

In other words, *Time and Tide* worked to position itself as a cultural authority with a remit to explore both highbrow and middlebrow cultural spheres using its reviews, short stories and Miscellany section to broker satisfaction from disparate parts of its readership. Macaulay’s association with the publication was well established and the writer had a clear idea of the audiences the magazine sought to attract. Indeed, the writer was described by the editor, Lady Rhondda, as an “old contributor” and an “old friend” of the periodical.<sup>54</sup> When the magazine committed to publishing throughout the war despite paper rationing, Macaulay was one of the prominent

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<sup>52</sup> Catherine Clay, *Time and Tide: The Feminist and Cultural Politics of a Modern Magazine*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194 and 273.

women writers whose ongoing presence in the pages of the periodical indicated that the magazine, as Clay suggests, “continued to operate out of a feminist commitment to women’s participation in public life”, despite its gradual move away from explicitly women’s issues through the 1940s. Therefore, by January 1945 and her first review of BBC output, Macaulay was a familiar figure to the mostly middle-class, still significantly female readership of *Time and Tide*.<sup>55</sup> As such, she can be seen to speak to an audience who shared her values of feminism, broadly liberal politics, and an in-depth literary knowledge. In other words, writer and readers were positioned towards the top of the cultural hierarchy, admitted into the “kingdom of culture” through their privileged education and their familiarity with cultural developments, as proven by their subscription to this very periodical.<sup>56</sup>

Addressing the relatively elitist audience of *Time and Tide*, Macaulay interrogated the extent to which BBC programming met the expectations of those with middle- and high-brow tastes. She did this through analysis of the BBC’s provision of three significant cultural forms: music, language, and drama. These areas were typically accessible to upper- and middle-class women, either through higher education or as part of their informal training to become wives, hosts, and mothers. As such, I argue that Macaulay used her platform as radio reviewer at the feminist periodical to promote and protect the standards of culture that privileged women could access, influence, and ultimately participate in, defending these spaces from the perceived threat of working-class vulgarity that the post-war world seemed to promise.

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<sup>55</sup> See Clay, p. 179. The readership was also increasingly academic and intellectual, along the lines of other literary periodicals, but Clay argues that women readers were the ‘core’ of *Time and Tide* for the bulk of its publication history.

<sup>56</sup> Dubois, p. 9.

Firstly, then, Macaulay assessed the quality of music broadcast across the BBC's channels. While the writer often complimented the BBC on the classical music it played on record programmes and in live concerts, she denigrated the Light Programme and much of the daytime schedules for pedalling popular and unchallenging fare. Her review of BBC output in March 1945 is a representative example. Although there had been "some good record programmes (notably by Desmond Shawe-Taylor and Spike Hughes)", a Beethoven string quartet, and the long-running poetry programme, *Time for Verse*, "decorate[d] Sunday evenings", Macaulay was appalled by the popular music that dominated daytime schedules:

Streams of gooey music, crooning, swing, "you are my baby", through the day. Does any nation but British and American stand for this? It does not seem to be offered to Continentals on the European service. Why are we thus insulted, and how long shall we endure this nauseating corruption of our minds by those who can (and often do) do so much to stimulate them?<sup>57</sup>

Macaulay considers the music from lower down the cultural hierarchy to be both sentimental and revolting, or 'gooey', and dangerous, able to 'corrupt' the intellectual faculties of intelligent listeners. In such sentiments, the writer's adherence to pre-war cultural values is in evidence as she warns of the dire consequences that conceding to lowbrow cultural tastes would have on the intellectual health of the nation.

What is more, in some of Macaulay's criticism of popular music programmes, class prejudice is glaring. In April 1945, for example, Macaulay uses an urban metaphor to describe her view of the Light Programme:

There is a radio slum which many of us seldom visit. Turn a knob at the right moments (there are many of these) and you enter it, as I did now and then during a recent illness, just to know the worst, Slum [sic] or idiot asylum, where facetious or slobbering half-wits gibber and howl, where tripey voices caterwaul and crooners croon, introduced often by lumberingly facetious jests.

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<sup>57</sup> "March on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 30 March 1946, pp. 294-296, p. 294.

Emerging from the asylum, one can scarcely believe it real. But it is; and we had better know.<sup>58</sup>

Through her reference to impoverished housing, or slums, Macaulay evokes the rhetoric of reconstruction Britain and its emphasis on the importance and urgency of re-housing the many millions who had lost their homes due to bombing. She is unsympathetic, however, eliding poor living conditions with intellectual inferiority and a taste for popular music. Her repeated emphasis on the importance of knowing about this cultural environment— “just to know the worst”, “we had better know”— suggests that the writer is promoting an attitude of ‘forewarned is forearmed’ to her middle-class readership. Although the audience of *Time and Tide* might never “turn a knob” and find themselves in a cultural landscape that celebrates popular culture, Macaulay as radio reviewer has braved it and reports it for the sake of warning those who may be complacent about the threat of working-class tastes on cultural standards. Utterly dismissive of the value of popular music or variety shows, “facetious jests”, Macaulay draws a parallel between the post-war narrative of urban reconstruction and the threat of popular culture encroaching on the lives of the social elite. In doing so, the writer advocates for stringent differentiation between channels of the BBC, supporting the stratification of the airwaves at the same time that town planners began to stratify towns and cities in their efforts to rebuild.

A second aspect of radio Macaulay particularly interrogated was the quality of literary debate in discussion programmes. She used the general-knowledge panel show, *The Brains Trust*, in particular, as a litmus test for the nation’s intellectual health and therefore drew it to her readership’s attention as a site of contention between the existing cultural hierarchy and new currents of cultural populism. The programme

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<sup>58</sup> “March on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 7 April 1945, p. 287.

consisted of a panel of experts or prominent thinkers who answered questions submitted to them by listeners. Regular contributors included the philosopher, C.E.M. Joad, retired naval officer, Commander A. B. Campbell, and biologist, Julian Huxley. Their appearances on the programme made them household names in Britain and contributed significantly to reformulations of the notion of a public intellectual in the post-war period.<sup>59</sup> The programme had begun on the Forces Service under the title “Any Questions?” in 1941 and, renamed, it quickly attracted a huge audience— by 1944 there were as many as 12 million regular listeners and up to 3000 questions submitted each week.<sup>60</sup> The popularity of *The Brains Trust* accounts, in part, for Macaulay’s interest in the programme, which she commented on in eight of her fifteen *Time and Tide* reviews. At the height of its popularity, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the programme was the most widely accessed demonstration of intellectualism in the country. For her female readers, the *Brains Trust* was one of only a few cultural productions that provided high-quality discussion on the airwaves. It was therefore an important programme for keeping middle-class women interested in and abreast of intellectual developments in the world.

Macaulay’s criticism of *The Brains Trust* scrutinised the kinds of questions presented to the panel, as well as the panel’s answers. In other words, she critiqued the quality of intellectual debate that was showcased. Questions varied greatly from philosophical to practical to scientific. The most famous one was posed by an RAF pilot who asked, “How does a fly land on the ceiling?”, a query that was still being

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<sup>59</sup> Collini, *Absent Minds*, p. 402.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Betts, *Time Restored: The Harrison Timekeepers and R.T. Gould, the Man Who Knew (Almost) Everything*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 334-5. The title ‘Any Questions?’ was then re-used for a different debate programme, broadcast nationally from 1950 until the present. More on this programme below. See also Calder, pp. 364-5.

referenced in 1957 and 1975.<sup>61</sup> Macaulay wanted rigorous debate on the airwaves and complained in January 1945 that: “The Brains Trust suffers from the question being changed just when a real argument seems blowing up”.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as the questions were sent in by the public, they could not always be relied upon for coherence. The BBC ought, in Macaulay’s opinion, to exercise more stringent checks on the questions and “weed out the more muddled”.<sup>63</sup> In its role as cultivator of cultural uplift, the BBC should enforce more exacting critical standards for its *The Brains Trust* questions.

Muddledness was a serious misdemeanour for Macaulay, especially when she considered the impressionable minds that were being misled. In November 1945, for example, she was scathing about the answer one panellist gave about post-war crime:

Muddled young people are given a bad example sometimes by *The Brains Trust*, one of whom, Mrs Tate, declared last week that crime waves don’t follow wars unless you expect them to. Unless this merely means that everyone with knowledge of history or of life does expect them to, it seems as simple minded as the people who go about saying smugly that you can’t catch influenza or any other germ unless you expect to.<sup>64</sup>

Unpicking the faulty reasoning of Mavis Tate, a Conservative MP and women’s rights campaigner, Macaulay casts herself as someone with “knowledge of history”, resisting placating reassurances in response to the problems facing post-war Britain. For Macaulay, the suggestion that crime would not increase was insipid and wrong. Worse, Tate perpetuated her own illogicality by presenting it to listeners of the next generation on the prominent programme. Macaulay attends to the minutiae of

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<sup>61</sup> P. T. Haskell, “Flight Instrumentation in Insects”, *The New Scientist*, 5 December 1957, (3: 55), p. 16, Howard Thomas, “Julian Huxley and the Brains Trust”, *New Statesman*, 18 April 1975, 89:230, p. 510.

<sup>62</sup> “January On the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 27 January 1945, p. 71

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> “November on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 1 December 1945, pp. 1003-1004, p. 1003.



illogical thought or argument presented by the panel and objects to bad examples being set.

Because they were intellectuals, the legitimacy of *Brains Trust* panellists was related to their position in the social hierarchy. In July 1945, for example, Macaulay indicates the extent to which she considered the capacity for quality of debate to be predicated on class and education: “The *Brains Trust* have broken up for the holidays...Some of the trusters can be sadly silly...Such irrelevance is common enough, but is always puzzling in those who should, by upbringing, have exact minds”.<sup>65</sup> According to Macaulay, those who were given a position of authority on-air should possess the ‘exact minds’ that were the product of upper-class education and refinement. Macaulay looks to the BBC, and its popular panel show, to protect and maintain pre-war class structures and cultural hierarchies.

Where the *Brains Trust* often lacked refined thinking and where *Time and Tide* readers could feel they had an advantage was in literary matters. Macaulay considered literary knowledge to be essential to intellectual attainment and therefore often questioned the literary allusions or etymology of words, characters, and phrases that arose in *Brain Trust* debates. In January 1945, for example, the writer noted that: “the five intelligent persons sometimes puzzle one; as when they all endorsed Polonius’s ‘to thine own self be true’ as suitable advice to every young man. Surely it all depends on what the self is like?”.<sup>66</sup> Macaulay attends to the panel’s lack of critical interrogation of the Shakespearian edict, rejecting the easy generalization as she had questioned the press’s characterisation of the public in the interwar period. She proposes that more critical specificity should be employed when

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<sup>65</sup> “June on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 7 July 1945, p. 562.

<sup>66</sup> “January On the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 27 January 1945, p. 71.

considering common sayings and phrases. In October 1945, Macaulay reiterated her concern about the panel's literary knowledge:

The Brains Trust has taken the air again; they were a good time last week, and dealt well with the atom bomb, Dr Joad with brilliant virtuosity. On the other hand, they were less good on 'merry England'; none of them showed signs of being aware that 'merry' in the ancient phrase did not mean jolly, but prosperous, comfortable, fortunate, as in the old greeting, 'God rest ye merry'.<sup>67</sup>

Questions of global security (the atom bomb) and etymological accuracy (the definition of merry) were of similar importance to the writer. Language was a key site for the demonstration of intellect and learning. For that reason, the Corporation's flagship intellectual programme should understand that 'merry' meant fortunate as well as jolly.

Macaulay recognised that she was demonstrating her own specialist knowledge. In the same programme, she lamented:

my admiration for the wide expert knowledge and versatility of many of the Trustees is always tempered by their apparent lack of interest in or information about language; I suppose it is, even among intelligent people, a minority interest.<sup>68</sup>

Although the panellists are sufficiently informed for general discussions, Macaulay feels that specialist linguistic knowledge would add quality to the debates. As Kate MacDonald notes "There is an unmistakable sense...of Macaulay judging unknown strangers by their use of language in comparison with her usage, and with what she knows to be right".<sup>69</sup> Sarah LeFanu also mentions the slipperiness of Macaulay's attention to language, noting that: "the borderline between linguistic rigour and linguistic snobbery is not always clear".<sup>70</sup> In addition to arrogance or snobbery,

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<sup>67</sup> "September on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 6 October 1945, p. 832.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Kate MacDonald, "Constructing a Public Persona: Rose Macaulay's Non-Fiction", in *Rose Macaulay, Gender, and Modernity*, ed. by Kate Macdonald, (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 118-136, p. 130.

<sup>70</sup> Sarah LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay*, (London: Virago, 2003), p. 177-178.

Macaulay's audit of the panel's use of language suggests how important she considered the accuracy of literary discourse on-air. Shakespearian sayings should not be emptied of meaning and become clichés, specific words should not be erroneously defined. A panel of intellectuals on the BBC should consider language to be more than a minority interest but central to their mission to raise the taste and intellect of the nation. This was Macaulay's ideological position that she expounded in her *Time and Tide* reviews of the broadcaster.

The connotation of some words was of nothing less than national significance for the writer. A particular irritation was "this odd habit of talking of 'visiting Europe'" in reference to current affairs programmes about the continent.<sup>71</sup> This verbal tendency seemed to suggest a lack of learning or intellectual rigour in its speakers. She went on:

is it caught from Americans, who of course use it correctly? This tendency to cut Britain out of Europe is a quite recent illiteracy, I think. Perhaps it comes from escapism, from a realization that Europe is just now a dreadful place. Still, however dreadful, we happen to be a part of it. We used to call the other part of it 'the continent'. Or, if we prefer, we can call it 'the mainland'. But we can't contract out of Europe by a misnomer.<sup>72</sup>

For Macaulay, the political ramifications of broadcasters referring to the continent as 'Europe' were significant and should be prevented. A slippage in the vocabulary of contemporary reportage could perpetuate the "recent illiteracy" of separating Britain from its neighbours— its erstwhile allies and enemies— and contribute to the formulation of a myth of British isolation and exceptionalism. Lack of accurate information exacerbated such discourse amongst listeners and broadcasters. In March 1945, for example, Macaulay had dismissed the speakers on the discussion

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<sup>71</sup> "August on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 1 September 1945, p. 726.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

programme *Europe and Ourselves* as needing “a properly marked atlas” to locate Europe.<sup>73</sup> The powerful ideological implications of this “misnomer” were not acceptable to Macaulay.

A commitment to accuracy of thought and precision with language was in concert with Macaulay’s distrust of nationalist sentiment. Reflecting on the broadcast of VE Day celebrations in May 1945, Macaulay warned against the temptation to mythologise the British war effort:

The recorded speeches were good, though there was too much self-praise. “You did not flinch”, etc. But of course we flinched. Why not? One gets tired of this myth of absolute fearlessness that we are building up about ourselves; it is not accurate. We flinched, we got under tables, into shelters, even fled from dangerous cities, even went to America. All very natural, why deny it? We also black-marketed, and looted bombed houses. The impulse to turn ourselves into saints and heroes is not to be encouraged, because it is dull, like the pious lives of saints.<sup>74</sup>

The “myth of absolute fearlessness” was not only pernicious because it was inaccurate, but such a generalisation rendered the lived experience “dull”, infused with the empty piety of past idols. Moreover, it was patronising to deny reality: “But of course we flinched. Why not?”.

Prior to the war, Macaulay had supported BBC efforts to standardise the spoken English used by announcers on the airwaves. She was a member of the expanded BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English between 1934 and 1939, helping to decide on the correct pronunciation of words that could be variously pronounced in a Received Pronunciation (RP) accent.<sup>75</sup> The Committee, comprised of writers, broadcasters, linguists, and other language experts, published their findings in *The*

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<sup>73</sup> “February On the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 3 March 1945, p.184.

<sup>74</sup> “May on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 2 June 1945, p. 454.

<sup>75</sup> See Jürg R. Schwyter, *Dictating to the Mob: The History of the BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 13 for more details on the ways an RP accent can have various pronunciations.

*Radio Times* and compiled several booklets of specific recommendations under the series title *Broadcast English*, becoming somewhat of a *cause célèbre* in the interwar period.<sup>76</sup> Disbanded due to the outbreak of the war, the Advisory Committee never reformed in peacetime.

Even after the Committee's dissolution, Macaulay was still interested in the impact broadcasting had on the population's accent. In March 1945, she commented in

*Time and Tide*:

*To Start You Talking* goes on being fresh and good. I liked the one on accents. Do we all realise that there is a language called by thousands of people "BBC English", which means ordinary educated English, and that these thousands speak of "talking BBC" as if it were French? The interesting thing is the apparent *newness* of the impact of standard English on the ears of those who themselves do not use it.<sup>77</sup>

For Macaulay and her *Time and Tide* readership, "educated English" was so commonplace as to be considered "ordinary". Such a position of middle-class security echoes Michael Warner's theory of the universalized liberal subject as the basis for public discourse, "the public" constituting the seemingly universal white, middle-class, heterosexual subject that is usually gendered male.<sup>78</sup> Although not necessarily masculine, the "we" of Macaulay's public contrasts with "these thousands" who have only recently come into contact with standard English accents through the medium of radio. Through the use of different accents, the English language itself becomes stratified for Macaulay into the 'correct', good, or middle-class group, and the 'Other', for whom BBC English is as foreign as French.

And a mass audience's unfamiliarity with what Macaulay considered the basic tenets of cultural literacy was the basis of the writer's third major critique of BBC output in

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>77</sup> "February On the Air", *Time and Tide*, 3 March 1945, p.184.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, (New York: MIT Press, 2002), p. 39-44.

the immediate post-war years. The Corporation sought to revive its provision of dramas and plays as the chaos of conflict eased. However, producers were aware that the average listener was not always familiar with the plot of canonical plays or novels. Moreover, the domestic listening environment was replete with distractions that could mean missing vital points. As such, the Drama department sometimes used the device of a 'straightman' or 'man on the street' as a side character in more complicated plays. This character would then ask for clarification, exposition or repetition of major plot points and character analysis, providing a kind of in-play gloss for listeners who were inattentive or unfamiliar with the plot.

Such intrusions were condemned by Macaulay. She called the characters "stooges" and complained about them throughout her reviews. For example, in January 1945, she wrote:

There was a brilliant account of the Italian campaign, flawed and interrupted by stooge voices making idiotically unreal remarks. Stooge voices are a morbid vice of the BBC; they too often spoil discussions with their "How is that Socrates?" "I see now, Socrates, that you are right" and so on.<sup>79</sup>

Two of Macaulay's principles of good broadcasting— accuracy and intelligence— were undermined by what she called the "idiotically unreal" contributions from a caricatured ordinary person. Her dismissal of the Corporation's "morbid vice" is derived from her own educational privilege, ensuring that she is a sufficiently literate listener to find glosses or explanations disruptive rather than helpful. In this sense, Macaulay tries to appeal to the similarly educated readership of *Time and Tide* on class-based grounds of shared culture and literacy.

Moreover, the writer also considers the use of the stooge to be patronising to listeners who might be described as lowbrow or lower-class. In October 1945,

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<sup>79</sup> "January On the Air", *Time and Tide*, 27 January 1945, p. 71.

Macaulay once again comments on the detracting effect of the “favourite BBC vice”, this time on a repeat of Edward Sackville-West’s talk about *Madame Bovary* in the *How It Was Written* series, produced by Stephen Potter.<sup>80</sup> In this programme, Macaulay “resented the interruptions by the half-wit stooge, so often put up by the BBC to make imbecile comments, such as ‘Who is Mme Bovary?’, ‘There you go again, the usual morbid stuff. Why don’t you tell us about a decent normal man?’.”<sup>81</sup> Increasingly caustic in her criticism, Macaulay explicitly elides questions of taste and education with intellectual capability— indirectly suggesting that those who are not familiar with *Madame Bovary* are “imbeciles” and “half-wits”, rather than members of a different public or social class, one which does not value the same cultural references. Macaulay goes on to propose a stratification of broadcasting practices so that popular tastes did not interfere with intellectual programmes and vice versa:

In my view, listeners (if any) who talk like this are in bed by eleven, or playing rummy, or else listening to dance music on the Light Programme; should they turn on *Mme Bovary* in error, they would resent the stooge, thinking he was meant for them and they were being got at. And more intelligent listeners are merely bored and interrupted by the intrusion of these fatuous comments into a vivid and moving story such as this was.<sup>82</sup>

Macaulay argues that the audience of the BBC *stratifies itself* through listening practices that reflect their varied tastes. Therefore, those who might need help interpreting elite drama would not be listening anyway and the BBC should not ruin plays for everyone else by including stooges.

For Macaulay, the public service Corporation ought to do more to uplift its audience and it could not do that with schedules full of crooning and stooges. It needed more literary discourse and more high-quality literary production. In her 1945 end-of-year

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<sup>80</sup> “September on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 6 October 1945, p. 832. Reference to the programme can be found in “How It Was Written”, *Radio Times*, 21 September 1945, 1147, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> “September on the Air”, p. 832.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

column for *Time and Tide*, Macaulay as radio reviewer proposed a manifesto for broadcasting which enshrined a commitment to intellectual debate, precision with language, and an aversion to cheap dramatic tricks:

There seems room on the Home and Light Programmes for a great deal more explanation of this and that; the abysmal ignorance of the average listener about history, literature, current affairs, art, etc., might well be disturbed by frequent instruction in the palatable guise of discussion, interviews, questions and answers, for, it has been discovered, even the confirmed Light Listener can take this, when a Talk would be switched off; it is much more amusing, except when the sycophantic stooge intrudes, with his "Yes, I see that", and all the rest of it; differences should be real and vocal, and discussers all intelligent.<sup>83</sup>

While a 'Light Listener' was unlikely to engage with dense debate or the demanding form of a Talk, Macaulay was adamant that more explanation and information should be provided for the listener in entertaining ways. She wanted the Corporation to carefully tailor its cultural programming to the capacities and interests of different sections of its audience, while still using 'intelligent' speakers to enlighten the audience. Such an approach would address the "abysmal ignorance" of the average listener and so protect the intellectual integrity of the nation.

A further political motive for stratification was the increasing need to give the public what they wanted. As the BBC announced its plans for changing the existing channels in 1945, Macaulay reflected:

The main new programmes, Home and Light, seem much on the lines of the late Home and Forces. The Light is the programme which people will leave on. At a cursory glance, it looks pretty grim; but Light listeners are brave, and can take it...in the main this programme is safe for democracy, and may be left running without apprehension.<sup>84</sup>

The fare available on the Light, while 'grim', would not incite uprisings of licence fee payers or general citizens. Rather it would cater to the tastes of the listeners who

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<sup>83</sup> "1945 and 1946 on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 5 January 1946, p. 7

<sup>84</sup> "July on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 4 August 1945, p. 648.



predominantly wanted entertainment, thereby maintaining the status quo. Indeed, if the Light was to be the channel for culture lite, it could absorb all of the programming that Macaulay did not want to hear:

Now that one of our programmes is definitely labelled Light, I suggest that it might carry a good deal of the light stuff now in the Home; sports, racing, cricket, boxing, music while you work, worker's playtime, all the jazz and crooning and such small beer; Light listeners enjoy that kind of thing, and it would leave much more room on the Home for interesting talks on current affairs, politics, foreign relations, books, parliamentary doings, discussions, good music.<sup>85</sup>

The writer seeks to explicitly separate programmes she associates with working-class tastes— sports, the wartime staples of *Music While You Work* and *Worker's Playtime*, as well as popular music— from the Home Service, reaffirming class differences and diverging tastes. For Macaulay, cultural and intellectual talks and “good” music are the domain of predominantly middle-class audiences, or those who choose the Home Service. In her *Time and Tide* reviews, Macaulay works to demarcate BBC schedules into class categories, reinforcing differences in taste. If the Corporation was to cater to a range of tastes, she argued that those categories should be clearly marked so as to enable the audience to make a clear choice. As the interwar periodical press had provided for the full range of cultural values, so the post-war BBC should separate its output more stringently.

Finally then, Macaulay considered the BBC's plans to introduce a third channel in her *Time and Tide* reviews. She was encouraging, but cautious:

And what of programme X, or C, or whatever it is to be called? The BBC might ask for suggestions to be sent in for a name for this intelligent programme which, in highly promising hands, is to stimulate and edify us in the spring. Highbrow, middlebrow, lowbrow: this is what our three main

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<sup>85</sup> “August on the Air”, *Time and Tide*, 1 September 1945, p. 726.

domestic programmes are apparently to be; but are these good names? And will Highbrow programmes have any lapses into Middle or Low?<sup>86</sup>

Macaulay clearly sees the stratification of the BBC's services as affiliated with brows and classes. She hopes that the public will be stimulated and edified by the responsible use of the new programme. However, her questioning of whether 'highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow' are 'good names' for the BBC structure suggests that she is not fully convinced the programmes will stay separate and not suffer from "lapses" into the other, lower cultural spheres. Haley's pyramid specified that the larger, more popular programmes of Light and Home would 'trail' the programme level of those above, encouraging Light listeners to move to Home, and Home to Third. Macaulay is wary of cultural hybridity because she and her mostly middle-class, substantially female *Time and Tide* readership felt that they had the most to lose if definitions of elite culture were either expanded to include more working-class values or once again restricted to exclude women.

### **Defender of the Third**

When Macaulay reviewed radio for *Time and Tide*, she was participating in the well-established cultural sphere of the literary periodical press. In late 1946, however, Macaulay began to review radio on the BBC's airwaves themselves. In doing so, she developed a reviewing technique that attended to and experimented with the form of radio while still maintaining cultural and class hierarchies. Macaulay perceived that well-educated women's voices were under threat from changing cultural standards and she saw the Third Programme as a site of resistance. In support of the Corporation's stratification into three strands, Macaulay used her reviewing platform

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<sup>86</sup> "1945 and 1946 on the Air", *Time and Tide*, 5 January 1946, p. 7

to promote even firmer divisions between cultural and class categories than the BBC had anticipated, thereby challenging the Corporation to be more elitist and experimental in its most intellectual offerings.

At its launch, the Third Programme wanted to court as large an audience as possible to fulfil its democratising cultural agenda. One method for addressing the audience's incomprehension of elite output without diluting the productions themselves was to include a critical commentary programme. A radio critic speaking on the Third could provide analysis to accompany the ambitious output of plays and Features, thus equipping the audience with more guidance on *how* to listen, as much as *what* to listen to. The BBC's Third Programme needed a champion, one who could convince the audience of the merit of elite culture. In the first month of the Third's existence, October 1946, the renowned producer Grace Wyndham Goldie contacted Macaulay about such an undertaking. Goldie called the review programme an "experiment" by the BBC, where they invited "independent critics to criticise the productions which are put out in this programme".<sup>87</sup> Goldie's emphasis on independence is significant; the Third wanted to be seen to perform a level of self-reflexivity as a means of demonstrating its own high cultural standards.

However, Macaulay had already established herself as a supporter of elite culture at the BBC through her radio reviewing over the previous year. While the writer's *Time and Tide* column was not explicitly mentioned by Goldie in her correspondence with Macaulay, the producer's membership of a middle-class network of cultural workers indicates that she was likely to have been aware of it. Therefore, Macaulay was only independent in so much as she was not an employee of the Corporation and had a

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<sup>87</sup> Grace Wyndham Goldie to Macaulay, 26 October 1946, RCONT 1, Talks File 1, 1926-1948, BBC WAC.

reputation for critical integrity. The Third sought an “independent critic” who would corroborate its mission of delivering elite culture.

Familiarity with the critical discourse of other cultural forms was essential for a Third Programme reviewer. The programme Macaulay was invited to speak on was called *The Critic on the Air*, which ran from 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1946, the first week of the Third’s existence, until November 1948. The first two critics to feature had been specialists—Cecil McGivern, a BBC producer, and Professor Edward Andrade, an atomic scientist.<sup>88</sup> They had reviewed programmes relating to their fields of expertise but, as Goldie explained, the Third hoped to develop general principles of critical engagement in its listeners, in much the same way that the review columns of literary weeklies did:

We are very anxious, now, in this fresh point of view that we are getting from you that the basis of the criticism should be wider. What the specialist critics obviously could not be expected to bring to their criticisms is an acquaintance with the general standards of critical judgement which have been built up in other fields- such as literature, the theatre, and so on. We very much hope that you will, in your much more broadly based criticisms, make it apparent to listeners *ways in which standards of criticism can be applied to this new medium of radio*...I think that if this series is to be justified, it should build up in the listener’s mind some ideas of the principles upon which radio dramatic productions can be judged.<sup>89</sup>

Not only does Goldie ask Macaulay to offer a less specialised mode of criticism, she expects that Macaulay will develop a method for reviewing broadcasts that was suitable for the Third Programme itself. The producer hoped that Macaulay would apply the principles of reviewing that characterised print-journal review pages and find a technique that demonstrated such legitimacy on the airwaves. Her reference to broadcasting as “new” more than two decades after the BBC’s first transmission indicates that Goldie understood radio to still be inferior in the contemporary cultural

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<sup>88</sup> Goldie to Macaulay, 8 November 1946, RCONT 1, BBC WAC.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

hierarchy. As this thesis proposes, the BBC turned to Macaulay, as a well-respected woman writer, to help legitimise the medium of radio in general, and, in this case, the Third Programme in particular.

Indeed, as a member of the intellectual elite, Macaulay represented authority and cultural taste in her manner, writing, and voice. Her broadcasting style was attractive to the Third Programme's target audience. After Macaulay's first *Critic on the Air* broadcast in November 1946, Goldie wrote with feedback. Although she had "not yet had any general reaction to the broadcast", she had spoken to her husband, the actor Frank Wyndham Goldie, who had tuned in:

He listens very little to broadcast talking but he said he would always make an effort if you were the talker— and told me at length during most of the evening what a remarkable "different" personality you were over the air from the 99% other people who seem to talk. The qualities of authority, of erudition and style were the ones he continued to dwell on.<sup>90</sup>

Macaulay's reputation alone had persuaded Frank to listen to a form of radio he tended to ignore, and he had not been disappointed. Her personality had made an impression on him— in particular her eminence and ability to convey expertise. The qualities of 'authority', 'erudition' and 'style' were the very same aspects the Third itself aspired to. Thus, Macaulay vocalised the ideal of Third Programme communication in her criticism of its output.

Because the writer was so aligned to the Third Programme's intellectual ethos, the Corporation anticipated that Macaulay would endorse its efforts, particularly when it came to dramatic productions. In her commissioning letter, Goldie noted that: "I do feel that nobody has yet attempted to define what the Third Programme is up to when it is putting on the whole of 'Man and Superman' or 'Agamemnon', or 'The

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<sup>90</sup> Goldie to Macaulay, 16 November 1946, RCONT 1, BBC WAC.

Careerist”, suggesting that plays and Features were at the forefront of the producer’s mind when she approached Macaulay.<sup>91</sup> As requested, Macaulay paid particular attention to the Third’s dramatic and literary output in her reviews. However, by applying the critical standards of existing cultural forms to radio, Macaulay challenged the BBC by casting radio drama as inadequate. Even on the Third Programme, broadcast dramas were lacking in quality:

At first, it is rather difficult to think out this question of radio drama; to know, I mean, exactly what one wants of radio. Is it to be a purveyor, and of course an imperfect purveyor, of something that is more fully purveyed through other mediums, such as the stage— a defective imitation that we accept *faute de mieux*? As regards plays, it can’t well be more than this; it is so obviously better to see as well as hear; even the most ardent radio addicts must admit this.<sup>92</sup>

For Macaulay, the purely aural form of radio, if measured against the conventional standards of dramatic criticism, must be seen as inferior to live stage productions. Rather than advising her audience of the quality of the Third’s drama output, Macaulay contextualises it in the competitive cultural ecology of post-war Britain. The whole character of radiophonic experimentalism appears under-developed when compared to well-established cultural forms.

The new form of radio Features, in particular, appeared to Macaulay as “too often self-conscious, gawky, fussy, coy, lacking grace and poise”.<sup>93</sup> “In short,” she continues, “it still lacks the urbanity of traditional culture; as indeed how should it not”.<sup>94</sup> Despite critiquing radio drama for its failings, Macaulay concedes that the new medium could not be expected to meet existing critical standards when it was being developed along new lines. Experimentalism was to be scrutinised and encouraged:

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<sup>91</sup> Goldie to Macaulay, 8 November 1946, RCONT 1, BBC WAC

<sup>92</sup> “The Critic on the Air”, 14 November 1946, Radio Talks Scripts, Pre 1970, LYO-MAC-B, T306g, BBC WAC.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

“Still, there it is; this is radio, and radio has a right to develop itself and become an art on its *own* account, not merely a hampered and imperfect substitute for *other* arts”.<sup>95</sup> Macaulay makes the case to the listener that for radio to achieve excellence, it must stop imitating other forms and develop its own techniques and corresponding critical framework. Macaulay’s review of Third Programme drama became a challenge to BBC standards, rather than the corroboration the Corporation had anticipated.

In her call for radio to find new forms and themes, Macaulay’s Third Programme reviews echo Virginia Woolf’s critique of the cinema from two decades before. In her 1926 essay, “The Cinema”, published in *Nation and Athenæum*, Woolf criticised the new form of film for borrowing too extensively from other, established artforms, particularly literature, at the expense of its own development. By adapting the characters, scenes, and plots of famous novels for the screen, Woolf argues, “the results to both are disastrous”.<sup>96</sup> Adaptations do not work, she suggests, because “eye and brain are torn asunder” trying to reconcile the internal understanding of characters’ motivations that we gain from novels with the resplendent visuals of surface behaviour that cinema can provide.<sup>97</sup> Woolf asks picture-makers to harness “some residue of visual emotion which is of no use either to painter or to poet” to carve out their own artistic forms and offer the audience a new perspective on reality.<sup>98</sup> “If it ceased to be a parasite”, she asks, “how would it walk erect?”.<sup>99</sup> This is the same question that Macaulay asks of radio: if Features and drama developed along their own lines, how would they innovate and provide new avenues for human

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>96</sup> Virginia Woolf, “The Cinema”, *Nation and Athenæum*, 3 July 1926, 39:13, pp. 381- 383, p. 382.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

expression? Both Woolf and Macaulay apply existing critical standards to new artistic and communicative forms and find them, predictably, lacking. Yet rather than adjust the standards by which these new forms are judged or take sympathetic account of their infancy, the writers demand that the form itself develops along more experiential lines. As writers of well-respected works, they are invested in a cultural hierarchy that sees literature as a dominant artform. New media, such as cinema and radio, can be derided as “self-conscious” or “parasitic”, thereby maintaining the status quo.

In her demands for formal innovation on the Third Programme, Macaulay became a more vociferous critic of the BBC than the Corporation had expected. She did not excuse sub-par performances, for example. She repeated her critique of Third Programme drama in a review of the channel she was commissioned to write for the BBC's 1947 *Yearbook*, an annual publication from the Corporation that celebrated and explained developments in broadcasting. In her essay, which was redolently titled “If I Were Head of the Third Programme”, Macaulay castigated the Third's producers for the lack of high-quality drama:

...where are the contemporary dramas, where are the dramatists who write continual radio plays for the other two programmes?...Where are the intelligent radio writers, who could write intelligent radio plays— not ‘features’, and not poetical dramas, but simply straightforward prose plays, on an educated level?<sup>100</sup>

The promise that the Third would provide a new opportunity to experiment with dramatic form was not being met. Experimentation with form and new writing talent was slow. Indeed, Macaulay concluded, “nothing can compensate for the lack of good plays written specifically for radio”.<sup>101</sup> For the Third to make a worthwhile

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<sup>100</sup> Rose Macaulay, “If I Were Head of the Third Programme”, *The BBC Yearbook 1947*, (London: Hollen Street, 1947), pp. 20- 24, p. 22.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.



contribution to British culture, it needed to encourage the production of new material and new forms, in the way that the other two programmes were doing. With her emphasis on experimental form, Macaulay exhibited a highbrow, *avant-garde* taste for innovative radio.

Indeed, the writer was beginning to appreciate the formal qualities of radio drama for the complex soundscapes it could create, and her own reviews became enriched with auricular aspects, particularly onomatopoeia. A broadcast which received particularly positive comment from Macaulay was the radio adaptation of David Jones' polyvalent epic poem, *In Parenthesis* (1937). Produced by Douglas Cleverdon, starring Richard Burton and with music by Elizabeth Poston, the Feature programme went out on the Third on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1946 and traced the emotional and aural experiences of First World War troops on the Somme. Of *In Parenthesis*, Macaulay noted:

The 'effects' department...were in great form, whistling and bursting shells whined with terrific actuality, machine guns rattled, platoons tramped by, bugles sounded, birds sang, men whistled, shovels scraped, mud squelched. It was all admirable.<sup>102</sup>

The cacophony of war seeps into her reviewing style— 'rattled', 'tramped', 'whistled', 'scraped', 'squelched'— and the voices and sounds of the production are incorporated into her criticism. Asked to discuss critical values on-air, Macaulay manipulates the aural form of radio to make an engaging broadcast.

Nevertheless, Macaulay also valued the aurality of radio because it could reveal class distinctions. While she was prepared to celebrate formal innovation, she maintained her support for cultural and class distinctions which perpetuated the stratification of culture into hierarchies. *In Parenthesis*, for example, conjured Welsh

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

folklore, soldierly dialogue, and song as well as the sound of modern warfare.

Macaulay was enthused by its vocal qualities and said as much in her review:

That this poetry should run side by side with the chatter of ordinary soldiers, Welsh and Cockney, officers and men— “the pibble pebble in Pompey’s camp”— and that one should heighten and not interrupt the effect of the other, was obviously a remarkable achievement.<sup>103</sup>

The adaptation of the text into the spoken voices that intensified and highlighted each other was an effective use of the radiophonic form which she wanted to see developed. She went on:

The radio production seemed to me first-class... It elucidated by its voices more important points than those that the notes in the book had explained; for the first time it was quite clear who said which things; the ‘to and fro’ of talk took on more aliveness; the soft lilting of the Welsh voices, the homely twang of cockney, the public school of the officers, interplayed extremely well.<sup>104</sup>

Macaulay attends to the ownership and positioning of multiple voices and sounds, asserting her ear for heteroglossia. But the ideological importance of hearing these voices tangled together was not to highlight unity but to demarcate difference; Welsh, cockney, and public-school accents worked to signify class stratification on the battlefield. What the book had failed to fully construe, even in the notes, was the vocal markers of class difference that a radio drama could easily illustrate. Macaulay approved.

Questions of vocal exclusivity and the kinds of class privilege certain accents represented came to be applied to the Third Programme more generally. Macaulay, in possession of an elite accent herself, was quick to publicly defend the Third’s perceived voice of social privilege. One of the most contentious examples of the Third’s cultural elitism was the prevalence of RP accents on its airwaves. In

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<sup>103</sup> “The Critic on the Air”, 21 November 1946, T306g, p. 1, BBC WAC. The quotation is from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, iv:i.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

November 1947, Mr A.R. Hudson had written to *The Listener* complaining of the “fantastically ‘precious’ accents, incredible vowels and ludicrously donnish intonation” of many of the speakers who delivered literary talks on the service.<sup>105</sup> Hudson described himself as someone who taught “literature to adult classes” and who “[worked] hard to try to remove or at least weaken the poisonous highbrow-lowbrow concept which is very widespread and which makes honest appreciation rare and difficult”.<sup>106</sup> For Hudson, the accent of those who spoke on the Third reinstated the barriers of the cultural hierarchy that prevented more extensive cultural appreciation. Many of his students, Hudson opined, were put off the Third’s literary talks and had their kindling passion for literature extinguished by the tone in which they were addressed: “They notice”, Hudson said “all the old suspicion and even hatred of the academic creeping back”.<sup>107</sup> Not only were accents a barrier to his student’s understanding and appreciation of literature, they were a catalyst for developing increasingly partisan social relations.

In a personal capacity and with no prompting from the Corporation, Macaulay responded to Hudson’s claims in the next edition of *The Listener*. Speakers should not be forced to adopt an unnatural accent, according to Macaulay, or they will sound affected. The BBC should, therefore, avoid discriminating against any type of accent:

Surely speakers should be allowed to speak as they naturally speak. A Birmingham accent may, for all I know, ‘repel people who are getting interested in the subject’ (though I have never heard anyone complain of this); is the BBC therefore to exclude Birmingham speakers from the air? Surely tolerance of one another’s accent might be striven after; why should we all

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<sup>105</sup> A.R. Hudson, “‘Third Programme’ Voices”, *The Listener*, 27 November 1947, 38:983, p. 940, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AoBpi9>> [accessed 11 October 2017].

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

talk in the same way? Or rather, why should one accent in particular be prohibited?<sup>108</sup>

Macaulay defends the 'natural' accent of the educated and academic literary speakers of the Third, preaching tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Although some accents might put people off, the BBC should not be didactic in ascribing legitimacy to certain ways of speaking and prohibiting others. However, Macaulay's response does not address the class or privilege issues that Hudson had initially introduced and actively obfuscates Hudson's social critique. By using a Birmingham accent as a parallel for the academic tones of the literary speakers, Macaulay elides regional, class, and educational differences in a disingenuous defence of the Third Programme. She rejects the accusation that "old suspicion" and "even hatred" can be legitimately evoked through voice by misrepresenting the class hierarchy that underpins Hudson's warnings. In doing so, she challenges a perceived threat of one accent being prohibited: the highly educated, privileged accent with which she speaks.

Motivated by a fear of being silenced and, concomitantly, to conserve the exclusivity of high culture, Macaulay's public defence of elitism on the BBC is in concert with her previous advocacy for linguistic precision on-air. In her involvement in the Advisory Committee on Spoken English and throughout her radio reviews for *Time and Tide* and the BBC, the writer employed the correct use of language as a synecdoche for education, erudition, and cultural elitism. Thus, Macaulay had a long history of scrutinising BBC output in an effort to maintain an elite standard of pronunciation on the airwaves, thereby protecting the Corporation's upper-middle-class aspirations. It

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<sup>108</sup> Rose Macaulay, "Third Programme' Voices", *The Listener*, 4 December 1947, p. 981, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AoNLH2>> [accessed 11 October 2017].

is these prejudices that A.R. Hudson objects to. In a rebuttal to Macaulay in *The Listener*, Hudson points out that certain vocal aspects:

form part of the particular speech of a small social group and are cultivated in order to gain prestige within that group. They are synthetic in origin and have no place in the larger and more varied group which constitutes a radio audience.<sup>109</sup>

Those fabricated vocal aspects that suggest an elite education or membership of a 'small social group' are not suitable for the breadth and variety of the radio audience because they are prestige markers of a powerful minority from which most radio listeners are excluded. This is dangerous to a cultural democracy, he concludes, because: "They encourage people to identify appreciation of the arts with a special kind of social and educational background, and to that extent make widespread understanding more difficult than it need be".<sup>110</sup> This final objection— that the use of specific voices in the discussion of literature alienates the majority of listeners— is representative of broader concerns about elitism and snobbery in British culture in the post-war period. Not only are the cultural discussions on the Third Programme held in an elite forum, they are conducted in the rarefied tones of the Oxbridge college and Bloomsbury living room, thereby alienating the majority of the radio audience.<sup>111</sup>

Such distinctions of taste and class were what Macaulay has been campaigning for throughout her post-war radio reviewing. In late December 1947, she had the last word in the *Listener* exchange. Turning his own critique of class against him, she suggested that Hudson's argument was based on inverted class bias:

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<sup>109</sup> A.R. Hudson, "'Third Programme' Voices", *The Listener*, 11 December 1947, 38:985, p. 1021, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AoCBx9>> [accessed 11 October 2017].

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Hudson signs his second letter by indicating his affiliation with the University of Bristol, highlighting his academic legitimacy and complicating his call for the increased democratisation of the appreciation of literature because of his employment at an institution of elite learning. Ibid.

Social prejudice about accents seems a pity, whatever social group feels it, and I think Mr Hudson might well exhort his too easily discouraged students not to give way to it, but to remember that a man's a man for a' that. I do not myself like all the voices and accents I hear on the air; many seem monotonous, ungainly, or sub-genteel, but they all enlarge one's experience of human locution.<sup>112</sup>

By accusing Hudson of cultural snobbery, or 'social prejudice', Macaulay defends the status quo and the prevalence of RP on the Third. Although she argues that all voices should be heard on the radio, even the 'monotonous, ungainly, or sub-genteel', she distances herself from such social circles or vocal traits by framing their inclusion as educational; they are only worth hearing because they 'enlarge one's experience of human locution'. Macaulay is invested in a specific *sounding* BBC radio, especially on the Third Programme, because such a position comfortably includes her own voice and authorises her to speak with legitimacy from a position towards the top of the cultural hierarchy. It was this cultural authority that Macaulay felt was under threat from the working- and lower-middle-class students that Hudson taught, their too-easy discouragement a danger to elite culture and advanced literary debate on the airwaves. Consequently, she defended the elite cultural values of the Third Programme as a means of protecting her own right to speak on its airwaves.

In her defence of the Third Programme, then, Macaulay was prepared to encourage innovations in form and celebrate broadcast heteroglossia in the context of enduring cultural and class hierarchies. She was not, however, able to countenance perceived threats to the legitimacy of the cultural and social elite, whether through the reduction of RP accents on the Third or through the development of more accessible forms of broadcasting, such as Features and drama in the immediate post-war period.

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<sup>112</sup> Rose Macaulay, "'Third Programme' Voices", *The Listener*, 18 December 1947, 38:986, p. 1064, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/AoNdk5>> [accessed 11 October 2017].

Macaulay accepted the role of Third Programme radio critic, in part, because she was being asked to reinforce cultural standards by applying them to a new medium, rather than training the audience to exercise their own judgement in a new critical paradigm. In this way, Macaulay challenged the BBC by advocating for greater experiments in dramatic form at the same time as perpetuating interwar cultural hierarchies that were becoming increasingly outdated at the Corporation. She was pushing the Third Programme to become a haven for highbrow listeners in a more profound and exclusive way than the BBC had anticipated or was prepared to accommodate.

### **Third Programme Criticism on the Home Service**

In the late 1940s, the Corporation was still committed to Haley's pyramid of intellectual uplift. As such, BBC Home Service producers sought ways to introduce more highbrow content to the schedule. In the autumn of 1947, a new review programme for the Home was developed in the Talks department. *The Critics* consisted of several reviewers presenting their thoughts on a topical film, play, broadcast, book, or exhibition, followed by general discussion from the panel, chaired by a capable and knowledgeable figure. Its producer, Thomas Radley, wrote: "it is hoped that this programme may provide a body of sound criticism for the ordinary listener, presented in a livelier and less formal manner than is possible always in a straight talk".<sup>113</sup> The discussion format was essential for the increased 'liveliness' that Radley desired. The difficulty lay in creating a balance between a solid basis of criticism and an approachable, informal style that would enlighten

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<sup>113</sup> Memo, "The Critics", n.date, R51/103/1 Talks, Critics (The), File 1, 1947-50, BBC WAC.

listeners whilst also entertaining them. Listeners were no longer being talked at by critics; critics were talking amongst themselves with the audience listening-in.

By now an experienced broadcaster and having demonstrated her commitment to the radio in both her *Time and Tide* and Third Programme reviews, Rose Macaulay was a reliable choice as radio critic for the new show. She therefore featured regularly on *The Critics* between 1948 and 1952 and again, briefly, in 1955.<sup>114</sup> And, although she was now broadcasting on the Home Service, she maintained her commitment to elite cultural standards. The writer often pushed the Home Service producers she was working with to give her a more ambitious remit than they had anticipated. One example of Macaulay's expansionist efforts as Home Service reviewer was the scope of her critiques. The intended format of *The Critics* programme was for reviewers to suggest specific items for the panel to listen to, read, visit, or watch. But Macaulay wanted to use this opportunity to criticise the BBC more generally, rather than review a particular cultural product that had aired that week. As such, in February 1948, she proposed reviewing the whole of the Home Service. While a copy of the proposal or draft script is not available in the BBC Written Archives Centre, the Chief Producer of Talks, Donald Boyd wrote a detailed note to Radley, indicating the parameters of Macaulay's criticism. I reproduce it here for the insight it provides on both Macaulay's criticism and the BBC's response to it:

There are some points I think we should take up with Rose Macaulay before she presents her conclusions on the Home Service....

As I see it the Home programme has always attempted to give listeners what might be called 'a balanced diet'. It provides entertainment, amusement, information and instruction on contemporary events and tries to give the best of each kind. It is therefore not a specialised programme, unlike the other two, where the listeners can get more in quantity of serious material (on the Third) and light material on the Light.

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<sup>114</sup> See Appendix 6.



Now if the Home Service were stripped of all entertainment material it would no longer be what it has set out to be...The proportion of Home Service listeners who listen to Music Hall, for instance, in comparison with those who listen to concerts or talks, is about seven to one. In a balanced programme like the Home the tendency is, for instance, for listeners who adore "ITMA" to go on listening to the Nine O'clock News and the Nine-Fifteen Talk (Friday Forum, Questions of the Hour, and the feature "Progress Report"). I have no doubt that if "ITMA" were removed from this period the tendency would be to concentrate listening on the Light Programme and the material which Miss Macaulay values would be even less frequently heard than it is.

...Its no use presenting good things if no one's going to listen to them.<sup>115</sup>

For this senior BBC official, the Home Service's *raison d'être* was to accommodate as broad a range of tastes as possible, including entertainment and lighter programming as well as intellectual fare. Boyd conceived of the Home Service as a *generalist* service in the sense that it exposed the listener to something of everything, including 'good' quality broadcasts, in contrast to the clearly defined specialist remits of the Third and the Light. Furthermore, he is adamant that it is the entertainment programmes that draw the greatest listenership. Without such hugely popular programmes as *ITMA*, Boyd is doubtful that any of the weightier broadcasts would be listened to at all.

What is striking is that Macaulay appears to criticise the Home Service for providing too broad a range of programmes. It is implied that she wants to raise the standard of the BBC's 'middle' channel, moving the majority of entertainment to the Light Programme and providing more uplift on the Home, as she had argued for in *Time and Tide*. However, as Boyd suggests, if it adopted Macaulay's proposals, the BBC would be required to abandon the principle of Haley's pyramid and opt for more rigid demarcations between the programmes and the audience's corresponding tastes. Boyd resists the breadth of Macaulay's criticism based on the Corporation's

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<sup>115</sup> Boyd to Radley, 17 February 1948, R51/103/1, BBC WAC.

understanding of how audiences are attracted and maintained. Yet he does concede that the writer identifies a central problem for the post-war BBC: “programme planning must depend on the audience and it seems to me that the interested speculations of Miss Macaulay on entertainment really break into the heart and soul of the matter and raise the essential question of what radio is for at all”.<sup>116</sup> The question of audience taste and the BBC’s allocation of resources to meet the various strata of standards across the nation was a perennial and pressing concern for the Corporation. Macaulay seems to suggest that the purpose of radio was to maintain cultural hierarchies.

Although BBC producers mitigated the scope of Macaulay’s critique in this particular case, the writer continued to champion a more erudite form of Home Service programmes through her own, often elitist reviews. Put another way, Macaulay sought to deliver criticism worthy of the Third Programme on the airwaves of the Home throughout her *Critics* appearances. In November 1951, for example, Macaulay subjects Cecil Day Lewis’ adaptation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* to critical analysis: “Well this is a very enjoyable programme. It’s full of spirit and zest and beautifully uttered, except that the speakers speak the verses as prose, so that one would guess they were loose hexameters and I suppose that is intentional”.<sup>117</sup> Attending to the metre of the translation, Macaulay showcases her literary expertise. In *The Critics*, as she had on the Third and in *Time and Tide*, Macaulay considers accuracy of language to be a fundamental aspect of an intelligent broadcast. Day Lewis showed his literary pedigree by quoting John Dryden in his introduction, stating that “I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would have spoken if

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Macaulay, “The Critics”, 18 November 1951, “The Critics”, BBC Script Library, ROLL NO. 3/4, BBC WAC.

he had been born in England, and in this present age”.<sup>118</sup> However, Macaulay still questions the prevalence of colloquialism in this broadcast:

But Virgil doesn't really use colloquial Latin or slang. The Aeneid is written in dignified poetic diction throughout, and to keep the same spirit, it should be I think, so translated. Carious, for instance, shouldn't cry 'jump to it', when all he says in Latin is 'Take Arms at once'. And such a phrase as 'he was in a fix' is thrown in out of the translator's head, with no Latin to correspond with it... Image is translated 'snapshot' instead of picture, demons becomes half-wit instead of madman. And there are unpoetic, rather childish expressions such as 'a great big corn-heap'.<sup>119</sup>

The litany of corrections demonstrates Macaulay's expertise and perspicacity. She subjects a broadcast play to intense analytical scrutiny, of the kind only usually applied to texts. Her knowledge of Latin and the alternative translations of specific lines showcases her classical education, demonstrating her erudition and her self-proclaimed cultural authority. She participates in the cultural sphere of *The Critics* with as much academic knowledge as a privileged man, thereby protecting her status as cultural expert and commentator and purveying Third Programme literary discourse on the Home.

In the previous week's edition of *The Critics*, Macaulay had used her intellectual gravitas to critique the representation of women in another popular panel show, *Any Questions?*, a format similar to the *Brains Trust* and one still with us today.

Introduced by the chairman as “another controversial matter”, Macaulay queries how panel members of the programme responded to the questions put to them by the audience:

...all the questions mentioning women are greeted by shrieks of hysterical mirth from the audience and fractiousness from the team...[More generally],

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

the questions don't seem always understood by the team, usually highly intelligent people, who often answer as if to some other questions.<sup>120</sup>

Macaulay calls out foolishness on-air with regards to the mention of women and also criticises muddled thinking. As such, her *Critics* review is almost identical to the criticisms she issued in *Time and Tide* about the *Brains Trust* and on *The Critic on the Air* about the Third's drama programming. In other words, Macaulay takes little account of her changed audience— that of the Home Service— and continues to perform her cultural criticism at the same intellectual level, and on the same topics, as before.

Furthermore, the writer echoes the class prejudices that had shaped her previous reviews, focussing particularly on the educational attainment of the panel of intellectuals that made up *Any Questions?*:

Only now and then do the team give an exact answer. It is as if they hadn't mostly had much training in logic and sticking to the point; they seemed to listen vaguely to the questions, which touch something off in them and get them rambling along some favourite side-track of their own. Have those well-informed people got rather blurred minds which can't deal in precise meanings, or don't they try?<sup>121</sup>

Even in the new context of *The Critics*, Macaulay attends to the responsibility of broadcasters to model clear-thinking, precision, and rationality. This is because she still subscribes to the dogma that the BBC ought to provide only the very highest standards of broadcast thought, with linguistic precision and high-quality discussion as key tenets of broadcasting policy.

Macaulay does not champion the idea of the audience as citizens on a path to state-educated, liberal democracy, a narrative that characterised the welfare state developments of the time. Instead, her critique of BBC programming was subsumed

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<sup>120</sup> Macaulay, "The Critics", 11 November 1951, BBC Script Library, p. 3/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

to the idea of upholding the cultural hierarchies that had existed between the wars and encouraging the national broadcaster to cater to the tastes of an elite minority like her. Although her reputation as a writer from the interwar period qualified her for prominence on the BBC, her adherence to conceptions of elite culture that were being contested in the post-war period rendered her a somewhat paradoxical choice. The reviewer and critic Frank Swinnerton wrote of Macaulay: "Though never a social snob, she could not resist the conviction that a sharp line must be drawn between the cultured and the uncultured".<sup>122</sup> By drawing a sharp line between her idea of cultured and uncultured at the BBC, Macaulay demonstrated that she was, in fact, more of a snob than the Corporation was in the post-war years. Indeed, the class connotations that defined 'good culture' for Macaulay, meant that she was also a social snob, regardless of Swinnerton's denial. Macaulay's support for cultural stratification across the BBC amounted to a perpetuation of class divisions.

### **"Happy Choice": The Verdict on Stratification**

Ultimately, Macaulay's fears for British culture being rendered destitute in the immediate post-war period were unjustified. The stratification of broadcasting aided the furtherance of a cultural hegemony in which Macaulay and her female peers could still participate. A decade after its launch, Macaulay was once again called to defend the Third. What she did not know was that, this time, it was from an internal threat. By 1956, the introduction of commercial television had accelerated the decline in radio listening that had been happening since the war.<sup>123</sup> Senior management within the BBC sought to reorganise radio broadcasting to compete in

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<sup>122</sup> Frank Swinnerton, "Rose Macaulay", *The Kenyon Review*, 29:5, (1967), pp. 591-608, p. 593.

<sup>123</sup> Carpenter, p. 166.

the new cultural context. One way of aligning sound output with broader cultural trends was reducing the emphasis on highbrow broadcasting. In an unsigned memo from October 1956, a senior member of BBC staff, probably Lesley Wellington, the Director of Sound Broadcasting, wrote:

I believe (roughly) there was general growing agreement in [the] 19<sup>th</sup> century that 'the people' should have 'the best' - working-class leaders joined with Liberal aristocrats in clamouring for this. What was missing was any working-class experience (on a mass scale) of 'the best'. Since this was experienced through the BBC it became clear (around 1950) that 'the people' didn't desire 'the best' at all. So, much of the Reithian/Haleian preconceptions are now proved to be false assumptions.<sup>124</sup>

Senior management were beginning to recognise that the ideals on which the BBC was founded had been formulated without any consultation or real consideration of the tastes, desires, and interests of those not belonging to the social elite, most significantly the working-class. As the BBC was now in competition with commercial broadcasters for audience figures, the Corporation underwent a radical shift in emphasis that reformulated 'the best' from an Arnoldian/Reithian/Haleian conception of elite culture to a democratic notion of culture that was voted for through the attention and loyalty of the listeners.

Regardless of changes occurring within the BBC, Macaulay was still invested in the maintenance of uplift via stratification at the Corporation. About to turn 75 and at the very apex of her career, the writer still saw cultural taste as divided along class lines. In the same month as the above BBC memo was written, Macaulay reviewed an anniversary collection of Third Programme broadcasts for *The Listener*. The article, titled "Happy Choice", was a reflection on the success of the channel over the previous decade. Throughout the piece, Macaulay plays with definitions of the high, middle, and lowbrow, demonstrating how class hierarchies had persisted into the

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<sup>124</sup> Qtd in Carpenter, p. 167.

1950s. Moreover, the writer's reassertion of class stereotypes and derisive language highlights the extent to which Macaulay's worldview was predicated on class differences. The writer frames her review in terms of how Third Programme content might fare on other BBC channels:

Reading through this eminently readable selection, one wonders how its contributions would have gone down on the other two programmes. Some might, I suppose, have had a rough passage on the Light. I believe it is a fact that the lower the brow the more truculent the rejection of unwanted fare. I do not know how many angry letters the Third gets; but its listeners are more likely, if they dislike a programme, to switch off and read a good book or put on a good record. If Light Programme listeners were subjected to the Third, what slings and arrows would hurtle, by post and telephone, to Portland Place!<sup>125</sup>

The criteria Macaulay uses to critique this selection of programmes rests on the assumption that the British public is stratified into, as Collier describes, "potentially overlapping but not entirely compatible" viewpoints.<sup>126</sup> The incompatibility of some publics is demonstrated by the truculence of the lowbrow, Light listeners, who would complain vehemently about content they do not enjoy. By contrast, in Macaulay's conception, the elite listener exercises civilised restraint if a broadcast does not interest them, turning to other forms of cultural edification. Although the highbrows may not clamour, Macaulay seems to suggest, their good behaviour deserves recognition from the national broadcaster.

The class snobbery of the writer is in evidence throughout the article. She cleaves violence and vulgar behaviour to "the masses" and cites the BBC's Third Programme as a civilised haven, one that rejects the principles of fast entertainment:

Fear of these intimidating armed tribes caused, as Sir Harold Nicolson once pointed out, the BBC to be over-conciliatory, to coat its pills with sugar. The

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<sup>125</sup> Rose Macaulay, "'Happy Choice', 'A Ten Years' Anthology. Edited by John Morris. Nonesuch. 21s'", *The Listener*, 4 October 1956, 56:1436, p.523, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9ybKd8>> [accessed 9 May 2019].

<sup>126</sup> Collier, p. 154.

Third resolved never to do this. It should, the Director-General decided, arouse, not muffle, controversy, it should give people the best from all over the world, it should be difficult, it should even sometimes be dull, it should not keep to time.<sup>127</sup>

Macaulay reduces the listeners of Light and Home to an “armed tribe”, their tastes dismissed as vulgar in an intellectual echo of Matthew Arnold’s “philistinism”.

Macaulay agrees with the BBC Governor and her friend, Harold Nicolson, that the Corporation treats this group with too much deference, ‘sugar-coating’ the pill of highbrow culture through accessible and uncontroversial programming on the lower two levels of Haley’s pyramid. Difficulty and occasionally dullness accompany the provision of elite culture on the Third, figured here as “the best from all over the world”. Haley refigured the Reithian ‘Best’ to be explicitly elitist.

The global scope of Macaulay’s definition of ‘good’ culture gestures to her own intellectual knowledge and educational capital. She praises E.M. Forster speaking about Wagner at the Beyreuth Festival, Thomas Mann on Chekov, and Gilbert Harding on Baroness Bourdberg.<sup>128</sup> She knows who these figures are and why they are significant in the European cultural canon. Her inclusion of them suggests that she believes the reader of the article will know too. Here, Macaulay applauds the BBC for its inclusion of a range of international elite art and literature, suggesting her support for the highbrow culture of continental Europe. Echoing the caution she issued in *Time and Tide* about Britain’s wartime national myth being both “dull” and “inaccurate”, a decade later Macaulay still advocated for an informed understanding of the culture of other European countries.

Yet, at points in the article, Macaulay works to disassociate herself from her own erudition, casting herself as a lowbrow in humorous asides that make for a jarring

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<sup>127</sup> Macaulay, “Happy Choice”, p. 523.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.



reading experience. Having acknowledged that Light listeners might enjoy Forster's talk on Wagner or Max Beerbohm's on Yeats, Macaulay goes on:

Perhaps these are about all which would pass us low-brow listeners without cat-calls and recriminations and throwing in of licences. For many of them are about people of whom we have not heard. Henry Reed's beautiful poem about Antigone we scarcely understand, for we do not know who this Antigone may have been, and it is not clear from the poem what occurred to her...<sup>129</sup>

Macaulay parodically imitates a lowbrow listener, denying all knowledge of the context and significance of the story of Antigone. Macaulay is secure enough in the success of the Third to imitate the kinds of critical views that were a threat to it in its early days and which she had sought to counteract in her *Time and Tide*, Third Programme, and BBC reviews. However, even as Macaulay parodies an imagined lowbrow listener in her *Listener* article, she hints at the very threat that faced the Third Programme unbeknownst to her at the time: the "throwing in of licences". As the cultural landscape of post-war Britain shifted and the BBC adapted to competition, so the threat of listeners refusing to renew their radio licences became increasingly real.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

# 4

## ***Truth and Fiction: Elizabeth Bowen, The Reluctant Educationalist***

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1948, Elizabeth Bowen participated in a broadcast discussion on the Third Programme with two contemporary novelists and friends of hers, V.S. Pritchett and Graham Greene. The talk was titled *The Artist in Society* and was based on a series of letters the writers had exchanged on the same subject, later to be published by the *Partisan Review* and in booklet form as *Why Do I Write?* (1948). In this exchange, Bowen expressed concern about the increasing pressure on the artist from an educated and interested audience:

Obviously intelligent people are on the increase: education, I suppose. This sounds supercilious: I do not feel supercilious, but I feel slightly frightened – the intelligent people seem to be closing in on the artist like the rats on the selfish bishop who hoarded corn in the famine time. We all know what happened to the bishop; they picked his bones white. The rats were in the right; at any rate they were the instruments of vengeance. The bishop was in the wrong; he had been unsocial. But really nobody could call – and as far as I know nobody does call – you or me Bishop Hattos: we don't hoard. Whatever comes in goes out again... So I really must get rid of that original rat nightmare, and the idea of that closing-in circle of thousands of avid glittering eyes.<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1940s, Elizabeth Bowen recognised the consequences of academic training for the growing numbers of the reading public and felt “slightly frightened” at the demands that readers might make. As Lorna Wilkinson contends, the increasing prevalence of education meant that, for Bowen, the “critical gaze” of the academic

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V.S. Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?*, (London: Percival Marshall, 1948), p. 21.

environment was “encroaching upon the writer’s creative store”.<sup>2</sup> The analogy that increasingly educated readers were surrounding writers like rats foregrounds a fear of class warfare in a society in transition. Bowen’s recognised the historically unfair distribution of literary culture– the socially elite’s exclusive access to literature– and the potential for the new order of ‘intelligent people’ to descend on those waning beneficiaries, picking their bones white. As a member of the social elite herself, Bowen was concerned that she might be accused of ‘hoarding’ the riches of creative inspiration that were to be turned over to the people in the post-war democratisation of culture. While she is uncomfortable about the shifts in social relations brought about by increased education or ‘academisation’, Bowen acknowledged that she must not seem to be hoarding– “whatever comes in goes out again”.

In the years following the Second World War, Bowen was a prominent public figure. She gave lecture tours in Europe and America, delivered short adult education courses at colleges in Britain, and wrote reviews for popular periodicals such as *The Tatler* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. As her biographer, Victoria Glendinning notes, the post-war years saw Bowen “widely recognised as an established and major author”, and she was made a Companion of the British Empire in 1948.<sup>3</sup> During this period, Bowen became increasingly involved with various public duties, including sitting on the Capital Punishment Commission and overseeing the Kent Education Committee’s summer school for English teachers between 1948 and 1950.

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<sup>2</sup> Lorna Wilkinson, “‘A Blur of Potentialities’: The Figure of the Trickster in the Works of Elizabeth Bowen, Elizabeth Taylor, Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark”, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Exeter, 2017), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 170.

Alongside such work, Bowen was broadcasting frequently on the BBC.<sup>4</sup> In short, she was participating as an artist in shaping her society.

This chapter argues that Bowen's prolonged interaction with the BBC in the mid-1950s occurred at a time when the Corporation re-shaped its understanding of and emphasis on its role in education. Debates about the value of literature precipitated a contest for the accepted model of literary understanding at the BBC between the fading generation of eminent, modernist writers such as E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot, and Bowen herself, and the increasingly academic study of 'University English' that the BBC had begun to incorporate into its educative mission. Such tensions were manifested in Bowen's reluctant engagement with the discourse of educational English for the BBC's Further Education series, *Truth and Fiction*, in 1956. While the BBC attempted to construct Bowen as an expert critic, the writer rejected or mitigated claims to scholarly insight and endeavoured to position herself on the airwaves as a novelist. By delineating this conflict, this chapter contributes to my overall argument that the BBC sought to use women writers to bolster its authority, which by mid-century consisted of an increasing focus on professional expertise and educational provision in broadcasts about literature.

Moreover, Bowen's ambiguous response to the BBC's proposals suggests that the motivations of women writers and the Corporation were diverging at this point. By 1956 the BBC was an established cultural institution, one which no longer required women writers to imbue it with cultural authority to the extent that it had in previous decades. Elizabeth Bowen's interaction with the Further Education department thus

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<sup>4</sup> Many of the scripts have been collated in Hepburn, *Listening-In*. See also Appendix 6 for a list of Bowen's broadcasts.

marks the limit of the BBC's need for women writers as it established itself in the British cultural landscape of the post-war period.

The context in which the mid-century Corporation operated was shaped by an educational revolution in Britain following the 1944 Butler Education Act. An uptake in Further Education courses and distance learning colleges was seen as evidence of an increased interest in education amongst the British population. The consequence for the BBC was heightened pressure to provide stimulating and accessible educational programmes for a broad audience of listeners.<sup>5</sup> Mid-century literary conversations on BBC radio became enmeshed in the precisely regulated field of adult education.<sup>6</sup> As the case of Bowen suggests, the BBC was on the cusp of a new literary paradigm, one that no longer made use of the kind of women writers that this thesis documents.

For writers whose careers straddled the inter- and post-war periods, ideological choices had to be made about the relationship of literature to education. In response to the increasingly 'academic' instruction in literary studies that was being ushered in by educational institutions, Bowen supported a personal, refined approach to literary texts, one that was shaped by a commitment to the imagination of both writer and reader. In this, she rejected the idea that literary understanding could be taught by rote. Bowen's own schooling undoubtedly contributed to her views on the possibility

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<sup>5</sup> See J.P. Devlin, *From Analogue to Digital Radio: Competition and Cooperation in the UK Radio Industry*, (London: Macmillan, 2018), pp. 55-61.

<sup>6</sup> Adult Education had always been a key facet of the BBC's educational mission. In the 1920s, Charles Siepmann had overseen the Adult Education department, a subsection of Talks, before becoming the Director of Talks in 1932. Before the war, the Adult Education emphasis was on group listening, where learners met to listen to an educational programme together and participate in guided discussion afterwards. During the war, the focus became the educational needs of the men and women in the Forces. When Forces Educational Broadcasts ended in 1952, the Further Education department had developed a new approach to educational programming. See Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, iv: Sound and Vision*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 734-743.

of learning in a rigorous but unconventional atmosphere. Between the ages of 15 and 18, Bowen had attended the progressive girl's school Downe House in Kent, which encouraged its students to think for themselves. The impact of Downe's educational practice on Bowen's pedagogical approach will be outlined in more detail below.

For now, it is important to note that the Assistant Director of the BBC's Further Education department, Jean Rowntree, was also connected to Downe House. She had taught current affairs and history at the "enlightened" school during the war, before taking up a position at the BBC.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Bowen and the BBC producer both had experience of an imaginative form of education and this shared connection may have been one factor that persuaded Bowen to work with the Further Education department in the mid-fifties. This case study therefore explores how the social networks of women producers and writers underpinned moments of innovation and collaboration between broadcaster and cultural worker in the post-war literary context. Education was in the ascendancy, but personal connections still yielded access to the microphone.

This chapter assesses, first, Bowen's changing attitude to the value of education in terms of literary appreciation and social class across the 1940s and 1950s, the period of her most consistent engagement with the Corporation. I then outline when and how Bowen explicitly rejected the BBC's conception of her as an expert critic in the late 1940s, suggesting that she saw the increasing academisation of literature as reductive and damaging to the creative process. However, Bowen began to demonstrate her critical acumen in conversation with fellow writers as the 1950s

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<sup>7</sup> "Record of Interview at Bedford College with Miss Jean W. Rowntree on the subject of an appointment in the BBC", 21 May 1941, Jean Rowntree Left Staff File, L1/1,269/1, BBC WAC.

progressed, introducing some contradictions to her position on institutional education. Her strategic repositioning may have been motivated by financial concerns and, in part, reveals why she accepted an educational commission from the Further Education department in 1956. I will analyse the content of the resulting *Truth and Fiction* programme alongside the conversations Bowen had with BBC producers to suggest that Bowen advocated an imaginative mode of reading while speaking in support of democratised, “academic” education. The contradictions of such a broadcast were met with ambiguity from the audience. As such, Bowen’s Further Education talks can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between interwar literary values and mid-century educational discourse that was not entirely effective.

### **“The Democratic Smell of a Dublin Bus”: Elizabeth Bowen’s Post-War Politics**

Elizabeth Bowen has been read variously as a feminist and a feminist sceptic, a gothic modernist, a realist, and an Anglo-Irish writer.<sup>8</sup> Born into an Anglo-Irish family in possession of a Big House in County Cork, Bowen spent her childhood between Dublin and her ancestral home, Bowen’s Court, before moving, aged seven, to the Kent countryside with her mother to allow her father to recover from a mental breakdown. She thus experienced a mitigated form of privilege— at once the inheritor of aristocratic heritage, she also occupied a transient, outsider position in relation to

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<sup>8</sup> For her feminism, see Phyllis Lassner, *Elizabeth Bowen*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990). For gothic modernism, see Bloom, *The Wireless Past*, for a psychoanalytical reading of Bowen see Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). For explorations of trauma see Jessica Gildersleeve, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Writing of Trauma*, (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014). For discussions of Irishness, see Eibhear Walshe, *Elizabeth Bowen: Irish Writers in Their Time*, ed. (Dublin, Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2009). Concerns about realism and materiality are discussed by Ellmann, and Gavin Keulks, “Elizabeth Bowen”, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of British Literature*, i, ed. by David Scott Kastan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 255-259 while Rennee Hoogland argues against Bowen’s realism in *Elizabeth Bowen: A Reputation in Writing*, (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

the British social elite. Thus Bowen's political loyalties were complex. While steeped in class consciousness, Bowen was adaptable. Matt Eatough identifies Bowen's account of her Anglo-Irish home, *Bowen's Court* (1942), as a dual history— on the one hand the gothic narrative of the decline of the aristocratic Anglo-Irish, on the other the transformation of the Anglo-Irish into “a professional class: isolated, individualistic, and committed to impersonal institutions”.<sup>9</sup> Through her links to a ‘professional class’, Bowen was amenable to the developing institutions of mass communications that came to dominate British culture in the twentieth century, of which the BBC was a prominent example. She was also attuned to the resonances of new technologies. Jane Hu writes: “Technology not only rewired Bowen's writing, but also the very ways she spoke about writing”.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, Bowen explored such topics as professionalism and writing on the radio, re-wiring her sense of self as a professional writer on and via the airwaves.

Such renegotiation was a result of the seismic changes taking place in Britain at mid-century. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle attend to the way Bowen's work is permeated with “dissolutions at the level of personal identity, patriarchy, social conventions and the language itself”.<sup>11</sup> Throughout her wartime short stories and later novels, such dissolutions amount to a disintegration of cultured Western society. Alan Sinfield sees Bowen as epitomizing the style and sentiment of the privileged inter-war writer challenged by the social onslaught of war. For Sinfield, Bowen's wartime writing “exemplifies the kind of delicately nuanced relations that

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<sup>9</sup> Matt Eatough, “*Bowen's Court* and the Anglo-Irish World-System”, *Modern Language Quarterly*, (2012), 72:1, pp. 69-94, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Hu, “Interception as Mediation in *A World of Love*”, *Textual Practice*, 27:7, (2013), pp. 1197-1215, p. 1201.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Bennett and Nicolas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives*, (London: Macmillan, New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), p. XIX.



Bowen and her friends valued and associated with literature".<sup>12</sup> It was these values that were eroded first by conflict and then by the introduction of the welfare state.

Sinfield continues:

The panic of literary intellectuals in the face of the postwar state is to be explained substantially by their assumption (deriving from the war experience in Britain...) that the working classes were about to take over. Henry in 'Sunday Afternoon' registers 'the democratic smell of the Dublin bus' (Demon, 18). The bargain with the people proposed in welfare-capitalism, designed though it was, in great part to rescue the prevailing class structure, seemed to undermine both the idea and the economic basis of the arts.<sup>13</sup>

Sinfield uses Bowen's dismissive reference to the smell of a Dublin bus as a metaphor for the uneasiness that literary intellectuals felt about the changed social relations of Britain in the post-war period. Such apprehension was grounded in the expectation of class warfare and the destruction of refined intellect and creative pursuits, resulting from a growing prevalence of working-class taste and policies that supported it.

The welfare state seemed imaginatively stultifying to Bowen. Having lived through the atmosphere of "overcharged subconsciousnesses" that permeated London at war, Bowen was suspicious of the seemingly clinical plans for cultural reconstruction.<sup>14</sup> Writing in a 1948 article titled "The Forgotten Art of Living", Bowen contends that government intervention in leisure breeds contempt and, eventually, fear:

Indeed, how many sneers at "planning" arise from mistrust of what should be, intrinsically, its good effects? Should catastrophe not again submerge us, we are due, in a reckoned number of years, each to be dealt out his or her accredited slab of leisure, leisure vested in safety... For hours of a day, not impossibly for days of a week, a benevolent State will require of us only that

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<sup>12</sup> Sinfield, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> Sinfield, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "The Demon Lover", *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Hermione Lee, (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 95-97, p. 95.

we should be ourselves. Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . what were desiderata become perils.<sup>15</sup>

Bowen distrusts the extensive provision of state-supported culture, the utilitarian 'slab of leisure' that requires citizens to participate in newly planned cultural activities for personal development. She finds the sterility of the proposition distasteful, rejecting the organised nature of post-war welfare provision in the arts and gesturing towards the 'perils' such culture might entail. Bowen is clear that class privilege has, to some extent, supported the art of living that war had begun to erase: "One point it would be dishonest not to admit: this gift for living went with gentle birth, or at least gentle education".<sup>16</sup> Here, the writer acknowledges that a certain kind of refined education facilitated the art of living that the democratic planners would try to undermine. This education was of the suggestive, intimate, and creative variety that was provided at elite educational institutions such as Bowen's own school, Downe House.

In descriptions of her schooling, Bowen was often effusive about the merits of the unconventional education she received. Called upon to provide the foreword to a book of recollections by former students, Bowen wrote the following of the education spearheaded by Downe's headmistress, Olive Willis:

Of the different subjects we studied at different hours, each seemed to have bearing upon the others: learning was composite...It was incisive teaching. It was also an invitation to perception. Beyond that, it begat the wish that, having perceived, one should convey.<sup>17</sup>

The 'composite' nature of lessons at Downe House instilled the importance of perception in its students, figured here as a profound understanding. Having come to

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "The Forgotten Art of Living", *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 391-396, p. 392.

<sup>16</sup> "Art of Living", p. 394.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "Foreword to Olive Willis and Downe House", *People, Places, Things*, pp. 121-125, p. 123.

a position of comprehension, students were encouraged to convey their knowledge through conversation and writing, developing their means of personal expression. At Downe House, Victoria Glendinning notes, “conversation was highly valued”.<sup>18</sup>

Although intellectual rigour was maintained through ‘incisive teaching’, there is a sense that a rigidly academic syllabus was not pursued. Indeed, Bowen was often free to direct her own learning, recollecting in “The Mulberry Tree”, that she “spent an inordinate amount of time over the preparation for some lessons” but that the rest of her time “went by in reading poetry or the Bible or looking up more facts of life in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*”.<sup>19</sup> Bowen recalls her school education as almost auto-didactic, relying on a few pillars of British culture (poetry; the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) and her own tastes to develop her sense of the world. Of the formal teaching, Bowen notes: “it fulfilled in its own way what by Shelley’s definition is a function of poetry: to cause us ‘to imagine that which we know’”.<sup>20</sup> For Bowen, education, is, or should be, an imaginative leap, a creative interaction with the world that is almost poetic.

However, in mid-century Britain, imaginative forms of education were being increasingly replaced by an emphasis on academic rigour in the discipline of English studies, a trend of which Bowen disapproved. Developed in Cambridge in the late 1920s and gradually adopted across secondary and tertiary English educational provision, by the mid-1950s practical criticism was the dominant mode of teaching literature in Britain.<sup>21</sup> Practical criticism, as Terry Eagleton observes, “stressed the centrality of rigorous critical analysis, a disciplined attention to the ‘words on the

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<sup>18</sup> Glendinning, *Bowen*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Bowen, “The Mulberry Tree”, *The Mulberry Tree*, pp. 13-21, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> “Foreword to Olive Wills”, p. 123-4.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Knights, “Intelligence and Interrogation: The Identity of the English Student”, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 4:1, (2005), pp. 33-52, p. 41.

page”.<sup>22</sup> Insightful analysis of literary texts became something to be worked at, rather than something that was emanant in the process of reading. Thus, “[T]he institutionalization of English studies within the universities,” writes Melba Cuddy-Keane, “augured an increasing gap between professional study and the general reading public”.<sup>23</sup> Further, Francis Mulhern suggests that academic literary criticism was “a deliberate repudiation of the amateurism of *belles-lettres*, and thus a symbol of the intellectual professionalism to which the rising generation aspired”.<sup>24</sup> In the context of “growing specialization and increasingly objective methodology in academic English studies”, British literary discourse providers such as the BBC were under pressure to conform to a more regimented analysis of literature.<sup>25</sup> Bowen herself did not attend university and was therefore not trained in such methods. For Bowen, Lorna Wilkinson argues, “the cerebral critic or scholar, seems to have posed a threat to the instinctive form of understanding and emotion involved in the creation of art”.<sup>26</sup> Too much emphasis on sterile intelligence, without the capacity to ‘imagine that which we know’ led, in Bowen’s view, to an impoverishment of the creative artist and the citizen.

Moreover, Wilkinson suggests that Bowen saw the “clash” between art and academia in gendered terms. Bowen’s concern that “the female consciousness [was] potentially being smothered in a society dominated by masculine discourse” is evocative of the writer’s fear that academic English studies repudiated female-dominated reading methods.<sup>27</sup> Such trends were apparent across Europe and

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<sup>22</sup> Eagleton, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Mulhern, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual*, p. 22. See also Matthews, “The Responsibilities of Dissent”, pp. 49-66, and Clay, *Time and Tide*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup> Wilkinson, p. 86.

Wilkinson attends to Bowen's account of her travels in post-war Germany, recounted in "Without Coffee, Cigarettes, or Feeling" and published in *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1955. In this article, Bowen recognises the pressure placed on young students in the German educational system:

There is no soft option, no easy way. The German university differs from what would otherwise be its counterpart in America and Britain in that it is not to be regarded as a social-cultural preparation for general life: it is a factory for efficiency, an intellectual-professional forcing house. No one goes there who is not thought likely to stay the course in an out-and-out cerebral career.<sup>28</sup>

Evoking the language of welfare-capitalism, the essay notes that the 'factory' and 'forcing-house' are tailored to 'cerebral' ends. The sterility of the academic environment has weighty consequences, especially for female students: "And this seemed to me to be bearing hard, in particular, upon the young women. For a woman in her young days, life should be opening up, not narrowing down".<sup>29</sup> The imaginative freedom Bowen had herself received in her schooldays— her impulsive consultation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*— represents an 'opening' of imaginative and intellectual faculties, rather than a reduced focus on measurable outcomes or careers. In her view, the pressure to 'stay the course' of academic education is oppressive for Germany's young women.

Even the methods of teaching are prohibitive of an imaginative and conversational mode of intellectual curiosity: "University classes, for instance, take the form of lectures; classroom discussions are almost unknown – thus, intellectual initiative, a querying attitude or individual thought, though not forbidden, cannot be stimulated".<sup>30</sup> Under pressure to learn much, and quickly, German students forego the opportunity to discuss or debate, impeding their capacity for dialogue and for forming individual

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<sup>28</sup> Bowen, "Without Coffee, Cigarettes or Feeling", *People, Places, Things*, pp. 92-99, p. 95.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96-7.

opinions. “One longs”, Bowen concludes, “to give these young people the gift of leisure, time to reflect and idle, space within which what is lyrical in their temperaments may expand”.<sup>31</sup> Bowen longed, in short, to give the students of reconstruction Germany the class privilege she had enjoyed in her Edwardian youth.

## **Elizabeth Bowen in Dialogue at the BBC**

As Bowen’s broadcasting career developed at mid-century, she engaged in a number of dialogic broadcasts with other writers. In these discursive programmes, she undermined the BBC’s endeavours to cast her as an expert on literature while developing further the discursive practices Vita Sackville-West and Una Marson had employed across their literary broadcasts. This section will consider a number of discussion programmes Bowen participated in in the late 1940s and early 1950s to demonstrate the ways in which she problematised concepts of expertise at mid-century and championed the principles of an imaginative education for a wide audience.

As previously mentioned, Bowen broadcast with Graham Greene and V.S. Pritchett in July 1948 in a programme titled, *The Artist in Society*. Much like Sackville-West’s 1929 “Marriage” discussion with Harold Nicolson, this broadcast was a staged dialogue between prominent writers and public intellectuals. In his preface to the printed edition, *Why Do I Write?*, Pritchett highlights the conversational nature of the exchange: “Above all we wanted to avoid the sterility of debate, the banalities of taking sides: what we wanted to produce was conversation”.<sup>32</sup> The talk itself is both an explanation of these writers’ perspectives of their relation to society and a

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> V.S. Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?*, (London: Percival Marshall, 1948), p. 10.

demonstration of their “recalcitrance” at being asked to unpack or justify their occupation to others.<sup>33</sup> As Bowen admits, she “feel[s] irked and uneasy when asked about the nature of my (as a writer) relation to society, this is because I am being asked about the nature of something that does not, as far as / know, exist”.<sup>34</sup> It should be the reader who ascertains a writer’s relation to society, because their reading of a text anchors the author to the outside world: “My books *are* my relation to society...It seems to me that it is the other people, the readers, who should know”.<sup>35</sup> Rather than subject writers to increasing scrutiny, readers should look to themselves for interpretation and insight.

Pursuing her commitment to the legitimacy of readers and their interpretations of texts, Bowen worked to construct a non-expert authorial persona on the BBC’s airwaves. This was despite the Corporation’s efforts to cast her as a professional literary critic. In an interview entitled “How I Write: A Discussion with Glyn Jones”, recorded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1950 and broadcast on the Welsh Regional Service a week later, Bowen responds to questions by emphasising her personal experience of writing and by downplaying her critical expertise. When asked about how she edits a novel, for example, Bowen replies:

People who don’t know about writing imagine that one revises for the sake of adding a final gloss. I revise like one prunes—snipping away dead wood...What I mean by ‘dead wood’ is anything too cerebral, too confused—anything which fails to convey sensation. I make particular war on analysis.<sup>36</sup>

Using the metaphor of pruning, Bowen explains that her artistic process is in direct contrast to notions of analysis. The verb ‘snipping’ positions Bowen’s skill as a

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<sup>33</sup> Pritchett, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Bowen, p. 23. Emphasis in original.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, “How I Write: A Discussion with Glyn Jones”, *Listening-In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 267-273, p. 269.

novelist in an everyday context of care and craft, disowning notions of expertise or academic rigor.

Even when Bowen describes how she uses her critical faculties when editing her work, she depicts herself as equal to the average reader:

While I write I'm reader-conscious- which I suppose is the same as being audience-conscious. I don't quite know who my reader is: simply "X", I suppose. "X" is several degrees more critically intelligent than myself, and a quick jiber at anything likely to stand out as "a fine phrase".<sup>37</sup>

Bowen reveals how she is conscious of the reader's powers of intellectual perception and works to satisfy this external arbiter when she writes. In casting the art of writing as a quotidian craft and the abstract "X" of the reader as the anonymous judge of quality, Bowen works to dispel the myth of the genius writer, touched by inspiration and removed from their audience. As a writer, Bowen knows her audience will not accept a 'fine phrase' and, by removing them in her editing process, she grounds her writing in the reality of her audience. Further, by discussing such methods on the airwaves of the BBC, Bowen's humbleness is in evidence in a prominent cultural sphere.

Indeed, Bowen was also aware that she lacked an advanced literary education. Towards the end of the interview, Jones asks: "Would you regard your own particular upbringing and education as favourable to you as a writer?".<sup>38</sup> Bowen replies by noting that the "[t]eaching of literature at my school was good! It made me style-conscious".<sup>39</sup> The imaginative teaching at Downe House facilitated an aspect of Bowen's craft: style. She concedes, however, that she did not attend university, a lack of education that she "semi-consciously tried to repair" through "extensive

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 273.



reading” as a young adult.<sup>40</sup> Bowen sets herself up in contrast to the prevailing academisation of literature in the middle of the twentieth century, citing her autodidacticism and self-directed learning as points of departure from institutional education.

Finally, despite, by the late 1940s, having published reviews for several decades, Bowen is explicit about her almost amateurish relationship to literary criticism. Upon being asked whether she enjoys the act of writing, she says:

I enjoy writing novels and stories- though there are days of impotence and nightmare. Criticism I find an undue strain, which I resent- I feel I am doing what's *not* my business; and fundamentally I doubt my right to pronounce judgement.<sup>41</sup>

In dialogue with another writer, Bowen deprecates her critical expertise and expresses the ‘strain’ that critical analysis poses to her. Her self-conception as a creative writer of fiction is challenged when she engages in literary criticism and she positions herself as someone without the ‘right to pronounce judgement’. Unlike Macaulay in Chapter 3, Bowen is hesitant to attribute expertise to her criticism.

Such a rejection of expertise presented a challenge for BBC producers who sought to cast Bowen in an expert role, particularly on the Third Programme. In October 1949, six months before Bowen’s interview with Glynn Jones, P.H. Newby, the novelist and Talks producer, wrote to invite Bowen to speak on the Third:

What I have in mind is a talk on the imaginative fiction that has appeared since the end of the war, just what are these writers trying to do, and so on... There is no one more interesting on this subject than yourself, and I do so hope the idea will appeal to you.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>42</sup> P.H. Newby, Talks department to Elizabeth Bowen, 4 October 1949, RCONT 1, Talks, Bowen, Elizabeth, File I, 1941-62, BBC WAC.

Newby considers Bowen well-placed to pronounce judgement on imaginative fiction since 1945, recognising her position as a leading writer of the period who should be an incisive critic. Bowen politely declines the offer, ostensibly because of her busy schedule, and challenges the premise on which she had been approached: “I would really rather not talk about the novel. I don't consider myself a critic- I'm only a reviewer, not always a willing one, and all my ideas are ad hoc”.<sup>43</sup> Bowen resists being labelled a critic. She is unwilling to talk about the novel more broadly and claims that her ideas are improvised therefore rendering them somehow unsuitable for an elite audience who would expect erudition. Her claim to be ‘only a reviewer’, rather than a critic, suggests that Bowen assigns greater analytical or possibly academic credentials to critical work, whereas reviewing can be part of the imaginative writer’s remit. Newby’s effort to utilise Bowen as an expert speaker on contemporary literature alienates the writer from the Third Programme.

In June 1950, following the Glyn Jones interview, Newby reformulated his approach to the novelist. The producer had seen the script of the Welsh Service broadcast and noted: “it is interesting to see that she is prepared to be so talkative about herself. What we should aim at for Third Programme purposes, I feel, is not an interview like this but a conversation”.<sup>44</sup> Newby wanted to develop Bowen’s conversational style for an elite audience. The fluidity of form is important as it was in contrast with the rigid analytical talk previously proposed. In her response to the new offer, Bowen clarified what the producer expected from her: “I understand you to mean a “free” conversation, not a prepared script”.<sup>45</sup> Bowen emphasises the freedom of the proposed broadcast, confirming with the producer that he was happy to authorise a

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<sup>43</sup> Bowen to Newby, 19 October 1949, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC. Emphasis in original.

<sup>44</sup> Newby to Christopher Holme, 28 June 1950, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

<sup>45</sup> Bowen to Newby, 10 July 1950, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

more informal approach to broadcasting. Of course, Bowen as a professional writer is also clarifying her commission, but the emphasis on conversation suggests that the BBC see her as capable of engaging in dialogue worthy of the Third Programme.<sup>46</sup>

Subsequently, Bowen suggested Jocelyn Brooke, the novelist and naturalist, as her interlocutor. Brooke had published one of his most acclaimed novels, *The Image of a Drawn Sword*, in 1950, a text which Alan Sinfield compares to Orwell's *1984* as sharing an underlying apprehension about the role of the state in post-war literary production.<sup>47</sup> As such, Bowen and Brooke can be seen to share political viewpoints and were part of the same literary networks. The tone and pace of this half hour talk is much more measured and leisurely than Bowen's "How I Write" interview, as it reflects the flexible schedule of the Third Programme and the tastes of its highbrow audience. *A Conversation Between Elizabeth Bowen and Jocelyn Brooke* went out on the prestigious evening slot of 8.30 pm on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1950, having been recorded some two months before. Brooke and Bowen share roughly equal airtime, with both writers enquiring into the practices and principles of the other. Their particular focus is the inspiration for writing, as well as the craft of the novel. Both writers agree on the "unconsciousness" of their work, and the "indirect" way that the time a writer lives in influences the creative process.<sup>48</sup> However, Bowen also articulates the obstacles that presented themselves to her as an imaginative writer in the post-war period: "I'm always rather non-plussed by these questions and discussions as to this predicament of the writer in our day...You don't even think

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<sup>46</sup> It is also worth noting here that Bowen spoke with a stammer that became more prominent when she read a script. As such, speaking freely from notes helped her to overcome the worst of her speech impediment.

<sup>47</sup> Sinfield, p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "A Conversation Between Elizabeth Bowen and Jocelyn Brooke", *Listening-In*, pp. 274-286, p. 276.

there's possibly a danger that we may use the badness of our time as an alibi".<sup>49</sup> Bowen registers frustration at what she sees as futile discussion about the nature and scope of contemporary writers' engagement with society. While she recognises there are specific challenges of writing in a post-war world, she worries that the perceived 'badness' of the period becomes an excuse not to engage with the world imaginatively, or an "alibi" to excuse failure. Despite agreeing to participate in a staged conversation with a fellow writer, Bowen rejects the kind of high-level literary discourse the BBC hoped to establish in this Third Programme broadcast. Finally, however, the piece ends with Bowen conceding that: "It is fair in these days to expect the artist to show credentials, everybody's expected to show credentials...".<sup>50</sup> Reluctantly, Bowen has moved from a place of 'torment' inspired by readerly questions about writers to an acceptance of the need to show one's credentials as a writer to the public. With the credentials she had garnered over her career, Bowen was soon to step into an altogether more educational role at the BBC.

## **Adult Education at the BBC**

Despite her scepticism of formal education, Elizabeth Bowen was personally connected to the project of democratising education in early twentieth century Britain through the work of her husband, Alan Cameron. They had married in 1923 and moved to Oxford, where Cameron had accepted the post of Secretary for Education for the city in 1925. By 1935, Cameron was becoming more established in educational circles and was appointed as Secretary to the Central Council of School Broadcasting at the BBC.<sup>51</sup> This was the body that liaised with Mary Somerville to

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>51</sup> Glendinning, *Bowen*, p. 92.

develop the ambitious schedule of Schools Broadcasts that was a core element of the educational work of the BBC. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, another important department was Adult Education— from where Charles Siepmann invited Harold Nicolson to discuss *The New Spirit in Literature*. Cameron gradually became more involved in the Corporation’s attempts to educate its adult audience. In 1938, the *Listener* records that Cameron was now the secretary for the newly formed Central Committee for Group Listening, who boasted 1393 listening groups across the country in the winter of 1937.<sup>52</sup> The increase of groups by 434 from the year before was ascribed to more training of group leaders and “the provision of a programme which has given the groups what they wanted”, particularly a talk on “The Way of Peace”.<sup>53</sup> In developing popular talks, the educational strand of the BBC was already dismantling the Reithian edict to ‘give the public what they need’ in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War. All this is to say that Bowen’s husband was intimately connected with the development of adult education along democratic lines even before the increased emphasis on education in the post-war period. It would not be too much to assume, therefore, that Bowen herself kept abreast of developments in educational broadcasting.

From 1945, and Cameron’s retirement from the BBC, Adult Education was re-organised into Further Education. This change aligned the BBC’s department with the language of the 1944 Butler Act, which required local councils to facilitate further education for all those above the school leaving age, which had been raised to fifteen. Moreover, Further Education abandoned the commitment to group listening. A BBC report from August 1950, titled the *Home Affairs Survey*, recognised that

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<sup>52</sup> G. W. Gibson, “The Progress of Group Listening”, *The Listener*, 9 June 1938, 19:491, p. 1233, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9PfsJ1>> [accessed 8 March 2019].

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

“most people who listen to the further educational programmes will do so in their own home”.<sup>54</sup> Educational programmes were to be re-worked to appeal to individual listeners, rather than intended as prompts for a group discussion. The Corporation also began to liaise with local educational authorities, universities and colleges to inform listeners of where they could enrol in recognised programmes of study or follow-up courses, should their interest be piqued. The formula of providing accessible, inspiring programmes that were complemented by supplementary courses at institutions of further learning was one that the Corporation embraced in the welfare state context.

What is more, the question of *who* should be providing adult education provoked debate during the 1950s. The involvement of universities in the adult education sector was particularly contentious due to those institutions’ historical exclusivity and upper-class membership. Speaking on the Third Programme in the summer of 1950, educationalist S.G. Raybould asked “*Has Adult Education Lost its Momentum?*”. Although Raybould admits that “numerically things look well”, with 50,000 more people in classes organised by the Workers Education Association (WEA) since the end of the war and 21,000 more in classes provided by universities, these were almost all accounted for by enrolment onto short elementary courses that did not provide the detail or rigour of previous courses.<sup>55</sup> He goes on, “the education which is required is adult education, not education dispensed by schools and universities, for it is the minds and wills of men and women long left school which have to be reached”.<sup>56</sup> In the angry exchange of letters to the editor of the *Listener* which

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<sup>54</sup> “The Further Education Experiment”, *Home Affairs Survey*, 22 August 1950, pp. 20-22, R15/4 Education: Further Articles on BBC and Further Education 1945-1962, BBC WAC.

<sup>55</sup> S. G. Raybould, “Has Adult Education Lost its Momentum?”, *The Listener*, 29 June 1950, p.1091+, <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9Pgw7X>> [accessed 8 March 2019].

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

followed, it appears that nothing short of the soul of British democratic education was being contested. Thomas Kelly, the Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Honor Oak Community Centre writes:

The educational 'conscience' of [the] worker has been roused by the revolutionary impact of the war...and [he] is suspicious of the scholastic approach because he associates it with those social forces which denied him his educational heritage. Moreover, academic detachment, though desirable, is surely the end-product of a mental discipline.... It is, therefore, a mistake to employ this method, *at the beginning...*<sup>57</sup>

The ideological underpinning of more academic forms of pedagogy was seen here as a re-inscription of the class-bias that had disadvantaged working-class learners in their access to education. Thus, the university was seen as a site of class-struggle.

In the immediate post-war period, however, the BBC was reliant on exactly those academic experts. By appearing on educational programmes and giving informative talks on the Third Programme, university academics were, as David Smith writes:

engaged in the shaping of knowledge and ideas for different, primarily but not exclusively middle-class, audiences. Working through the medium of the BBC some university academics became, in effect, creative agents in the interpretation and delivery of the Corporation's mission to provide for the educational and cultural needs of the nation.<sup>58</sup>

By transplanting the university academic to the airwaves, adult education at the BBC mirrored the elitist structures of the British education system. The Corporation's mission was being delivered in a more formal, hierarchical mode than might have been hoped for by those who supported the democratisation of culture and learning.

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Kelly, Director of Extra-Mural Studies. "Honor Oak Community Centre", *The Listener*, 20 July 1950, 44:1121, p. 98 <<http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/9PgwhX>> [accessed 8 March 2019]. Emphasis in original.

<sup>58</sup> David N. Smith, "Academics, the 'Cultural Third Mission' and the BBC: Forgotten Histories of Knowledge Creation, Transformation and Impact", *Studies in Higher Education*, 38: 5, (2013), pp. 663-677, p. 665.

Thinking that the post-war academisation of knowledge should be resisted, Bowen seemed to side with working-class audiences by rejecting “academic detachment” as the pre-eminent intellectual goal. As a writer, Bowen was attached to society through her imaginative work, a connection that would be damaged by the widespread adoption of intellectual objectivity. Her resistance to the mantle of “academic critic” at the BBC is evidence of her scepticism of this educational trend that was both exclusive and limiting. The BBC therefore faced similar criticism of their educational provision from two very different sides: those who had been excluded from traditional structures of education through class inequality and those, like Bowen, who had received a privileged but unconventional education that promoted imaginative exploration.

The BBC sought to reconcile these critics to the Corporation’s mission of uplift through the work of the Further Education department, championed by the Assistant Director, Jean Rowntree. Of course, Rowntree had taught at Downe House and absorbed some of the ethos of imaginative education that was practised there. In 1947 she had also conducted an extensive survey of how the whole of the BBC’s output met the audience’s educational needs, approaching as many as 19,000 listeners in an attempt to ascertain the impact of broadcasting.<sup>59</sup> Following the conclusion of the survey, in October 1951, the Spoken Word Committee, who had jurisdiction over Further Education, drew several conclusions about the department’s remit. These were, as Asa Briggs describes:

First, ‘the purpose of FE should be to enable each individual to live a fuller and richer life’, and, second, ‘FE could be said to apply to all aspects of serious broadcasting, irrespective of subject, and should not in broadcasting be tied to any curriculum devised by workers in the outside FE field’.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Briggs, *History of Broadcasting*, iv, p. 744.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*



Thus, Further Education was remodelled to meet the expectations of those who valued education for its capacity to inspire imaginative and personal growth and also freed from association with specific curricula, such as university degrees on the one hand or WEA courses on the other. It was hoped that such an approach would make broadcasting with an educational intent appealing to as broad an audience as possible.

Such an ideological foundation for Further Education may be why Bowen agreed to collaborate with Rowntree in the mid-1950s. As Briggs recounts, Further Education programmes were “to differ from the rest of programme output ‘not by reason of their subject matter or of any specially didactic approach, but in their planning and preparation’”.<sup>61</sup> Such rejection of didacticism was acceptable to Bowen. More, the audience’s appetite for literary discussion was substantial. In a subsequent Further Education poll, “English was at the top of the desired subject list (75.5 per cent), followed by Languages, History, and Current Affairs”.<sup>62</sup> Here was an audience that wanted to learn about literature and was not attached to specific educational institutions. By collaborating with Further Education, Bowen could further her career as a professional writer without being forced to conform to rigid standards of academic criticism.

### **Planning *Truth and Fiction***

While Bowen denied her critical expertise, Jean Rowntree was busy emphasising Bowen’s academic legitimacy to senior BBC management. In the spring of 1956, an

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 749.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 748.

anonymous, undated memo titled “Short Literary Series by Elizabeth Bowen” was circulated in the Further Education department of the BBC. As discussed, Further Education programmes needed to be accessible and authoritative. The “Short Literary Series” memo, probably written by Rowntree, proposed a remedy for the lack of literary material in the current schedule with a series of illustrated talks by Elizabeth Bowen on the subject of the construction of the contemporary novel.<sup>63</sup> The memo particularly highlights Bowen’s academic and public speaking credentials:

Elizabeth Bowen has recently been giving a number of lectures at Morley College and at other colleges of the same type... Elizabeth Bowen is to be given a D.Litt in Oxford in May... She has been elected to a Fellowship in Brynmawr [sic] for 1956-57 but her talks would presumably be timeless and could probably be recorded in the later summer.<sup>64</sup>

Morley College was a well-known adult education college in London, founded for the schooling of working-class men and women. Virginia Woolf had given talks there before the war. By mentioning Bowen’s experience there, Rowntree was locating the writer in the context of recognised adult education providers. The positioning of the novelist as approachable to a non-expert audience is problematised, however, by the subsequent reference to her forthcoming honorary degree from Oxford and her fellowship at the prestigious female-only American college, Bryn Mawr. These symbols of academic achievement underpin Bowen’s expert status and showcase her authority for use by the BBC.

Rowntree later used these vestments as justification for a higher-than-average fee for Bowen:

I believe that the fee may be an important consideration, especially as we are fitting in the main work on the programme between her getting an honorary degree at Oxford and her departure to an academic post in America; in this time she will have to do a good deal of highly concentrated reading and

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<sup>63</sup> “Short Literary Series by Elizabeth Bowen”, n. date and n. author, probably written by Jean Rowntree, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

preparation in order to have the material ready at the time we want it... In offering this fee, the points to take into account are, I think, that we are getting someone who is in a unique position to talk on this subject, that it needs more preparation than talks for the ordinary F.E. series, and that we shall be bringing her over from Ireland. I would not suggest that we pay her expenses, but I think we ought to offer her a fee of about £50 a programme.<sup>65</sup>

Wrangling with the Finance department, Rowntree makes a case for Bowen's employment as an exceptionally well-qualified speaker who would have to undertake quite intense work to achieve the standard that was expected. This suggests that the BBC were bestowing a high level of cultural capital on Bowen's name and abilities as a critic. As a friend and colleague, Rowntree was also acting in the interests of the writer. Following the death of Alan Cameron in 1952, Bowen was forced to finance herself and her crumbling aristocratic home. As Heather Bryant Jordan notes, sometimes Bowen's work was the result of "a female artist who wrote, at least in part, to pay the bills".<sup>66</sup> Rowntree wanted Bowen to provide literary discourse on the Further Education schedule and was prepared to petition the BBC to offer an above-average payment that would incentivise the writer to collaborate on the kind of project that she had previously avoided. In the end, Bowen was paid 40 guineas per broadcast, which in decimal currency was £42 a programme.<sup>67</sup> This was twice as much as any of her other BBC broadcasts and would be worth around £1000 per programme in today's money.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Rowntree went out of her way to encourage the writer to join the Further Education schedule.

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<sup>65</sup> Rowntree to Accounts Officer, Talks, 28 March 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

<sup>66</sup> Heather Bryant Jordan, "A Bequest of Her Own: The Reinvention of Elizabeth Bowen", *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, 12:2, (2008), pp. 46-62, p. 47. Another reason, perhaps, for Bowen's acceptance of the Bryn Mawr appointment.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>68</sup> Figure derived from National Archives Currency Converter, <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>> [accessed 6 June 2019].

Yet, in her interactions with the Further Education department, Bowen still actively rejected a scholarly identity in her correspondence with the BBC. In response to an outline about the programme, Bowen wrote to Rowntree:

I think B [Beatrice Horton]'s draft article...excellent. No comments- except that I query "scholar", in the first paragraph: could this be misleading. Though I think B. does elsewhere make clear that anything I have to say about the Novel is the product of experience- studying fellow-novelists from my own, a novelist's, point of view- not the result of study in the (good) academic sense. Jean, if I had been to Oxford and read English there could be other, further, elements [sic] to my criticism.<sup>69</sup>

Here, Bowen draws attention to her lack of an academic education to make it clear that her literary knowledge comes from her novelistic practice, rather than formal study in a "(good) academic sense". Bowen gestures to her own uncertainty, or rather specificity here, noting that such an education would have instilled 'other, further elements' in her criticism. What Bowen can and intends to bring to the broadcasts is a novelist's perspective.

In any case, excessively highbrow or expert analysis was not what the Further Education department desired for these programmes. In a letter from March 1956, Rowntree reassures Bowen about the audience for which the talks were intended:

This particular Home Service audience is a fairly unsophisticated one not unlike, I imagine, the classes you have talked to at Morley College;- thought [sic] they may well be rather less serious minded, and not by any means necessarily members of a formal Adult Education group. What we want to do is- either directly or by implication- to suggest some new questions which the novel reader might consider so as to get more enjoyment out of what he reads, and perhaps extend the range of his reading.<sup>70</sup>

The emphasis here is to provide understanding and enjoyment to the reader, rather than dense critical analysis. The audience was not the engaged students of Morley

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<sup>69</sup> Bowen to Rowntree, 14 July 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC. Beatrice, B.C., Horton, was a Talks producer and daughter of Curtis Brown, literary agent. She was also a close personal friend of Bowen, Alan Cameron, and Rose Macaulay.

<sup>70</sup> Rowntree to Bowen, 29 March 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

College, but “less serious minded” and not certain to listen to all three programmes.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to Bowen’s expert-status that Rowntree had leveraged in her communication with BBC officials, the writer is encouraged to address her talks to the average novel-reader, an identity that encompassed a very large proportion of the adult audience of the BBC.

By 1956, audience profiles were carefully considered at the BBC. The Further Education department had produced a detailed account of its target audience ten years before. The report divided possible listeners into four groups, which broadly mirrored the educational markers of the middle- and working-classes. Group A were considered “able to follow abstract argument” and were “more interested in authoritative views than personal interpretations”.<sup>72</sup> They had typically been educated at grammar schools or to school certificate equivalent in an adult education institution and were estimated to number two and half million in the population. Group B, by contrast, were “able to follow abstract argument at a slower rate”, whereas C could “follow a simple line of argument or inquiry if well illustrated and/or dramatised”.<sup>73</sup> Group D, numbering more than ten million, needed “special presentation techniques to interest them in more serious topics”.<sup>74</sup> The *Truth and Fiction* broadcast was billed to appeal to A listeners, those most likely to have had some previous access to academic literary discourse. Thus, the predicted audience of *Truth and Fiction* could very well have been as “serious-minded” as the students of Morley College but, as they were listening in their domestic environment, they may not have fully concentrated on the talk.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Rowntree wrote: “We get 60% continuity, generally”.

<sup>72</sup> Memo, n. date but written between March and November 1946, “The Four Population Levels to which BBC Further Education Series are at Present Directed”, R15/4, BBC WAC.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

The porous nature of home listening did not concern Bowen. In many ways, it served to reinforce her commitment to a non-academic mode of literary discussion, one which could accommodate interruptions or moments of inattention. Listeners ought, as far as Bowen was concerned, to take ownership of their learning however they saw fit. Upon receiving some detailed notes about the structure of the programmes, Bowen replied to Rowntree that: “I am grateful for an [sic] interested in the notes: I’ll absorb as much as possible of the content...It seems to me better to leave the talks open at the edges, for readers to get thinking and bring in their own ideas”.<sup>75</sup>

Bowen’s conception of the talks as being ‘open at the edges’ mirrors the form of radio broadcasting in as much as it evokes the centrifugal transmission of sound that radiates outwards and traverses physical and national borders. She elides the form of radio with the conceptual structure of her series, investing the listener with the ability to contribute ideas or, at least, galvanise their thinking. Her openness to and consideration of the listener is in sharp contrast to the image of the “avid glittering eyes” of the reader that Bowen had previously feared. The informal nature of broadcasting to people’s homes and Bowen’s rejection of her expert status allowed this series to be infused with an imaginative and dialogic approach to reading novels.

### ***Truth and Fiction***

Bowen’s three *Truth and Fiction* talks, titled ‘Story’, ‘People’, and ‘Time’, promote an imaginative method of reading novels, whilst outlining the basic literary devices of plot, character, and time that underpin literary critical analysis. At the outset of the series, Bowen asks her listeners to enter into an abstract mindset, seeing the novel as something more than “an invented story”: “I am suggesting to you that there is a

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<sup>75</sup> Bowen to Horton, 28 August 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

distinction between truth and so-called reality”.<sup>76</sup> Rejecting a rationalist definition of truth as reality, the writer introduces ambiguity as central to literary engagement.

Bowen argues that the purpose of novels is to explore an imaginative truth that factual texts— biography or documentary— cannot achieve:

And here comes in what is the actual livening spark of the novel: the novelist’s imagination has a power of its own. It does not merely invent, it perceives. It intensifies, therefore it gives power, extra importance, greater truth, and greater inner reality to what well may be ordinary and everyday things.<sup>77</sup>

Bowen ascribes almost transcendental powers to the novelist’s imagination, imbuing it with the capacity to reveal truth in new contexts. This description foregrounds the un-teachability of such a creative process, and, to some extent, the failure of analytical criticism to comprehend the sublime inspiration that shapes a writer’s work. As such, Bowen begins her educational talks on literature by problematising the potential for students to learn how to read texts by rote, or without recourse to their own imaginations.

Furthermore, throughout the series Bowen positions herself as equal to her listeners, rejecting the kinds of formal hierarchies that typically structure student/teacher relations. In her “Story” episode, for example, Bowen asserts that one of the key aspects of a good novel is that it “takes off well”.<sup>78</sup> “Speaking as a reader”, she goes on, “I must say that I myself am tremendously influenced for or against a book by the manner of the opening, and that as a novelist myself I have put great stress and interest into the openings of my own books”.<sup>79</sup> Identifying first as a reader and then as a novelist, Bowen supports her claim that compelling beginnings are essential to the success of a story through reference to her personal experience. She

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<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, “Truth and Fiction”, in *Afterthought*, (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 114-143, p. 114. (Referred to from now as T&F).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> T&F, p. 115.

<sup>79</sup> T&F, pp. 115-6.

foregrounds her own working methods as evidence for her assertion. Although her expertise as a novelist does set her apart from the majority of her listeners— indeed it qualifies her for the role of speaking on the BBC about contemporary novels— Bowen takes pains to collapse differences between her own and her listeners’ reading experience. Coming to a text as a humble reader, regardless of social position or literary training, encourages the kind of imaginative engagement with fiction that Bowen champions. In her “People” episode, Bowen makes use of a rhetorical question to align herself with her audience: “Would you or I, as readers, be drawn into a novel...if our interest was not pegged to the personalities and the outlooks and the actions of the people whom we encounter inside the story?”.<sup>80</sup> By recognising that all readers are hooked by compelling characters, Bowen works to dispel notions that some books are worthy of reading regardless of personal interest but by dint of canonicity alone.

United with the audience as a reader, not a critic, Bowen unsettles the post-war trend towards increasingly complex analysis of literature, as adopted by universities and some further education colleges. For Bowen, excellent novels should not be overly complicated. A key aspect of a good story, she claims, is that it is simple; “by which I mean straightforward, easy to grasp, and therefore liable to be well remembered. Do you think by stressing simplicity I perhaps simplify too much?”.<sup>81</sup> Here, the writer directly questions a preconceived idea that her listeners might hold that good literature is necessarily complex or difficult. To what extent, she asks, does simplicity imply simplification? By framing her contention as a question, Bowen engages in the kind of dialogism that Vita Sackville-West developed for her BBC

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<sup>80</sup> T&F, p. 124.

<sup>81</sup> T&F, p. 115.



book reviews, twenty-five years before. The speaker and listener are participating in an imaginary conversation about what kinds of literature should be valued— in other words, they are engaging in considered, democratic literary discourse. While the listener cannot directly respond to the woman writer who is delivering this talk, they can question their own views on literature. In doing so, they develop their critical faculties in a collaborative and supportive way, rather than by absorbing the ‘correct’ interpretation of texts.

Moreover, Bowen offers a model for listeners to invigorate the kinds of literary discourse in which they may habitually participate. For an ordinary reader, she argues, it can be a challenge to articulate the theme, or “the inner subject”, of a book:

You may know how difficult it is, if you are impressed by a book you are reading, and somebody says: ‘What is it about?’ You outline the superficial plot or story and your friend may say: ‘Well, I’ve heard of all that before’. And really in order to convey the effect that the novel is having on you, you would have to plunge a degree more deeply and find words, if you could, if you had time, for the underlying idea which gives the reason why the story should be told, and the reason why the story is important and hits you.<sup>82</sup>

Enacting the discourse that listeners might face when discussing their everyday reading, Bowen attends to the need to ‘plunge a degree more deeply’ into a text to uncover the essence of it. She recognises that such an engagement with a text requires time and expertise but suggests a deeper level of awareness can be beneficial to an individual’s understanding. While more academic literary scholars might advocate for the adoption of a systematic analysis of a text to grasp the theme, as would be practised in the classroom or seminar, Bowen locates such knowledge in the personal experience of reading; the reason why a novel ‘hits you’. Thus,

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<sup>82</sup> T&F, p. 120.

Bowen promotes individual readers' responses as a primary mode of understanding, trying to empower listeners to discuss what *they* thought or felt when reading, rather than rely on the interpretations of an educational authority.

Throughout these broadcasts, Bowen reconfigures the meaning of literary analysis to constitute a personal exploration, an emotional or imaginative response to a text. In doing so, she works against the prevailing narrative of literary discourse as an academic discipline, using her access to the BBC's microphone to advocate for an imaginative understanding of literature, rather than a systematic one. She goes on to describe theme as "something of which you will feel the effects and which works strongly for the novelist but which is down so deep that you may have to analyse the story to find what it actually is".<sup>83</sup> When Bowen uses the word 'analyse' here, she means 'understanding one's personal response', rather than undertaking a methodical examination of technique or form. As early as 1945, Bowen had proposed that literary learning should be guided by the reader's thoughtful reaction to a text. Reviewing T.S. Eliot's guide to the English literary canon, *What is a Classic?*, Bowen notes: "Mr Eliot's theme, to which he has given thought, demands a response of thought from the reader. To make this response is well worthwhile".<sup>84</sup> In order to fully comprehend the author's meaning, the reader must enter into a kind of intellectual exchange with them, a call and response dialogue where text inspires an idea or feeling that the reader can then examine for themselves.

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<sup>83</sup> T&F, p. 121.

<sup>84</sup> "T.S. Eliot, *What is a Classic?*, March 7, 1945", *The Weight of A World of Feeling: Reviews and Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), pp. 183-185, p. 184.

In the talks themselves, Bowen seeks to instil responses in her audience through the intermittent use of dramatised extracts from canonical novels. In her third talk, “Time”, Bowen included the section of Virginia’s Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* in which the main characters hear a back-firing car. Their whirling, varied reactions to the event were read by Marjorie Mars, an actor in the BBC’s Repertory Company. Resuming the flow of the talk, Bowen immediately foregrounds the emotional response that the extract excited: “You will have been struck by those intersections of different people, the ironies, the contrasts”.<sup>85</sup> The suggestiveness of Woolf’s writing, for Bowen, renders the everyday happenings of a London street striking, stirring a response in the reader. Following the opening passage from Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock*, where the main character is isolated from the holidaying crowds in the coastal city due to his fear of being murdered, Bowen asserts: “You will have reacted to the immense contrast between the scene and the man; the irony of the band playing, the bright glistening paint, the Whitsun sunshine”.<sup>86</sup> In both these instances, Bowen places great emphasis on the reader’s emotive response to the techniques employed by these novelists– whether stream of consciousness or juxtaposition. However, her imperatives, “you will have been struck”, “you will have reacted” leave little room for doubt or ambiguity in the reader’s response. Although Bowen works to reject a didactic mode of literary education for the majority of the series, in moments such as these Bowen suggests a uniform response in the reader. Such instances demonstrate that she was speaking within the context of the BBC’s Further Education schedule and therefore liable to slip into pedagogical modes of engagement. In other words, although Bowen emphasised the value of personal

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<sup>85</sup> T&F, p. 137.

<sup>86</sup> T&F, p. 118.

responses to texts, her position as speaker on the airwaves meant she effaced some of that individuality during this series by ascribing unified responses to certain extracts.

In fact, the inclusion of extracts in the series was not Bowen's choice. As part of the Further Education department's winter schedule, the series had to appeal to a range of audiences. Dramatised readings were considered an effective technique to keep the attention of listeners who were unused to extended literary discussion. As Rowntree wrote, the series was intended "for the average novel-reading listener whose choice of fiction is on the whole haphazard, tends to be rather conventional, and who has no specialised literary education".<sup>87</sup> Reading extracts from well-known novels would ground the audience in familiar texts, allowing them to re-orientate themselves if they lost the thread of Bowen's argument. It would give them concrete examples of literary analysis, which they could return to in their own time if they so wished, thereby providing a sort of further reading list to the studious listener of the series. However, the writer felt that such a tactic was problematic:

...from my point of view there's no such thing as the ideally illustrative extract (for reading aloud). I am speaking from generalised experience. No extract can carry the whole of what I mean. For that reason, I have never till now (when I speak) used illustrative extracts: they always seem to me to tend to distort or limit what I'm trying to say.<sup>88</sup>

For Bowen, the use of extracts to illustrate her points was limiting because it tied her generalised suggestions to concrete examples. These, in turn, could not contain the breadth of her assertions in their diminutive form.

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<sup>87</sup> Rowntree, n. date. "Further Education: Commission for Home Service series to be broadcast at 7.30-8.00 pm. Wednesdays, 26th September-10th October, inclusive" R15/480/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>88</sup> Bowen to Horton, 28 August 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC. Emphasis in original.

Furthermore, extracts created unnecessary exposition in a broadcast talk and Bowen sought to keep her programmes free from didacticism or overt pedagogy. Extracts with omniscient narrators, for example, provided the kind of old-fashioned analysis that could be found in novels from previous centuries. Prior to the contemporary moment, says Bowen, “the original loose, comfortable, descriptive method which the late eighteenth-century people and the Victorians employed” was the primary way of telling the reader what was happening.<sup>89</sup> Such a technique was dependent on the authorial voice: “The writer stepped in, he intervened”.<sup>90</sup> In her talks, however, Bowen examined what she called the “*contemporary way of keeping in evidence...the characters in a book*”: dialogue.<sup>91</sup> Dialogue, by contrast to Victorian analysis, was “sharp, clear-cut, almost rowdy” and sliced through the “smoke-screen of continuous analysis” in the period just after the First World War.<sup>92</sup> The reason for this change, Bowen asserts, is that dialogue is “arresting”, “entertaining” and “highly personal”.<sup>93</sup> By this she implies that dialogue is personal to the characters, such that they are wrought in fine detail by an author, but also personal to the reader. In keeping with her overall claim that novel-reading is a personal experience, Bowen was at pains to emphasise the importance of dialogue for increasing a reader’s investment in a text. As she herself employed dialogic tactics in her broadcast and offered readers suggestions for improving their conversations about texts, so Bowen supports the dialogic principle within texts. Her view of ‘good’ literature is informed by the dominance of a discursive mode in novel-writing, an approach that she sees as a response to the heavy exposition of the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

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<sup>89</sup> T&F, p. 126.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> T&F, p. 129. Emphasis in original.

<sup>92</sup> T&F, pp. 132-3

<sup>93</sup> T&F, p. 129.

Fundamentally, for Bowen, dialogue is an imaginative, non-hierarchical form of fiction-writing that foregrounds the personal response of the character and the reader as the primary mode of understanding.

Finally, at the culmination of her series, Bowen asserts that dialogism is a key factor in what literature means to a contemporary audience. Literature's value, she asserts, is that it can spark imagination in the reader and foster dialogue between reader and writer and reader and reader. Such dialogue is essential, Bowen claims, for the health of literary production:

...if our young novelists are to exist, if they are to survive, they do need, I think, more attention and more response and more come-back on the part of the reader, than novelists have ever needed before. The relation between the writer and the reader is and needs to be closer than it has been.<sup>94</sup>

For contemporary writers to exist in the competitive media ecology they were working in, readers must provide a receptive audience, one which is willing to participate in the conversation of what literature means and how it can be successful. Fostering a close relation between reader and writer does not necessarily require formal literary education or a slavish respect for the canon. Instead, Bowen suggests, the reader ought to demonstrate their awareness of contemporary writing, their general interest and alertness, in a way that literary radio broadcasts, for example, can cultivate:

The writer needs reception, good reception in the radio sense, because of this forging ahead, this seeking for an expression which shall be unique to our age and yet hold in it the elements of all time. I ask you to look out for, to be aware of, the writers, the novelists, who seem to you to be making the literature of our age. Receive them, understand them, help them, and leave in our time, as there has been before, this close link, this identification, between fiction which we read and enjoy and the truths which through fiction we comprehend.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> T&F, p. 143.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

In order for contemporary literature to thrive, develop, and establish for itself the standards that previous epochs had attained, the reader must take ownership of their reading and cultivate a connection, a 'close link', between literary production and the deeper truths that fiction portrays. It is not for the teachers and lecturers of English Literature courses to decide about the value of contemporary writing, but the personal responses of numerous individuals whose literary engagement creates an atmosphere charged with 'good reception'. Speaking at the BBC microphone in 1956, Bowen promotes informed literary discourse on an individual level, rather than an institutional one. That she figures this in a technological metaphor of "good reception in the wireless sense" speaks to the importance, reach, and ideological flexibility of the concept of radio by mid-century. The BBC could be both the institution for educational uplift that the Further Education department envisaged and a site of intellectual resistance to trends in literary education, as Bowen's talks sought to be.

### **The Listener Writes Back**

As we have seen throughout this thesis, the form of radio broadcasting lends itself to fostering immediate and intimate contact with a large audience. When given the opportunity to broadcast by the BBC, the women writers in this study seized their chance to expand the scope of literary discourse by engaging their listeners in conversation about the value of literature. Following Bowen's call for actively engaged readers, listeners responded. As documented in previously unopened files at the BBC's Written Archives Centre, Bowen's audience entered into a dialogue with the ideas that the writer had proposed in her short series. However, much of the listener feedback was mediated through two strands of official BBC apparatus: the Audience Research department and the Further Education department itself.

Audience Research was commissioned to measure the reception of broadcasts through the use of focus groups and a survey of representative listeners. Unusually, two of the three *Truth and Fiction* broadcasts were the subject of an Audience Research report, suggesting that the BBC were particularly interested in assessing the success of Bowen's talks. Additionally, Further Education had its own network of regional Education Officers who liaised with listeners in their district and reported both a general consensus and their own thoughts on the efficacy of certain broadcasts. As such, the comments from listeners that are held in the archive were filtered through officially sanctioned systems for capturing listener responses, meaning that listeners knew they were not interacting with Bowen directly. This means that their feedback is less personal and dialogic than the listeners letters that Sackville-West or Marson received.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that Bowen's *Truth and Fiction* talks inspired some of her listeners. Hugh Johnstone, Senior Education Officer for Edinburgh noted, "Her suggestions that novelists today need more come-back or better reception from their readers than ever before was disturbing and thought-provoking".<sup>96</sup> The question of a reader's responsibility to a writer challenged Johnstone's understanding of literary exchange. Such provocative claims seemed to require more discussion. An anonymous commentator from North Wales wanted closer communication with Bowen herself: "if only the ordinary reader could have asked questions on various points. E.g. the different ways of presenting novels".<sup>97</sup> This listener wanted more

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<sup>96</sup> Hugh Johnstone, Senior Education Officer (S.E.O.), Edinburgh to Rowntree, 16 October 1956, R15/481/1 Education, Further Education, Programmes, Truth and Fiction, Audience Research & Education Officer Reports, 1956, BBC WAC.

<sup>97</sup> Humphrey Williams, Education Officer (E.O.), North Wales to Senior Education Officer, CC Rowntree, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.



dialogue with the writer so as to be able to raise specific questions, fulfilling Bowen's call for a more engaged readership as they did so.

Perhaps the opportunity for direct questioning would have mitigated other respondents' complaints that Bowen was too esoteric in her delivery. The Audience Research report on Bowen's third talk stated that some listeners "found Miss Bowen's thesis 'too technical' and were frankly unable to understand what she was 'trying to put over'".<sup>98</sup> The report went on:

There were some complaints that [the programmes in the series] were 'dull' or too like a 'technical lecture', and several listeners considered them of interest only to writers. More frequently listeners said they had enjoyed the series and felt that their reading, especially of contemporary fiction, would benefit from hearing it.<sup>99</sup>

Such responses indicate that there was a proportion of the audience for whom Bowen's discussion was considered too technical, dull, or difficult to understand. For these listeners, the writer's series edged into the academic sphere that they appeared to be suspicious of. But, as the report makes clear, many listeners were not put off by the intellectual level of the talks. Johnstone, in Edinburgh, concurred: "As for her 'academic and abstract manner', well you cannot undertake analysis or criticism of any originality or subtlety in this day and age without employing a few intellectual concepts".<sup>100</sup> Johnstone recognises the emphasis of contemporary literary discourse by acknowledging the requirement of 'intellectual concepts' for original literary analysis. Academically informed discursive practices were to be expected "in this day and age".

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<sup>98</sup> Audience Research Report, (Week 41), LR/56/1672, *Truth and Fiction: 'Time, Period and Reality'*, 10 October 1956, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Johnstone, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

In fact, Rowntree had worried that the talks were possibly too informal. In September 1956, she had warned her Education Officers that listener feedback might be mixed:

As you know, the *raison d'être* of the series was to have a practising and distinguished novelist talking about her views on the novel and the novelist's craft...As it happens, the effect is as of a rather informal lecture to a small group of interested but unspecialised people. I do not, myself, find the rather measured pace, the pauses for thought and occasional slight repetition at all trying, because I get the feeling of a person of authority honestly thinking out the roots of the problem as she sees it. On the other hand, some listeners may complain of the rather curious delivery.<sup>101</sup>

Although Rowntree had been responsible for the direction of this series, upon completion of recording, the Assistant Director of Further Education recognised that the talks did not conform to conventional educational programmes. For Rowntree, the value of Bowen's contribution to the schedule was her first-hand experience of novel writing, from whence her authority was derived. Yet Rowntree acknowledges that the audience may expect a more rigorous or conventional talk, in which case they will be disappointed: "If the listener does not care for this as a personal essay, he will not care for it as a teaching job, which could, of course, have been done far better by a literary critic who was also a trained broadcaster".<sup>102</sup>

As it was, many listeners appreciated the first-hand account of novel writing that Bowen had provided. The Audience Research report for the "Time" programme included a quote from "a farmer's wife", who wrote of the series: "It made me think of being taken into the kitchen to see the actual preparation of a dish one has enjoyed. One is shown the ingredients and then how they are used and blended to produce the finished article".<sup>103</sup> For this listener, the practical undertaking of writing was revealed in a simple and straightforward way that did not reduce her respect for the

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<sup>101</sup> Rowntree to Mr Fawdry, S.E.O., 24 September 1956, R15/480/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Audience Research Report, (Week 41), R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

finished product. From North Wales, listener Noel Hughes recognised Bowen's personal expertise: "Miss Elizabeth Bowen is undoubtedly the 'master of her art' and, whereas a student might possibly differ on some points, I as a general reader, can offer no criticism on her subject matter".<sup>104</sup> Deprecating his own knowledge by casting himself as 'a general reader', rather than a 'student', Hughes echoes Bowen's previous clarification that she delivered *Truth and Fiction* from "a novelist's point of view- not the result of study in the (good) academic sense".<sup>105</sup> The distinction between academic study and personal reading or writing experience appears to be increasingly stark. University education was held by some to be the most legitimate form of learning, such that students might differ from a novelist in their opinions on the validity of certain points. Bowen had written her series in a way that avoided adopting an authoritative position on literary interpretation, at the risk of her audience questioning her claims. For their part, listeners were sometimes honoured by the respect that Bowen paid to them as knowledgeable interlocutors. Audience Research recorded "an architect's" thoughts on the programmes:

Miss Bowen paid her audience the compliment of assuming them to be both as intelligent and as well read as herself- in my case, at least, a false assumption. But how much pleasanter it is to be extended in the attempt to keep up with a lecturer than to be talked down to.<sup>106</sup>

Despite Bowen's attempts to address the audience as an equal, even those who appreciated the consideration she paid to her listeners saw an element of the academic in her position; she was a lecturer by dint of her position as expert in the Further Education schedule.

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<sup>104</sup> Noel Hughes, n. date, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>105</sup> Bowen to Rowntree, 14 July 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

<sup>106</sup> Audience Report, (Week 39), LR/56/1572, *Truth and Fiction: 'Story, Theme and Situation'*, 26 September 1956, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

Bowen's series of talks ultimately motivated many listeners towards enrolling in formal educational courses, a consequence of which Bowen would have been sceptical. Having expressed her distrust of conventional education methods through much of her interaction with the Further Education department, it was compromising for Bowen to be part of a broadcasting initiative that encouraged greater involvement with adult education providers. A more critical audience member, P. Durey, wrote to the Education Officer for the North of England with the following comments:

I felt that these, while being clear and interesting discussions of Character, Time and Period, did not break any particularly new ground. There was, however, sufficient material to provide at least a starting point for the week-end courses arranged as a 'follow-up' to the series.<sup>107</sup>

Considering himself *au fait* with the arguments Bowen made in her series, Durey conceded that the programmes contained enough information to build a scheme of study for the short courses that Further Education developed to accompany some of its series. These courses were often taught by volunteers who had themselves been through a Further Education teacher training programme. In addition, the BBC department's association with numerous adult education providers and colleges resulted in the advertisement of other literary courses in Further Education's specialist publication, *Listen and Learn*. It appears that many of these courses saw an increase in enrolments following Bowen's series. Mr Lewin, the Chief Assistant in Home Service Planning noted that "the effect in terms of demand for follow-up courses has been very considerable".<sup>108</sup> In this sense, Bowen's appeal for more sensitive and attuned readers of contemporary literature was answered by the audience, but through involvement in the existing educational institutions, rather than

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<sup>107</sup> "Mr P. Durey, Rectory Cottage, West Boldon", n. date, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>108</sup> Mr Lewin, Chief Assistant, Home Service Planning to Rowntree, 15 October 1956, RCONT 1, Bowen, BBC WAC.

by dismantling the dominance of academic literary studies. While Bowen may have sought to inspire readers to engage imaginatively in literature, she succeeded in galvanising some to subscribe to further study. As such, her attempt to encourage imaginative literary discussion among her audience was overwhelmed by listeners' return to organised provision of adult education provided by the welfare state.

Finally, then, it appeared as if Bowen had failed in her efforts to reject the BBC's conception of her as an expert and prevent her broadcast from perpetuating an academic literary discourse that conformed to mid-century expectations of how literature should be discussed. She failed, in part, however, because the influence that authorial figures could have at the BBC was beginning to wane, and the position of women writers was becoming more precarious. There is evidence in the *Truth and Fiction* audience feedback that listeners were beginning to categorise prominent mid-century women writers, such as those that have featured in this thesis, in increasingly reductive roles. Of the two examples contained in the archive, the first inferred a level of dignity, the second was pure parody. The Education Officer for the North of England offers the first example. Of Bowen's halting and haughty delivery that derived from her Anglo-Irish class and her persistent stammer, the Officer writes: "I did feel that her somewhat measured style gave the impression of a somewhat detached personality. To me she sounded- as indeed she could be- like someone lifted straight out of 'The Critics'".<sup>109</sup> Although Bowen had sought to reject a position of expertise on the airwaves, her extensive knowledge of writing and literature meant that she qualified in listeners' minds as a critical expert of the kind that featured on the BBC's review programmes. In this, she was on a par with Rose Macaulay, the difference being that Macaulay embraced her expert role and sought

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<sup>109</sup> E.O. North to S.E.O., n. date, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

to expand it where she could. It seems, then, that by 1956, women writers of the calibre of Macaulay and Bowen were viewed as arbiters of high cultural taste, but not necessarily as major contributors to the rough and tumble of mainstream cultural debate.

Consequently, women writers with elite social privilege and formidable writing abilities might begin to inspire satire. Previously dismissive of the content of the talks, P. Durey was also concerned that Bowen's *Truth and Fiction* series almost parodied itself: "...I was less happy about Miss Bowen's own manner of delivery which I found a shade too close to Joyce Grenfell's parodies of lady novelists for comfort".<sup>110</sup> One of the BBC's star performers, Joyce Grenfell, was an extremely popular comedy actor who appeared in many satirical programmes on the BBC, most notably the *How to...* series with Stephen Potter. For Durey to explicitly draw a link between Bowen's broadcasts and this well-known satire means that eminent women writers of the inter-war period were beginning to seem out-dated or even comical. By 1956, Bowen represented a commitment to refined literary values and elite taste that from the position of mid-century was increasingly obsolete. As the audience started to disregard these kinds of eminent women writers, so the BBC stopped using them for its top-tier cultural programming. The domain of literary discourse was moving into the hands of academics at the Corporation. The age of the kinds of wireless women that have filled these pages was drawing to an end.

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<sup>110</sup> "Durey", n. date, R15/481/1, BBC WAC.

## Conclusion

In closing, I return to March, April, and May of 1945, those decisive months at the end of the Second World War when the women writers in this thesis converged in front of the BBC microphone to broadcast on literature and culture.<sup>1</sup> That Vita Sackville-West, Una Marson, Rose Macaulay and Elizabeth Bowen all broadcast during these months, the only instance of such synchronicity across the thirty-four-year period of this study, suggests that the historical moment of victory for Britain marked a pinnacle of influence for these women writers at the Corporation. The spring of 1945 was pregnant with uncertainty, relief and a sense of opportunity about the kind of national culture that would emerge from the conflict as much as the progression of the war itself. As the nation teetered on the brink of a new identity, ushered in by the profound changes that were anticipated both at home and abroad, so all four of the women writers of *Wireless Women* were called upon to lend their voices to the airwaves of the public service broadcaster. As this study has made clear, the BBC found the reputations, ideological positions, and literary skills of these women writers appropriate for its overall mission of cultural uplift at moments of crisis or growth, even as these women expanded their broadcasting remits beyond the bounds of what the Corporation had anticipated. The eve of peace was one such moment of great transition.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, women writers were attractive to BBC producers because they were seen to provide a sense of stability in the cultural

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<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the Introduction, the respective broadcast details were as follows: Vita Sackville-West, "Delight in Gardens", *Away From It All*, *BBC Home Service*, 16 March 1945, Una Marson, "West Indian Party", *Calling the West Indies*, *BBC Overseas Service*, 13 and 20 March 1945, "Caribbean Voices", *Calling the West Indies*, 25 March 1945, Rose Macaulay, "Capitalist", *What Does It Mean?*, *BBC Home Service*, 26 April 1945, and Elizabeth Bowen, "Anthony Trollope", *New Judgement*, *BBC Home Service*, 4 May 1945.

debates of the interwar period and beyond. When Britain reflected on itself in the aftermath of the First World War, argues Alison Light, a capable middle-class femininity came to be inimitably connected to the nation's sense of self.<sup>2</sup> Middle-class women writers in particular promulgated a conservative modernity that accepted the changed social context of the 1920s and 1930s, whilst making something "homely and familiar from the brand new".<sup>3</sup> As women came to participate more prominently in the political and cultural life of the nation, so Britain as a nation sought comfort and stability in domestic notions of womanhood. It was just such cultural familiarity that the BBC sought to provide in the spring of 1945 when it broadcast the four women featured in these pages.

In this particular case, the Corporation and female writers were collectively engaged in producing a national culture that could accommodate the material reality of a class-riven, imperialist society within a morale-boosting myth of unity at the end of 'the People's War'. Thus, Vita Sackville-West's talk on gardens and Elizabeth Bowen's imaginary train ride with Anthony Trollope, especially, conjure a vision of the British as a "peaceable, tolerant folk" with a rich literary heritage and fondness for horticulture.<sup>4</sup> In the interwar period, Light suggests, these virtues had come to represent "a national life worth fighting for".<sup>5</sup> For Sackville-West and Bowen to depict such cultural aspects on the airwaves at this moment was an act of propaganda in support of the British war effort.

And, Sackville-West and Bowen were perhaps able to so fully endorse an ideal of middle-class Britishness on the BBC because they were not fully integrated into the

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<sup>2</sup> Light, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



class and conventions of 'Little England'. Sackville-West's aristocratic heritage placed her beyond the internal competition of the middle-classes— her inheritance ensured that she could view the “nation of gardeners and housewives” fondly, identifying with the masculine gardeners more than any housewife.<sup>6</sup> It was these citizens who were the book-buyers of the 1930s and whom she had addressed with respect and cordiality in her BBC book reviews. Bowen, on the other hand, inherited the torn loyalties and creative sensibilities of her Anglo-Irish heritage. In her wartime radio feature, “Anthony Trollope”, Bowen resurrected an authorial voice in conversation with a contemporary soldier, dramatising an exchange between writer and reader that articulated this particular artist's relation to society.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, she promoted the kind of personally engaged response to literature that she would advocate to her Further Education audience. Steeped in the imaginative ferment of wartime London, Bowen produced inventive radio for the nation.

More ambiguous than Bowen and Sackville-West's efforts to contribute to a cohesive national culture during conflict was Rose Macaulay's talk on the correct use of the term “capitalist” in April of 1945. On the one hand, this etymological programme seems to refer to the ideological schism between capitalism and communism that had contributed to the global conflict and would continue to shape international relations for the next century. On the other hand, more than a discourse on the word “capitalist” itself, Macaulay's broadcast gives prominence to the importance of linguistic precision, a topic which had been a mainstay of class distinctions between the wars. On the brink of peace and the social, political and economic shifts it was predicted to herald, Macaulay cleaved to the stability and familiarity of the correct

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of the Trollope broadcast, see Bloom, pp. 100-103.

use of words. Through her linguistic conservatism, Macaulay sought to perpetuate the cultural hierarchy that she had benefitted from in the interwar period.

As Macaulay's own radio criticism attests, some factions of the intelligentsia would continue to use linguistic precision as a criterion for inclusion in the cultured classes in post-war Britain. This elite felt increasingly assailed by the state-educated, BBC-English-speaking masses of welfare state Britain. It would not be too much to say that the kernel of Macaulay's apparently unifying and egalitarian talk on the BBC in April 1945 was a commitment to class division, intellectual snobbery, and elitism, themes which she would develop more fully when critiquing the Corporation for both *Time and Tide* and the BBC itself. Although appearing to participate in the production of national culture with solidarity at the BBC, Macaulay would reject the narrative of a unified state only weeks after VE Day. In her May 1945 *Time and Tide* review, she reverted to notions of phrasal accuracy: "One gets tired of this myth of absolute fearlessness that we are building up about ourselves; it is not accurate".<sup>8</sup> Although the writer issued this warning as a caution against rampant nationalism in the post-war period, her rejection of unity also allowed her to champion a stratified BBC along divided lines of taste. For Macaulay, an undivided and fearless Britain was not accurate, linguistically or socially, and the British Broadcasting Corporation ought to reflect a class-divided reality.

Indeed, while the BBC hoped that women writers would help to produce a unified national culture during the war, sometimes their participation worked to undermine aspects of said culture from the inside. Una Marson, for example, collaborated with the BBC by producing programmes that showcased new colonial forms of culture,

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<sup>8</sup> "May on the Air", p. 454.

including West Indian music and literature. Such culture from the colonies was, temporarily at least, strategically included in the broader definition of “Britishness” in order to encourage colonial citizens to feel invested in a war they were also required to fight. As such, Marson’s curation of West Indian music in 1945 was ostensibly an act of imperial unity— she was a colonial citizen offering her knowledge and labour to the empire in order to maintain morale during the global conflict. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, such displays of imperial unity on the shortwaves of the BBC exacerbated nationalist and anti-imperial sentiments that were already taking hold in the region. Marson’s efforts to represent a diverse and inclusive West Indian national identity on the BBC established a shared sense of affiliation between the islands, an imagined community, that had previously been undermined by the logic of imperial unification under the rubric of Britishness. This shared identity would coalesce as a nationalist movement that resulted in independence from imperial rule. When the BBC sought to evoke a unified empire during the war, the diverse cultural forms that were newly included worked to undermine the hegemony of imperial British culture. Thus, like Macaulay, the kernel of Marson’s propaganda broadcasting was post-war division.

These early months of 1945 were a moment to reimagine the British state in the post-war context. And, during that period, the women writers of this thesis simultaneously gestured backwards to the cultural context in which the BBC was founded, those years between the war marked by a pacifist, feminised modernity, and looked forward, to peace and the project of reconstruction along new, unknown lines. The previous chapters have argued that given the opportunity to discuss literature on the airwaves, the selected women expanded their broadcasting remit to include more listeners, more voices, or, in Macaulay’s case, more intellectual

rigour and class division in questions of literary culture. As such, they can be seen as arbiters of changing cultural concerns, negotiating BBC policy and systemic sexism to expand their prominence and influence on contemporary cultural debates.

Although the four women of this study often conformed to BBC expectations and aspirations sufficiently for the Corporation to permit them access to the airwaves, they also all subverted the BBC's conception of them as women writers by occupying more or different airtime than they had initially been allocated.

Opportunities to work with the BBC were more than just another writing job for the writers in *Wireless Women*. Through collaboration with BBC producers and their development of literary discourse on-air, these women sought to expand the limited remits they were given by the Corporation and thereby enhance their reputations and audiences. For Sackville-West, broadcasting involved compiling an eclectic, and at times controversial, reading list for her diverse audience, predicated on a shared understanding between reviewer and reader that had been developed through a dialogic commitment to broadcasting. Marson, similarly, offered a nuanced and heteroglot broadcasting ethos, using her position as employee at the BBC to provide a wide range of West Indians with the opportunity to speak at the microphone. In doing so, she fostered a set of shared cultural practices for Caribbean audiences that foregrounded language and place as symbols of identity and community.

By contrast, Macaulay had a much more reactionary response to post-war cultural changes, a response which she used her broadcasting opportunities to promote. Her commitment to established cultural hierarchies led her to support the BBC in its stratified provision of elite culture. In doing so, Macaulay could protect the spheres of cultural production in which she and women writers like her had influence.

Meanwhile, Bowen faced a more restrictive BBC. Her efforts to mitigate the trend

towards academic literary criticism were impeded by the BBC's organisational structure and, ultimately, the listeners' disregard for Bowen's perspective.

Regardless, Bowen, like all the women in this thesis, used the BBC to campaign for a receptive atmosphere for contemporary writers— one of tolerance, understanding and engagement from an interested readership.

And, while this study has focussed predominantly on the subjects' discursive and authorial roles at the Corporation, another area of study that would offer fruitful insights into women's influence on broadcasting is how women writers developed an engaged readership through other means. For example, some women writers, such as Olivia Manning, Peggy Wells and Barbara Burnham, specialised in adapting novels and short stories for the air. By contrast, writers such as Sylvia Townsend Warner, E.H. Young, Winifred Holtby and Daphne Du Maurier often had their short stories and novels read on-air, especially when *Woman's Hour* began its "Serial Story" feature in 1946, a platform for women's writing that endures to this day.<sup>9</sup> A critical study of such creative undertakings would offer a different understanding of moments of conflict and confluence between mid-century women writers and the Corporation than the current work has done.

And finally, the experience of broadcasting at the BBC had a range of different impacts on the four women's writing careers. First, and perhaps most straightforwardly, Vita Sackville-West's prolonged exposure to contemporary novels during the period that she was a BBC reviewer coincided with the creation and publication of her two most critically respected and popular novels; *The Edwardians*

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<sup>9</sup> Although *Woman's Hour* did not exclusively feature women's writing in this slot, the female-dominated audience of the programme encouraged producers to select texts that would interest women which were often also written by women.

(1930) and *All Passion Spent* (1931). It appears that Sackville-West developed an informed understanding of the field of contemporary literature during this time, enabling her to put into practice some of the techniques and themes that constituted a highly marketable fiction during the early 1930s. According to Stephen Barkway, *The Edwardians* sold 18,000 copies in its first three weeks on the booksellers' shelves, requiring the Hogarth Press to order a second impression of 8,000 copies in early June 1930.<sup>10</sup> "To put this into perspective," Barkway notes, "Woolf's latest novel, *Orlando*, had an initial print run of only 5,080".<sup>11</sup> Based as it was on her reminiscences of Edwardian high society, Sackville-West herself had an inkling that "for snobbish reasons alone [*The Edwardians*] ought to be highly popular!".<sup>12</sup> Sackville-West was aware of the preoccupations of the reading public through the correspondence she had conducted with her listeners for a number of years. Through this and her wider engagement with literary culture, she also understood contemporary anxieties about class and status as denoted by reading material, anxieties that were the underpinning of the 'Battle of the Brows' and that *The Edwardians* catered to in such a way as to tap into a large, book-buying audience. Such an understanding of the zeitgeist also informed Sackville-West's 1931 novel, *All Passion Spent*, which details the final years of Lady Slane, who finds freedom after her husband, a former prime minister, dies. Also commercially successful, both of the Woolfs thought *All Passion Spent* was a "better" book than *The Edwardians*.<sup>13</sup> And, indeed, while some critics consider Sackville-West's treatment of her female

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Barkway, "Oh Lord What It Is To Publish a Best Seller': The Woolf's Professional Relationship with Vita Sackville-West", in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. by Helen Southworth, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 234- 259, p. 240.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Vita Sackville-West, *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Louise DeSalvo and Mitchell Leaska, (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1984), p. 352.

<sup>13</sup> Barkway, p. 242.

characters as modernist in the sense of egalitarian and modern, neither of her BBC-coetaneous best-sellers are especially formally innovative.<sup>14</sup> As such, the clearest impact on Sackville-West's writing career is the phenomenal popular and financial success of the work she produced during her time as a BBC reviewer and the additional name-recognition that her bi-weekly broadcasts might have precipitated.

Quite the opposite was the case for Marson. As a result of her broadcasting experience, Marson's writerly identity became more formally experimental but she received limited public recognition of her literary or radiophonic work. What is more, Marson suffered a great deal personally and physically as a result of her time at the BBC, rather than benefitting both professionally and financially as Sackville-West had done. As has been noted in this thesis and by Ian Whittington, James Proctor and Anna Snaith, Marson continued to face explicit and implicit racism throughout her tenure at the BBC. In "Making Waves: Una Marson at the BBC", I argue that such exposure to prejudice sharpened her writing style from the pastoral poetry that Marson had produced before she spent time in London into pieces that were far starker and formally innovative.<sup>15</sup> For example, the poem "Politeness", published in her 1945 collection *Towards the Stars*, consists of the following six lines:

They tell us  
That our skin is black  
But our hearts are white.  
We tell them  
That their skin is white  
But their hearts are black.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For Sackville-West's modernist aging woman, see Kathleen Williams Renk, "'Blackberrying in the Sun'? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent*", *Women*, (2016), 27:3, pp. 317-328.

<sup>15</sup> Leonie Thomas, "Making Waves: Una Marson's Poetic Voice at the BBC", *Media History*, 24:2, (2018), pp. 212-225.

<sup>16</sup> Una Marson, "Politeness," in *Una Marson: Selected Poems*, ed. by Alison Donnell, (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2011), p. 166.

I suggest that Marson's inversion of customary politeness and colonial paternalism, represented in this poem by the reclamation of the verb 'tell', acts as a modernist rejection of convention that moves her work into more experimental, contemporary contexts. It seems likely that the very long hours Marson worked for the Corporation, combined with the danger inherent in working in central London during the Blitz and the psychic strain of continued colonial and patriarchal discrimination, contributed significantly to her increasingly austere poetic style.

Additionally, the formal requirements of regular broadcasting, particularly of curating the Message Parties, may have had an impact on the brevity and structure of Marson's poetry. After years of keeping contributors to time, of blending multiple voices into complex but consistent broadcasts, and of scripting, editing, and speaking on the modern medium of radio, Marson's poetry reflects the time-boundedness and succinctness of the sound bite or news clip. She also employs an awareness of heteroglossia or polyvalence that is missing in some of her earlier work. The untitled poem reproduced at the end of Chapter 2, for example, is an instance of Marson striving to find a poetic voice that encompasses the multiplicity of the West Indies, in all its cultural and political complexity, rather than reaching for the conventions of the romantic poetry that she had experimented with in her work from the 1930s. In this sense, employment at the BBC can be seen to have influenced the content and the form of Marson's subsequent writing by making it new, in a modernist sense, and making it more self-consciously 'West Indian'.

However, as scholars, we are somewhat limited in our analysis of the influence of broadcasting on Marson's written work. This is because a significant consequence of Marson's BBC work was the erasure of her professional reputation in the following decades, due in large part to the shattering mental breakdown she suffered as a



result of over-work and emotional strain in late 1945. As I and others have detailed, Marson's tenure at the BBC came to an end with the onset of severe mental health difficulties that precipitated her certification and forced admittance into a hospital.<sup>17</sup> As a colonial subject with no immediate family in the country, Marson's BBC colleague, Joan Doutrrie, was forced to sign the certification paperwork, meaning that, on some level, the BBC machinery was responsible for administering the care that Marson needed in the spring of 1946. Eventually, the BBC, in consultation with Marson's sister in Jamaica, arranged for Marson to be accompanied on the journey back to Jamaica with friends, a move that the writer fought. Marson's sister thought that Marson herself was resistant because she worried that leaving Britain under such circumstances would effectively curtail the professional successes the writer had achieved whilst there.<sup>18</sup> This fear was to be proved correct. While there is evidence in the BBC's archive that Marson contacted her erstwhile colleagues for a reference for radio work in America in the late 1950s, Marson never achieved the kind of career success or prominence she had reached at the BBC again, nor did she publish any more plays or poems.<sup>19</sup> In this way, the psychological consequences of broadcasting at the BBC ultimately hindered Marson's professional career and obscured her significance until her role in Caribbean literature was recovered in the important that has been undertaken in the last decade to reverse such cultural forgetting.

Where the consequences of their BBC engagement were fairly clear-cut for Sackville-West and Marson— for one, professional success, for the other, personal

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas, p. 221-222.

<sup>18</sup> Miss Marson Jones to Grenfell Williams, 9 September 1946, Left Staff, Marson, Una Maud Victoria, L1/290/2, BBC WAC.

<sup>19</sup> See File L1/290/2, BBC WAC for more details.

pain and professional diminishment— the effects of radio broadcasting are more subtle for Macaulay and Bowen. This is due, in part, to the fact that both writers engaged most consistently with the Corporation towards the end of their careers, when they had already established well-respected authorial reputations. Both writers, at least middle-aged when they were writing the broadcasts that I analyse in this thesis, could be said to rely more heavily on BBC employment during the post-war period as a result of a contraction of the publishing industry, brought about by paper shortages and financial hardship in the post-war years. In this sense, broadcasting provided a practical accretion of their professional income during a period of relative scarcity in the writing world.

Yet their exposure to the machinations and methods of broadcasting did influence Macaulay and Bowen's later fiction. Perhaps the wide-spread name recognition that the BBC had provided for Vita Sackville-West also applied to Macaulay; her final novel, *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956), met with great public and critical approval. It won the James Tait Black Memorial prize of 1956 and crowned Macaulay's career before her death, two years later. *Trebizond* gestures to Macaulay's familiarity with radio in two significant ways. The first is the repeated encounters that the main characters, Laurie and her Aunt Dot, have with BBC employees and apparatus throughout their travels. The Corporation has worked its way into the very fabric of Macaulay's fiction in much the same way that radio was now prevalent in everyday life. Having spotted a BBC recording van in a village in Turkey, for example, Aunt Dot exclaims:

I wonder who else is rambling about Turkey this spring. Seventh Day Adventists, Billy Grahamites, writers, diggers, photographers, spies, us, and

now the B.B.C. We shall all be tumbling over each other. Abroad isn't at all what it was.<sup>20</sup>

Dot sees the presence of the British Broadcasting Company in her exotic destination as the final confirmation that Western organizations and interests have polluted or compromised her ideal of a romanticised Orient, an "abroad" that evokes an otherness and antiquity cluttered with religious, academic, political, and now media interests.

Not only is the BBC an irritant to Dot, but its world-wide reach and approach to representing foreign cultures speaks to increasingly bland, globalized reporting:

Reporters for the B.B.C. have such an extra-ordinary effect on the people they meet- wherever they go the natives sing. It seems so strange, they never do it when I am travelling. The B.B.C oughtn't to let them, it spoils the programme. Just when you are hoping for a description of some nice place, everybody suddenly bursts out singing. Even Displaced Persons do it. And singing sounds much the same everywhere, so I switch off".<sup>21</sup>

BBC reporters function as a synecdoche for a modern presence in and understanding of the countries and regions that Aunt Dot, and Macaulay herself, also travelled in. They are levelling agents, "urging crowds...to sing and dance", regardless of the cultural specificity of the place in which they are recording.<sup>22</sup> As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, such generalisations and lazy mindedness were anathema to Macaulay's belief in a precise, intellectually robust public broadcaster. As such, the BBC comes in for satire and mockery from a frequent broadcaster and we can see that Macaulay's proximity to the Corporation allowed her to use her inside knowledge to furnish some of the humour that made *Trebizond* such a popular success. Macaulay uses her conscious mentions of the BBC to delineate class and taste difference throughout the novel in ways that was consistent with her critical

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<sup>20</sup> Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond*, 1956, (London: Futura, 1981), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

position on-air at the BBC. As reflected in the opening of Chapter 3, Macaulay used *Trebizond* to satirize the Corporation's stratification:

From cafes and squares loud speakers blared across the water to us the eternal Turkish erotic whine, I dare say no more erotic than the British kind that you get on the Light Programme, but more eternal, for the Light Programme sometimes has a change, though it loves and whines much more than the Home Programme does, and on the Third they scarcely love and whine at all, which is why those whom aunt Dot calls the Masses very seldom turn this programme on.<sup>23</sup>

In this analysis of the BBC, Macaulay delineates the differences apparent on each of the Corporation's channels by 1956 and notes the class aspects that affect listening patterns.

By contrast, the second way this writer's fictional style was influenced by broadcasting is a contradiction to her stated position on stratification. Macaulay's exposure to diverse cultural programming at the BBC may have in fact, unintentionally, inspired her to write her most universally appealing novel by blending a range of styles, voices, and tastes in a novel that displays the very opposite of stratification: heteroglossia. Macaulay did not consider herself to be a "natural novelist" and, as Maria Stella Florio notes, decried fiction as "the form of literary activity which give me the least pleasure".<sup>24</sup> Yet in *Trebizond*, Macaulay plays with tastes, genres, and lexical associations to create a text that brims with irreverence.

Florio goes on:

[Macaulay] fully exploits the power of words to create verbal haloes-....as well as nursery-rhymes, biblical verses, popular songs, unexpected literary quotations, and thoughts and images from her own previous writings, all contributing to create 'nimbuses of association' in the novel which is, fittingly enough, a story of travel and exploration.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Stella Florio, "The Towers or Trebizond: Language and the Joys and Paradoxes of the Modern World", in *Rose Macaulay, Gender, and Modernity*, ed. by Kate Macdonald, (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 161-174, p. 163.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 164-5.

The description of Macaulay's final literary work here evokes the cacophony and variance of turning the mid-century radio dial and hearing an assortment of voices speaking, snatches of music, echoes of plays or skits or news transmissions, designed to appeal to the full range of the listening audience. Where Florio ascribes such a creative "world of words and their sounds, echoes, and assonances" as "post-modernist" in its playfulness, I argue that it is radiophonic or, more precisely, the consequence of familiarity with both broadcasting on and listening to the full spectrum of the BBC's airwaves.<sup>26</sup> Despite having spent the previous decade of her critical career arguing for more rigid demarcations between tastes at the Corporation, in *Trebizond*, Macaulay produces an eclectic fictional work that appealed to a wide audience and has been remembered as one of her most popular and important texts. Writing to confidante and friend, Father Johnson, Macaulay indicates an acceptance, even a pleasure, at the universality of her last novel: "The camel and ape are popular with those who don't make much of the religious theme so there is something for everyone".<sup>27</sup> In providing 'something for everyone', Macaulay's last novel is an anti-stratification text, suggesting that the cumulative effect of broadcasting was to widen her cultural engagement, rather than sanctify the elite culture she so ardently defended as an on-air critic.

And finally, the traces and echoes of Bowen's engagement with broadcasting are also detectable in her later work. Critics have begun to attend to the presence and function of sound in Bowen's final three novels, *A World of Love* (1955), *The Little Girls* (1964), and *Eva Trout* (1968). Most notable of these scholarly interventions are Allan Hepburn in his essay "Acoustic Modernism: BBC Radio and The Little Girls",

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168 and p. 171.

<sup>27</sup> Qtd in Florio, p. 171.

his collection of the writer's speeches and broadcasts, *Listening-In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen* (2010), and Emily C. Bloom in her monograph, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968* (2016).<sup>28</sup> Bloom, in particular, argues for the gothic quality, the hauntedness, that radio or disembodied sound evokes in Bowen's later fiction, noting that "[o]ne of Bowen's principal fascinations with radio was with its occult properties".<sup>29</sup> Bloom suggests that Bowen's imaginative resurrection of Anthony Trollope in the *New Judgement* series for the BBC influenced her approach to broadcasting as a gothic force that is sometimes violent.<sup>30</sup> In *A World of Love*, for example, the transmitted chimes of Big Ben forcibly reconnect the isolated Anglo-Irish Big House with the present:

At the full, the first of the whanging blows struck down upon quivering ether, the echo swelling as it uprose. Repetition, fall of stroke after stroke where stroke after stroke had already fallen, could do no more than had been done: once was enough. From the first, the room was a struck ship—hither, thither slithered the thoughts and senses; the windows like port-holes careened over, appearing actually to fill up. The sound of Time, inexorably coming as it did, at once was absolute and fatal. Passionless Big Ben.<sup>31</sup>

This passage is rife with onomatopoeia; the "hither, thither slithered" and the "whanging" and "quivering" evokes the physical impact of a loud broadcast on the psyches of those listening: traumatised Jane, impervious Antonia, and radio "fanatical" Maud.<sup>32</sup> As Bloom suggests, radio can be very clearly heard in Bowen's later novel.

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<sup>28</sup> Allan Hepburn, "Acoustic Modernism: BBC Radio and The Little Girls", *Textual Practice*, 27:1, (2013), pp. 143-162 and *Listening-In: Broadcasts, Speeches, and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. by Allan Hepburn, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). See also Emily C. Bloom, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

<sup>29</sup> Bloom, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Qtd in Bloom p. 112.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

However, Bowen had engaged in such sonorous stylistic techniques before, particularly in her wartime short stories. In the title story of her *Demon Lover* short story collection (1945), the *absence* of sound in Mrs Drover's abandoned London home is an annihilating force: "The hollowness of the house this evening cancelled years on years of voices, habits, and steps. Through the shut windows she only heard rain fall on the roofs around".<sup>33</sup> Whereas broadcast sound precipitates the full realisation of contemporary reality for the inhabitants of the Big House in *A World of Love*, the lack of such aural markers of civilization isolates the city home of Mrs Drover, unmooring it from a quotidian reality and leaving it open to supernatural interference. In both instances, sound, and particularly broadcast sound, acts as a bridge or connection to a wider reality. That Bowen was cognisant of this before her work with the Further Education department suggests that sound was always a significant part of her literary sensibility. Where I diverge from Bloom's analysis is by suggesting that Bowen's work for Further Education appears to have had an effect on her depiction of how communications media came to dominate over imaginative institutional education in its shaping of opinion and experience. Indeed, the unrelenting whanging of the strike of Big Ben in *A World of Love*, while often read as a symbol of British imperialism and the merciless progress of Time, also represents the un-nuanced, confounding effect of a constant stream of information on poorly educated minds. It is the "thoughts and senses" that "slithered", "hither, thither" as a consequence of the transmission, with rational thought seemingly impossible under the onslaught of sound.

In her last novel, *Eva Trout*, the confounding nature of broadcasting on a person's intellect is even more stark. In this novel, the eponymous Eva is an orphan who

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<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 747.

attends two schools yet receives almost no effective education. When she meets Iseult, a gifted teacher, at the second school, Eva receives some of the love, care, and education she desires until their relationship breaks down and Eva's education is suspended for good. "She desisted from teaching me. She abandoned my mind," Eva later decries, "I had never been...I was *beginning* to be".<sup>34</sup> The rest of the novel grapples with Eva's inability to be in a meaningful sense, to know herself sufficiently to communicate or to connect with others. In order to fill the void of self-knowledge and awareness, Eva purchases an array of communication devices to fill her semi-adult home:

Outstanding examples of everything auro-visual on the market this year, 1959, were ranged around the surprised wall: large screen television set, sonorous-looking radio, radio-gramophone in a teak coffin, other gramophone with attendant stereo cabinets, 16 millimetre projector with screen ready, a recording instrument of BBC proportions, not to be written off as a tape recorder. Other importations: a superb typewriter shared a metal-legged table with a cash register worthy to be its mate; and an intercom whose purposes seemed uncertain, had been installed. What looked like miles of flex matted the parquet. Glaring in upon all this, the June sun took on the heightened voltage of studio lighting.<sup>35</sup>

The sheer amount of technology that Eva has acquired reflects her thirst for knowledge and for connection with society— she wishes to see, hear, project, and record all manner of human experience. By using her newfound wealth to buy such high-end equipment, Eva can be seen to adopt the post-war consumer mentality that material wealth equates to education and, by extension, knowledge. Yet the disconnectedness and disuse of all this technology reveals the hollowness of the promise that communications media holds without an existing creative or intellectual commitment. The superfluity of media in this room renders it studio-like; cables snaking on the floor, the light unnaturally bright. No expense has been spared with

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout, or Changing Scenes*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), p. 203.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.



this state-of-the-art equipment. The officiousness with which the reader is told not to confuse a 'recording instrument' with a 'tape recorder' evokes the sensitivity of the BBC engineers Bowen may have worked with during the recoding of *Truth and Fiction*. Set just three years after that series aired, Eva's living room conjures the technology of the BBC studio but without a public service broadcasting mandate: the 'purpose' of this technology 'seemed uncertain'. Finally, then, Eva informs Iseult that her computer will shortly be arriving. Pressed on her need for a computer, Eva remarks, "It thinks... That is what you used to tell me to do".<sup>36</sup> Instructed, once, by her teacher to think for herself, Eva instead turns to technology to fill the void left by her lack of education.

Responding to this passage, Bloom maintains that Bowen's last novel signals the failure of the novel form to exist meaningfully in a mediated world.<sup>37</sup> It seems accurate to suggest that Eva's inability to think for herself is a comment by Bowen on the bankruptcy of modern thought. Where I go further than Bloom is to argue that Eva's reliance on technology, coupled with her lack of education, represents Bowen's fear that imaginative education could not exist in a mediated world. In this imagining, the rigorous education of the kind Bowen received at Downe House has already been replaced by slick, vacuous broadcasting that purports to be educative. In *Eva*, the unsatisfactory nature of such technological connection is seen to fail to provide human connection or imaginative depth, those intellectual qualities that Bowen considered necessary for a profound understanding of the world and, especially, literature. One could read Eva's failure to connect to others as a symptom of the post-war world demanding easy, clear, and stark answers to complex

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Bloom, p. 126.

questions of self. As reflected in Bowen's fraught negotiation with the Further Education department and the audience of *Truth and Fiction*, the writer still held that an imaginative education could equip the modern reader with the skills of uncovering nuanced truths. As it was, by 1956, the glittering-eyed consumers of literature were increasingly dismissive of such pedagogic positions. Bowen's later novels, and especially *Eva Trout*, reflect the new, mediated educational landscape of the post-war world as well as Bowen's exasperation and disillusion with it. Participating with integrity and intelligence in BBC broadcasts, the women in the chapters of *Wireless Women* shifted the emphasis of certain corners of the radio schedule towards their own personal views of culture. By engaging in literary discourse on their own terms, these women temporarily re-directed the broadcasting apparatus to questions and debates that interested those who were marginalised from the cultural hegemony, due to their gender, race, or class. Radio broadcasting pervaded the lives of these writers as much as, if not more than, it had come to dominate the cultural life of the nation. In the confusion and transience of wartime London, Macaulay wrote to her sister about the importance of radio to her daily life: "I have hired a wireless, and may buy it in the end, if mine doesn't turn up...So now I can hear the news tonight... and Handel's Concerto...at 10. I don't care what anyone says about not buying things, a wireless I will have".<sup>38</sup> A committed listener to current affairs and classical music programming on the BBC, Macaulay sought out a replacement wireless when hers was misplaced during the war. Regardless of rationing and state warnings about consumption, Macaulay would not be denied access to the radio. A wireless she would have, and, along with a few, select others, a wireless woman she would become.

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<sup>38</sup> Rose Macaulay to Jean Macaulay, 24 November 1940, ERM/9/100, WREN.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: BBC Women and their Education

Name	Dates (BBC)	Department	Role	University	School
Allison Booth	1942	Overseas Service	Script Writer and Assistant		
Anna Kallin	1940-1964	European Services and Talks, predominantly Third Programme	Producer	Leipzig University	
Audrey Russell	1942- 1951, (freelanced at BBC until 1980)	News and Outside Broadcasts	War Correspondent and commentator	Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, London	Private governess, Southlands, Harrow and Villa St Georges, Paris
Barbara Bray	1940-1961	Drama, predominantly Third Programme	Script Editor, Translator, Writer and Producer	Girton College, Cambridge	Preston Manor County Grammar School, Wembley
Barbara Burnham	1933-1967	Drama, Radio and Television, and Features	Adapter, Writer, and Producer	Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, London	
Beatrice Horton	1947-1956 (although freelanced at the BBC until 1958)	Talks and Further Education Department	Producer		St Felix School
Cecilia Reeves	1933-1967	Foreign Liaison Office, French Service	Foreign Liaison Officer, Producer, and BBC Representative in Paris	Newnham College, Cambridge	King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham
Clare Lawson Dick	1935-1976	Programme Planning, Home Service, (later Radio 4)	Assistant, eventually Controller of Radio 4	University of Grenoble, King's College London and the London School of Economics	Channing School for Girls, London
Cynthia Pughe	1927-1965	Drama	Secretary, Play Adapter		
Elisabeth Rowley	1950s	Talks	Producer		
Elizabeth Blunt	1946-1965	Third	Presentation Assistant		
Grace Wyndham Goldie	1944-1965	Talks, radio and television	Producer, eventually Head of Talks and Current Affairs	Bristol University,	Cheltenham Ladies College

				Somerville College, Oxford	
Helen Arbuthnot	1948-1964	Talks	Producer	London School of Economics	
Hilda Matheson	1927-1932	Talks	Director of Talks Department	Society of Oxford Home Students, now known as St Anne's College,	St Felix School
Isa Benzie	1927-1964	Foreign Department and Talks	Assistant, Director of the Foreign Department, 1932-1938 and Talks Producer 1943-1964	Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford	Laurel Bank School, Glasgow
Janet Adam Smith	1928-1935	<i>The Listener</i>	Assistant Editor	Somerville College, Oxford	Cheltenham Ladies College
Janet Quigley	1930-1945 and 1950-1962	Foreign Department and Talks	Producer, Editor, Woman's Hour, 1947-1956, Chief Assistant, Talks 1956-1960	Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford	Richmond Lodge, Belfast
Jean Rowntree	1944-1945 and 1948- 1966	Talks and Further Education	Assistant Talks Producer, Senior Producer, Director of Further Education	Somerville College, Oxford	Downe House, Kent
Jenifer Wayne		Features	Producer	Somerville College, Oxford	
Joan Gilbert	1933-1953	Television, Overseas Service			
Joanna Spicer	1941-1973	Overseas Service, Television	Programme Planner, Assistant, Head of Programme Planning, Assistant Controller, Television	Somerville College, Oxford	
Joyce Thirlaway Rowe	>1951	Press Office	Sound Publicity Officer		
Leonie Cohn	1952- 1958	German Service, Talks,	Wartime Translator for German Service, seconded to Radio Hamburg after war, then re-joined BBC Talks for Third Programme	Rome University	

Mabel Constanduros	1925-1948	Variety, Drama and Children's Hour	Actor and Writer	Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, London	Mary Datchelor School, Camberwell
Margery Wace	1930-1944	Talks, Empire Service	Producer, Empire Talks Director	St Hugh's College, Oxford	
Marianne Helweg		Swedish Service, Features	Play Adapter		
Marjorie Anderson	1946-1950, Home from 1950	Third	Announcer	Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, London	Felixstowe College, Suffolk, St James's Secretarial College, London
Marjorie Banks		Features	Producer	University of London	
Marjorie Scott Johnston	1940	Photographic Section	Assistant, <i>The Listener</i>		
Mary Adams	First broadcast, 1927, employed 1930- 1939 and 1946-1958	Talks, Television	Producer, Head of Television Talks	University College, Cardiff and Newnham College, Cambridge	Godolphin School, Salisbury
Mary Hope Allen	1927-1958, although she continued to adapt plays on a freelance basis until 1975	Programme Research Unit, which became the Features Department, Drama, predominantly for the Third	Producer	Slade School	Downe House, Kent
Mary Somerville	1927-1955	Schools and Talks	Head of Schools Broadcasts before becoming Controller of Sound, Home	Somerville College, Oxford	Often home-schooled due to ill health
May Elizabeth Jenkin	1927-1952	Children's Hour	Producer, Head of Children's Hour		
Mollie Greenhalgh	1950s	Drama	Script Unit		
Mona Dinwiddie		Engineering	Programme Engineer		
Nesta Pain	1942-1963, and part-time from 1966-1971	Features and Drama	Radio and Television Scriptwriter and Producer	Liverpool University and Somerville College, Oxford	West Heath School, Liverpool
Noni Wright	1939-1946	Empire Service	Scriptwriter and Producer		Auckland Girls' Grammar School
Olive Shapley	1934-1973	Northern Region, Features,	Producer and Presenter	St Hugh's College, Oxford	

		Woman's Hour Presenter			
Patricia Hughes	1946, 1960s		Announcer		
Peggy Wells	1950s-1970s	Script Unit	Writer and Adapter		
Penelope Fitzgerald	1937-1948	Gramophone Department	Records Production Assistant	Somerville College, Oxford	Wycombe Abbey, High Wycombe
Prue Smith	1950s	Talks, predominantly for Third	Producer	Somerville College, Oxford	
Rhoda Power	1927-1957	Schools	Producer and Presenter	St Andrews University	Oxford High School
Ursula Eason	1933-1970	Children's Hour, Northern Ireland region, Television Talks and Film Unit, Children's Programmes (TV)	Organiser, Producer later Assistant Head, Children's Programmes (TV)	University College, London	

## Appendix 2: Vita Sackville-West's Book Reviews, May 1929-October 1932

### Gender breakdown of reviews, by programme

	?	F	M
<b>Books in General</b>	6.00%	21.50%	72.50%
<b>Books of the Week</b>	4.00%	22.60%	73.30%
<b>New Novels</b>	2.00 %	43.00%	55.00%

### Full list of Books Reviewed by Vita Sackville-West on the BBC, May 1929-October 1932

Date	Title	Author	Publisher	Cost	Programme
02-May-29	<i>The True Heart</i>	Sylvia Townsend Warner	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
02-May-29	<i>The Squires Daughter</i>	F.M. Mayor	Constable	7s 6d	New Novels
02-May-29	<i>Brothers and Sisters</i>	Ivy Compton-Burnett	Heath Cranton	7s 6d	New Novels
02-May-29	<i>Roon</i>	Herbert Asquith	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
16-May-29	<i>The Semi-Attached Couple</i>	Emily Eden	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	7s 6d	New Novels
16-May-29	<i>The Coat without Seam</i>	Maurice Baring	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
16-May-29	<i>The Yellow Rock</i>	David Footman	Herbert Jenkins	7s 6d	New Novels
30-May-29	<i>A Background for Caroline</i>	Helen Ashton	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
30-May-29	<i>The Embezzlers</i>	Valentine Kataev Trans	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
30-May-29	<i>Paper Houses</i>	William Plomer	Hogarth Press	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>Bretherton</i>	W.F. Morris	Bles	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>Combed Out</i>	Fredrich Voigt	Jonathan Cape	3s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>Barbarian Stories</i>	Naomi Mitchison	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>The Storm of Steel</i>	Ernest Junger	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>Squad</i>	James Wharton	Lane	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>War</i>	Ludvig Renn, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir	Martin Secker	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>	Erich Maria Remarque	Putnam	7s 6d	New Novels
13-Jun-29	<i>Undertones of War</i>	Edmund Blunden	Cobden Sanderson	7s 6d	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>Two Masters</i>	A.W. Wheen	Faber and Faber	1/-	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>Cote d'Or</i>	H.M. Tomlinson	Faber and Faber	1/-	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>Speedy Death</i>	Gladys Mitchell	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>Dewey Rides</i>	L.A.G. Strong	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>Grand Manner</i>	Louis Kronenberger	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels



27-Jun-29	<i>The Sleeping Fury</i>	Martin Armstrong	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
27-Jun-29	<i>The Galaxy</i>	Susan Ertz	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>The Worlds Illusion</i>	Jakob Wassermann	Allen & Unwin	10/-	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>World's Ends</i>	Jakob Wassermann	Allen & Unwin	7s 6d	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>Three Came Unarmed</i>	E. Arnot Robertson	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>The Wave</i>	Evelyn Scott	Jonathan Cape	15s	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>A Charmed Circle</i>	Helen Ferguson	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
11-Jul-29	<i>The Man Within</i>	Graham Greene	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
08-Aug-29	<i>Wolf Solent</i>	John Cowper Powys	Jonathan Cape	15s	New Novels
08-Aug-29	<i>Gathering of Eagles</i>	Val Gielgud	Constable	7s 6d	New Novels
08-Aug-29	<i>Dark Star</i>	Lorna Moon	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
08-Aug-29	<i>The Good Companions</i>	J.B. Priestley	Heinemann	10s 6d	New Novels
19-Sep-29	<i>The Buried Stream</i>	Lillian Bowes-Lyon	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
19-Sep-29	<i>Joy is My Name</i>	Sarah Salt	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
19-Sep-29	<i>Black Roses</i>	Francis Brett Young	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
19-Sep-29	<i>Harriet Hume</i>	Rebecca West	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
19-Sep-29	<i>Hans Frost</i>	Hugh Walpole	Macmillan	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>Whatever Gods May Be</i>	Andre Maurois, trans. Joseph Collins	Cassells	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>A High Wind in Jamaica</i>	Richard Hughes	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>The Revolt of the Fishermen</i>	Anna Seghers, trans. Margaret Goldsmith	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	6s	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>Hunky</i>	Thames William	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>My Best Short Story Ever</i>	Various	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>Death of my Aunt</i>	C.H.B. Kitchin	Hogarth Press	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Oct-29	<i>The Hidden City</i>	Sir Phillip Gibbs	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>Randalls Round</i>	Eleanor Scott	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>The Near and The Far</i>	L.H. Myers	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>The Young Man</i>	Stephen Potter	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>The Heaven and The Earth</i>	Grace Zaring Stone	Cobden Sanderson	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>Charriot Wheels</i>	Sylvia Thompson	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Oct-29	<i>The Necessary Man</i>	Agnes Lozan	Nisbet	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Nov-29	<i>Frost In April</i>	Malachi Whitaker	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Nov-29	<i>Petruchio</i>	G.B. Stern	Chapman & Hall	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Nov-29	<i>This Poor Player</i>	Shirley Watkins	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	10s 6d	New Novels
14-Nov-29	<i>The History of Button Hill</i>	Gordon Stowell	Gollancz	10s 6d	New Novels
14-Nov-29	<i>Fugitive's Return</i>	Susan Glaspell	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
12-Dec-29	<i>The Emperor's Tigers</i>	Valentine Dobree	Faber and Faber	6s	New Novels
12-Dec-29	<i>The Lacquer Lady</i>	F. Tennyson Jesse	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
12-Dec-29	<i>Whiteoaks</i>	Mazo de la Roche	Macmillan	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>No Man's Land</i>	Vernon Bartlett	Allen & Unwin	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>Dr Serocold</i>	Helen Ashton	Benn	2 ½ d	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>Slowbags and Arethusia</i>	Adrian Alington	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels

03-Feb-30	<i>The Clock</i>	Guy Rawlence	Constable	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>Time, Gentlemen, Time!</i>	Norah Hoult	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>Secrets of a Showman</i>	Charles Cochran	Heinemann in the Crown Library	5/-	New Novels
03-Feb-30	<i>The Murder on the Bus</i>	Cecil Freeman Gregg	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>Down in the Valley</i>	H. W. Freeman	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>Dandelion Days</i>	Henry Williamson	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>The Dark Sisters</i>	Helen Ferguson	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>Turn Back the Leaves</i>	E.M. Delafield	MacMillan	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>Tentaius</i>	Mrs Van Ammers-Fuller	—	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Feb-30	<i>The Voyage Home</i>	Storm Jameson	Knopf	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Special Providence</i>	M.A. Hamilton	Allen & Unwin	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Five Sisters</i>	Violet Kasarine	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>The Miracle of Peille</i>	J.L. Campbell	Collins	6/-	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology</i>	Ed. by Wyndham Lewis	Dent	6/-	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Red Wagon</i>	Lady Eleanor Smith	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Dawn on Mont Blanc</i>	Wilfrid Benson	Hogarth Press	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>The Three Maidens</i>	Eden Philpote	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Not On The Screen</i>	Henry Fuller	Knopf	7s 6d	New Novels
03-Mar-30	<i>Aubrey Dene</i>	Sylvia Hooke	Longmans	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>The Seventh Gate</i>	Muriel Harris	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>Kindness in a Corner</i>	T.F. Powys	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>The Confessions of Zeno</i>	Italo Svevo, trans. Beryl de Zoete	Futnam	10s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>Rogue Herries</i>	Hugh Walpole	MacMillan	10s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>The Triumphant Footman</i>	Edith Olivier	Martin Secker	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>Occupied Territory</i>	Alice Ritchie	The Hogarth Press	7s 6d	New Novels
17-Mar-30	<i>Journey's End</i>	Vernon Bartlett, with R.C. Sherriff	Grosset & Dunlap	—	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>None So Pretty</i>	Margaret Irwin	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>The Beguiling Shore</i>	D.P. Gardiner	Constable	7s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>Rondo</i>	Basil Maine	Duckworth	7s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>To Be Hanged</i>	Bruce Hamilton	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>The Mine in the Desert</i>	David Footman	John Long	7s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>Chapter The Last</i>	Knut Hamsun, trans. Arthur Cheter	Knopf	—	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>The Woman of Andros</i>	Thorton Wilder	Longmans	6/-	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>Rogue Herries</i>	Hugh Walpole	MacMillan	10s 6d	New Novels
31-Mar-30	<i>The Gilded Cupid</i>	Elizabeth Murray	The Bodley Head	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>No Walls for Jasper</i>	Joanna Cannan	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>The Lost Crusade</i>	Daphne Muir	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Egyptian Portrait</i>	C.W. Grundy	Dent	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Here is thy Victory</i>	Iris Barry	Ethan Matthews	7s 6d	New Novels

14-Apr-30	<i>The Best Detective Stories of 1929</i>	Anthology	Faber and Faber	—	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Murder Yet to Come</i>	Isabel Briggs Myers	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>The Broomscod Collar</i>	Gillian Olivier	Heinemann	6s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Give Up Your Lovers</i>	Louis Golding	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Good Sir John</i>	Phoebe Fenwick Gaye	Martin Secker	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>Three Daughters</i>	Jane Dashwood	Murray	7s 6d	New Novels
14-Apr-30	<i>The Golden Goat</i>	Brian Donn-Byrne	Sampson Low	5/-	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>Doctor Fogg</i>	Norman Matson	Benn	6/-	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>The Gift of Life</i>	James Cassidy	Chapman & Hall	—	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>The Mysterious Mr Quin</i>	Agatha Christie	Collins	7s 6d	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>And Co.</i>	Jean Richard Bloch, trans. C.K. Scott-Moncrieff	Gollancz	8s 6d	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>Cimarron</i>	Edna Farber	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>The Finger of Fate</i>	"Sapper"	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
28-Apr-30	<i>The Party Dress</i>	Joseph Hergesheimer	Knopf	7s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>The Under Dogs</i>	Mariano Azuela	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>Cecile</i>	F.L. Lucas	Chatto & Windus	8s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>Seven Bobsworth</i>	J.D. Beresford	Faber and Faber	7/-	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>The Years That Take The Best Away</i>	Barbara Noble	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>Shrimps for Tea</i>	Josephine Blumenfeld	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>Tales Told by Simpson</i>	May Sinclair	Hutchinson	7s 6d	New Novels
12-May-30	<i>The Handmaid of the Lord</i>	Ramon Maria Tenreire trans J.B. Trend	Martin Secker	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>The Forgotten Image</i>	Eleanor Scott	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>Vanishing Shadows</i>	J. Maconachy	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>Violet Ryder</i>	Norah Hoult	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	6/-	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>The Two Tickets Puzzle</i>	J.J. Connington	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>Many Captives</i>	John Owen	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>The Jealous Ghost</i>	L.A.G. Strong	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>The Little Dog Laughed</i>	Leonard Merrick	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>Matka Boskn</i>	Cecile Ines Loos, trans. Margaret Goldsmith	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>Bystander</i>	Maxim Gorki, trans. Norah Hoult	Jonathan Cape	10s 6d	New Novels
26-May-30	<i>A Little Flat in Temple</i>	Pamela Wynne	Phillip Allan	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>Corduroy</i>	Adrian Bell	Cobden Sanderson	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>The Hungry Road</i>	G.U. Ellis	Duckworth	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>Old Miss</i>	T. Bowyen Campbell	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>Free</i>	Blair Niles	Harcourt	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>The Baffle Book</i>	Lassiter Wren and Randle McKay, ed. by J. Tennyson James.	Heinemann	2s 6d	New Novels

09-Jun-30	<i>Wild Justice</i>	George Birmingham	Methuen	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>The Corpse in the Church</i>	T.F.W. Hickey	Methuen	7s 6d	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>The Castle</i>	Franz Kafka, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir	Knopf	4/-	New Novels
09-Jun-30	<i>Coronet</i>	Ramond Komnoff	—	—	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>The Seventh Bowl</i>	"Miles"	Eric Partridge	7s 6d	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Tashkent</i>	Alexander Neverov, trans. Reginald Merton and W.G. Walton	Gollancz	6/-	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Ella</i>	Elisabeth Wilkins Thomas	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Robert Peckham</i>	Maurice Baring	Heinemann	—	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Iron Man</i>	W.R. Burnett	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Printer's Devil</i>	Clemence Dane and Helen Simpson	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>Haxby's Circus</i>	Katherine Prichard	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
23-Jun-30	<i>The Water Gipsies</i>	A.P. Herbert	Methuen	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>The Documents of the Case</i>	Dorothy Sayers and Robert Eustace	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>Sie, She Said...</i>	Alec Waugh	Chapman & Hall	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>The Prince from Overseas</i>	Sir Basil Thomson	Chapman & Hall	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>Soldiers' Pay</i>	William Faulkner	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>Her Father's House</i>	Hilda Vaughn	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>Very Good Jeeves</i>	P.G. Wodehouse	Herbert Jenkins	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>The Street Paved With Water</i>	Almey St John Adcock	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
07-Jul-30	<i>Miss Mole</i>	E.H. Young	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>Novels and Novelists</i>	Katherine Mansfield	Constable	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>Murder on the Palisades</i>	Will Levinrew	Gollancz	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>Madder Music</i>	Mildred Cram	Harran	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>The Beacon Hill Murders</i>	Roger Scarlett	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>Look Homeward, Angel</i>	Thomas Wolfe	Heinemann	10s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>Castle Gay</i>	John Buchan	Hodder & Soughton	7s 6d	New Novels
21-Jul-30	<i>The Great Meadow</i>	Elizabeth Madox Roberts	Viking	—	New Novels
04-Aug-30	<i>The Spanish Virgin</i>	V.S. Pritchett	Benn	7s 6d	New Novels
04-Aug-30	<i>Wanted On The Voyage</i>	Berta Ruck	Cassell	7s 6d	New Novels
04-Aug-30	<i>The Autocracy of Mr Parham</i>	H.G. Wells	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
04-Aug-30	<i>Backwater</i>	T.S. Stribling	Heinemann	7s 6d	New Novels
01-Sep-30	<i>Of Reading Books</i>	John Livingston Lowes	Constable	—	Books in General
01-Sep-30	<i>The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson</i>	Genevieve Taggard	Knopf	15/-	Books in General
08-Sep-30	<i>The Heroines of Ancient Persia</i>	Bapsy Pavry	Cambridge UP	15/-	Books in General
08-Sep-30	<i>On the Leash</i>	Princess Lichnowsky	Jonathan Cape	7s 6d	Books in General
08-Sep-30	<i>The Film Till Now</i>	Paul Rotha	Jonathan Cape	15/-	Books in General

08-Sep-30	<i>Amphion</i>	Dudley Harbro	Dent	6/-	Books in General
22-Sep-30	<i>The Wind on the Heath</i>	Anthology	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books in General
22-Sep-30	<i>Memoirs of an Infantry Officer</i>	Siegfried Sassoon	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	Books in General
22-Sep-30	<i>The Englishman and His Books</i>	Amy Cruse	Harrup	7s 6d	Books in General
22-Sep-30	<i>As We Were</i>	E.F. Benson	Longmans	18/-	Books in General
06-Oct-30	<i>Sir Henry Irving</i>	Gordon Craig	Dent	15/-	Books in General
06-Oct-30	<i>Man and His Universe</i>	John Langdon-Davies	Harpers	16/-	Books in General
06-Oct-30	<i>The Hamwood Papers of the Ladies of Llangollen</i>	Ed. by G.H. Bell	MacMillan	21/-	Books in General
06-Oct-30	<i>Essays of the Year</i>	Anthology	The Argonaut Press	5/-	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>The Press and the Public</i>	George Blake	Faber and Faber	1/-	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>William Shakespeare</i>	M.K. Chambers	Oxford UP	£2.20	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>The Dickens Advertiser</i>	Bernard Darwin	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	—	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>Arabia</i>	St. J. Philby	Benn	18/-	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>Rough Islanders</i>	Henry Nevinson	Routledge	7s 6d	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>How They Do It In England</i>	Rudolf Kircher	Elkin Mathews & Marrot	—	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>St Loe Strachey, His Life and His Paper</i>	Amy Strachey	Gollancz	16/-	Books in General
20-Oct-30	<i>My Early Life</i>	Winston Churchill	Butterworth	—	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>The Two Carlyles</i>	Osbert Durdett	Faber and Faber	15/-	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>H.G. Wells</i>	Geoffrey West	Gerald Hove	10s 8d	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>Fighting Fitzgerald</i>	Mary MacCarthy	Martin Secker	10s 6d	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>The Pleasures of Poetry</i>	Edith Sitwell	Duckworth	6/-	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>Winter Movement</i>	Julian Bell	Chatto & Windus	5/-	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>The Armed Muse</i>	Herbert Palmer	Hogarth Press	—	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>The End of the World</i>	Geoffrey Dennis	Eyre & Spottiswoode	—	Books in General
03-Nov-30	<i>Under the Red Star</i>	Norah Rowan-Hamilton	Herbert Jenkins	12s 6d	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>The Mysterious Universe</i>	James Jeans	Cambridge UP	3s 6d	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>Digging Up The Past</i>	Leonard Wooley	Benn	4/-	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>Poetry and the Ordinary Reader</i>	M.R. Radley	Bell	3s 6d	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>Beethoven</i>	J.W.N. Sullivan	Jonathan Cape	4s 6d	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>The Conquest of Happiness</i>	Bertrand Russell	Allen & Unwin	7s 6d	Books in General
10-Nov-30	<i>Discoveries in England</i>	Emila Cammaerts	Routledge	6/-	Books in General

13-Dec-30	<i>Mrs Gaskell and Her Friends</i>	Elizabeth Haldane	Hodder & Soughton	12s 5d	Books in General
13-Dec-30	<i>Christina Rossetti and Her Poetry</i>	Edith Birkhead	Harrup	2/-	Books in General
13-Dec-30	<i>Loyalties</i>	Sir Arnold Wilson	Oxford UP	25/-	Books in General
13-Dec-30	<i>The Book of the Basques</i>	Rodney Gallop	MacMillan	15/-	Books in General
13-Dec-30	<i>The Magic and Mysteries of Mexico</i>	Lewis Spence	Rider	15/-	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>Sober Truth</i>	Osbert Sitwell and Margaret Barton	Duckworth	12s 6d	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>The Folklore Calendar</i>	George Long	Phillip Allan	12s 6d	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>A Realist Looks at Democracy</i>	Alderton Pink	Benn	10s 6d	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>Vegetable Cookery</i>	Elizabeth Lucas	Heinemann	8s 6d	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>Their Hour Upon the Stage</i>	James Agate	The Mandarin Press	6/-	Books in General
21-Jan-31	<i>An Introduction to Persian Art</i>	A. Upham Pope	Peter Davies	10s 6d	Books in General
04-Feb-31	<i>World Without End</i>	Helen Thomas	Heinemann	6/-	Books in General
04-Feb-31	<i>Things I Remember</i>	Grand Duchess Marie of Russia	Cassell	21/-	Books in General
04-Feb-31	<i>A Journey to China</i>	Arnold Toynbee	Constable	15/-	Books in General
04-Feb-31	<i>Dragons and a Bell</i>	Cicely Farmer	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	Books in General
04-Feb-31	<i>What Shall We Have Today?</i>	Marcel Boulestin	Heinemann	3s 6d	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>If</i>	Ed. by J.C. Squire	Longmans	21/-	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Murder by Persons Unknown</i>	H.L. Adam	Collins	12s 6d	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Some Persons Unknown</i>	Henry Rhodes	Murray	6/-	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Palms and Patios</i>	Rodney Collin	Heath Cranton	7s 6d	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Carl Akeley's Africa</i>	Mary J. Akeley	Gollancz	18/-	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Bring 'Em Back Alive</i>	Frank Buck	Gollancz	16/-	Books in General
18-Feb-31	<i>Africa View</i>	Julian Huxley	Chatto & Windus	15/-	Books in General
04-Mar-31	<i>Men and Memories</i>	William Rothenstein	Faber and Faber	21s	Books in General
04-Mar-31	<i>Scrutinies</i>	Anthology	Wishart	7s 6d	Books in General
04-Mar-31	<i>The Practical Dog Book</i>	Edward Ash	Simpkin Marshall	£1 1s	Books in General
04-Mar-31	<i>The Animal Mind</i>	C. Lloyd Morgan	Arnold	12s 6d	Books in General
04-Mar-31	<i>Green Hell</i>	Julian Duguid	Jonathan Cape	10s 6d	Books in General
18-Mar-31	<i>The Scented Garden</i>	Eleanor Sinclair Rohde	The Medici Society	10s 6d	Books in General
18-Mar-31	<i>Saturday in My Garden</i>	R.H. Farthing	Richards Press	7s 6d	Books in General
18-Mar-31	<i>The Horrors of the Countryside</i>	C.E.M. Joad	Hogarth Press	1s 6d	Books in General
01-Apr-31	<i>An Oxford Portrait Gallery</i>	Janet Courtney	Chapman & Hall	12s 6d	Books in General

01-Apr-31	<i>My First Fifty Years</i>	Paul Poiret	Gollancz	10s 6d	Books in General
01-Apr-31	<i>Round About the Crooked Steeple</i>	Simon Evans	Heath Cranton	3s 6d	Books in General
01-Apr-31	<i>Watchings and Wanderings Among Birds</i>	H.A. Gilbert	Arrowsmith	10s 6d	Books in General
15-Apr-31	<i>The Letters of John Keats</i>	Maurice Buxton Forman	Oxford UP	36/-	Books in General
15-Apr-31	<i>Sketches in the Life of John Clare</i>	Edmund Blunden	Cobden Sanderson	—	Books in General
15-Apr-31	<i>The Mills of Man</i>	George Long	Herbert Joseph	12s 6d	Books in General
15-Apr-31	<i>Stories from Everywhere</i>	Rhoda Power	Evans Brothers	4s 6d	Books in General
15-Apr-31	<i>Flower and Vase</i>	Anne Larnplugh	Country Life	5/-	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>My South Sea Island</i>	Eric Muspratt	Martin Hopkins	7s 6d	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>The People of the Leaves</i>	Vivian Meik	Phillip Allan	12s 6d	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>Just Round the Corner</i>	W.R. Calvert	Skeffington	12s 6d	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>Swift</i>	Carl van Doren	Martin Secker	10s 6d	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>Treasure-Trove in Bookland</i>	Henry de Halsalle	Werner Laurie	10s 6d	Books in General
29-Apr-31	<i>New York</i>	Paul Morand	Heinemann	7s 6d	Books in General
13-May-31	<i>An Adventure</i>	Anne Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	Books in General
13-May-31	<i>Elizabeth Fry's Journeys on the Continent</i>	Elizabeth Gurney	Bodley Head	12s 6d	Books in General
13-May-31	<i>Eastward Ho!</i>	Foster Rhea Dulles	Bodley Head	12s 6d	Books in General
13-May-31	<i>My Northcliffe Diary</i>	Tom Clarke	Gollancz	8s 6d	Books in General
27-May-31	<i>The Sibyl of the North</i>	Faith Compton Mackenzie	Cassell	10s 6d	Books in General
27-May-31	<i>Collected Poems</i>	Martin Armstrong	Secker	7s 6d	Books in General
27-May-31	<i>The Cicadas and Other Poems</i>	Aldous Huxley	Chatto & Windus	5/-	Books in General
27-May-31	<i>Time Stood Still</i>	Paul Cohen-Porthiem	Duckworth	8s 6d	Books in General
15-Jun-31	<i>After Ten Years</i>	Constance Malleson, ed. by Colette O'Neil	Cape	7s 6d	Books in General
15-Jun-31	<i>Some and Sundry</i>	Gilbert Coleridge	Constable	9/-	Books in General
15-Jun-31	<i>Thalassa</i>	M.F. McHugh	MacMillan	7s 6d	Books in General
15-Jun-31	<i>Florence Nightingale</i>	I.B. O'Malley	Butterworth	—	Books in General
13-Jul-31	<i>Long Way to London</i>	Max Murray	Cape	7s 6d	Books in General
13-Jul-31	<i>Red Bread</i>	Maurice Hindus	Cape	12s 6d	Books in General
13-Jul-31	<i>Fact and Fiction About Wagner</i>	Ernest Newman	Cassell	8s 6d	Books in General
13-Jul-31	<i>Travels of an Alchemist</i>	Li Chih-Ch'ang	Routledge	10s 6d	Books in General
13-Jul-31	<i>Voyages and Discoveries</i>	William Dampier	The Argonaut Press	30/-	Books in General

13-Jul-31	<i>Passages in Arabia Deserta</i>	C.M. Doughty	Cape	4s 6d	Books in General
27-Jul-31	<i>Camera Obscura</i>	William Bolitho	Heinemann	7s 6d	Books in General
27-Jul-31	<i>On Dramatic Method</i>	Harley Granville-Barker	Sidgwick and Jackson	5/-	Books in General
27-Jul-31	<i>Enter the Actress</i>	Rosamond Gilder	Harrap	15/-	Books in General
27-Jul-31	<i>Pavlova</i>	Walford Hyden	Constable	8s 6d	Books in General
27-Jul-31	<i>Marshal Lyautey</i>	Andre Maurois	The Bodley Head	12s 6d	Books in General
10-Aug-31	<i>James Fenimore Cooper</i>	Henry Walcott Boynton	The Century Co	18	Books in General
10-Aug-31	<i>Henry Kingsley</i>	S.M. Ellis	Grant Richards	12s 6d	Books in General
10-Aug-31	<i>Trackers and Smugglers in the Deserts of Egypt</i>	Andre von Dumreicher	Methuen	15/-	Books in General
10-Aug-31	<i>The Wild Deer of Exmoor</i>	Henry Williamson	Faber and Faber	2s 6d	Books in General
10-Aug-31	<i>Brush Up Your French</i>	W.G. Hartog	Dent	2s 6d	Books in General
17-Aug-31	<i>The Letters of Katherine Mansfield</i>	Katherine Mansfield	Constable	15/-	Books in General
17-Aug-31	<i>The Modern Herbal</i>	M. Grieve	Jonathan Cape	42/-	Books in General
17-Aug-31	<i>Aphrodite in Aulis</i>	George Moore	Heinemann	8s 6d	Books in General
31-Aug-31	<i>Hartley Coleridge</i>	Herbert Hartmann	Oxford UP	15/-	Books in General
31-Aug-31	<i>Some Queer People</i>	Ladbroke Black	Sampson Low	12s 6d	Books in General
31-Aug-31	<i>The Quest for Power</i>	Hugh and Margaret Vowles	Chapman & Hall	15/-	Books in General
31-Aug-31	<i>Charlton</i>	Anonymous	Faber and Faber	10s 6d	Books in General
21-Sep-31	<i>Music at Night</i>	Aldous Huxley	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books in General
21-Sep-31	<i>Under the North Pole</i>	H. Wilkins	Benn	18/-	Books in General
21-Sep-31	<i>Time Was</i>	W. Graham Robertson	Hamish Hamilton	15/-	Books in General
21-Sep-31	<i>Are We All Met?</i>	Whitford Kane	Elkin Mathews & Marot	—	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>Fashion in Literature</i>	E.E. Kellett	Routledge	12s 6d	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>Contemporary Comments</i>	E.H. Lacon Watson	Eyre & Spottiwode	—	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>Shakespeare Versus Shallow</i>	Leslie Hotson	The Nonesuch Press	12s 6d	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>Cinema</i>	C.A. Lejeune	A. MacLehose	—	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>The Gardener's Chapbook</i>	E.H.M Cox	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>James Ramsay MacDonald</i>	M.A. Hamilton	Cape	3s 6d	Books in General
12-Oct-31	<i>The New Russia</i>	Various	Faber and Faber	3s 6d	Books in General
19-Oct-31	<i>A Tenement in Soho</i>	G. Thomas	Cape	7s 6d	Books in General
19-Oct-31	<i>The Romance of Soho</i>	E. Beresford Chancellor	Country Life	12s 6d	Books in General
19-Oct-31	<i>The Story of the Road</i>	J.W. Gregory	A. MacLehose	12s 6d	Books in General



19-Oct-31	<i>The Omnibus Book of Traveller's Tales</i>	Milton Waldman	Gollancz	8s 6d	Books in General
19-Oct-31	<i>A Whip for the Woman</i>	Ralph Strauss	Chapman & Hall	7s 6d	Books in General
19-Oct-31	<i>Fatal Interview</i>	Edna St. Vincent Millay	Hamish Hamilton	5/-	Books in General
02-Nov-31	<i>The Emergence of Man</i>	Gerald Heard	Cape	10s 6d	Books in General
02-Nov-31	<i>What Dare I Think?</i>	Julian Huxley	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books in General
02-Nov-31	<i>The Travels of Marco Polo</i>	Denison Ross	Routledge	21/-	Books in General
02-Nov-31	<i>The Mango Tree</i>	Margaret Hamilton	Cobden Sanderson	6/-	Books in General
02-Nov-31	<i>A Letter to Madam Blanchard</i>	E.M Forster	The Hogarth Press	1/-	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>The Brave Days</i>	Neil Munro	Porpoise Press	7s 6d	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>A Persian Journey</i>	Fred Richards	Cape	15/-	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>Dalmatia</i>	Geoffrey Rhodes	Stanley Paul	18/-	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>Finland</i>	Kay Gilmour	Methuen	6/-	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>Circus</i>	Paul Eipper	Routledge	10s 6d	Books in General
16-Nov-31	<i>Nature by Night</i>	Arthur Thompson	I. Nicholson & Watson	—	Books in General
30-Nov-31	<i>Votive Tablets</i>	Edmund Blunden	Cobden Sanderson	—	Books in General
30-Nov-31	<i>An Innkeeper's Diary</i>	John Fothergill	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books in General
30-Nov-31	<i>Across the Gobi Desert</i>	S. Hedin	Routledge	25/-	Books in General
30-Nov-31	<i>The Religion of Tibet</i>	Charles Bell	Oxford UP	18/-	Books in General
30-Nov-31	<i>Collected Sketches and Lyrics</i>	Noel Coward	Hutchinson	7s 6d	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>Our Fathers</i>	Alan Bott	Heinemann	8s 6d	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>The Stream of Time</i>	C.S. Peel	The Bodley Head	18/-	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>A Letter from a Black Sheep</i>	Francis Birrell	Hogarth Press	1/-	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>A Letter on the French Pictures</i>	Raymond Mortimer	Hogarth Press	1/-	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>The Augustan Books of Poetry</i>	Robert Frost	Benn	-/6	Books in General
09-Jan-32	<i>The Flute</i>	H.J.C. Grierson	Samson press	15/-	Books in General
25-Jan-32	<i>The Genius of Louis Pasteur</i>	Piers Compton	Alexander Ousley	12s 6d	Books in General
25-Jan-32	<i>Hunting Insects in the South Seas</i>	Evelyn Cheesman	Phillip Allan	10s 6d	Books in General
25-Jan-32	<i>The Facts of Fiction</i>	Norman Collins	Gollancz	10s 6d	Books in General
17-Feb-32	<i>Common-Sense About Poetry</i>	L.A.G. Strong	Gollancz	2s 6d	Books in General
17-Feb-32	<i>The Golden Treasury</i>	Ed. by Francis T. Palgrave	Hamlyn	—	Books in General
17-Feb-32	<i>Crime from the Inside</i>	Ed. by John Gregory	Long	12s 6d	Books in General
17-Feb-32	<i>Twelve on the Beaufort Scale</i>	Stanley Rogers	Melrose	18/-	Books in General

17-Feb-32	<i>Tu Viens en Angleterre</i>	Felix de Grand'Combe	Les Presses Universitaires de France	—	Books in General
02-Mar-32	<i>The Road to Oblivion</i>	Vladimir Zenzinov	Cape	12s 6d	Books of the Week
02-Mar-32	<i>The Life of Horace Walpole</i>	Stephen Gwynn	Butterworth	15/-	Books of the Week
02-Mar-32	<i>The Laird of Abbotsford</i>	Dame Una Pope-Hennessy	Putnam	7s 6d	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>Sarah Bernhardt</i>	R. Hahn	Elkin Mathews	5/-	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>Melba</i>	Percy Colson	Grayson	18/-	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>My Indian Summer</i>	M.V. White	Grayson	15/-	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>Thoughts on Germany</i>	R. von Kuhlmann	MacMillan	10s 6d	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>Why Birds Sing</i>	J. Delamain	Gollancz	7s 6d	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>The Discovery of Poetry</i>	Hugh Lyon	Arnold	6/-	Books of the Week
07-Mar-32	<i>The Craft of the Poet</i>	F.W. Felkin	Allen & Unwin	3s 6d	Books of the Week
21-Mar-32	<i>A World Can End</i>	Irina Skariatina	Cape	12s 6d	Books of the Week
21-Mar-32	<i>The City of the Red Plague</i>	George Popoff	Allen & Unwin	10/-	Books of the Week
21-Mar-32	<i>Lamb Before Elia</i>	F.V. Morely	Cape	10s 6d	Books of the Week
21-Mar-32	<i>An Egyptian Childhood</i>	Taha Hussein	Routledge	6/-	Books of the Week
04-Apr-32	<i>Jane Austen: Her Life and Art</i>	David Rhydderch	Cape	7s 6d	Books of the Week
04-Apr-32	<i>On the Roads from Rome</i>	Luigi Villari	A. Maclehose	—	Books of the Week
04-Apr-32	<i>Modern Italy</i>	Cicely Hamilton	Dent	7s 6d	Books of the Week
04-Apr-32	<i>Leaves from Life</i>	E.J. Dillon	Dent	7s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>Recovery</i>	Arthur Salter	Bell	10s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>A Rabbit in the Air</i>	David Garnett	Chatto & Windus	5/-	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>Ten More Plays of Shakespeare</i>	Stopford Brooke	Constable	3s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>Four Lectures on Shakespeare</i>	Ellen Terry	Hopkinson	7s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>Pistol v. Poleaxe</i>	Lettice MacNaghten	Chapman & Hall	21/-	Books of the Week
20-Apr-32	<i>Gay Gardening</i>	Dorothy Easton	Heinemann	2s 6d	Books of the Week
11-May-32	<i>The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre</i>	M.C. Day and J.C. Trewin	Dent	7s 6d	Books of the Week
11-May-32	<i>The Essential Shakespeare</i>	J. Dover Wilson	Cambridge UP	3s 6d	Books of the Week
11-May-32	<i>Digressions of a Man of Science</i>	Daniel Hall	Martin Hopkins	7s 6d	Books of the Week
11-May-32	<i>Voltaire</i>	Andre Maurois	Peter Davies	5/-	Books of the Week
16-May-32	<i>The Centenary Edition of the Works of Leo Tolstoy</i>	Leo Tolstoy	Oxford UP	9 Guineas	Books of the Week
16-May-32	<i>Fiction and the Reading Public</i>	Q.D. Leavis	Chatto & Windus	12s 6d	Books of the Week

16-May-32	<i>Bath</i>	Edith Sitwell	Faber and Faber	15/-	Books of the Week
16-May-32	<i>Man, Proud Man</i>	Anthology	Hamish Hamilton	7s 6d	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>The Life of George Eliot</i>	E and G Romieu	Cape	7s 6d	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>Lady Caroline Lamb</i>	Elizabeth Jenins	Gollancz	10s 6d	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>The Curious Gardener</i>	Jason Hill	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>Down the Garden Path</i>	Beverley Nichols	Cape	7s 6d	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>Winter Blossoms from the Outdoor Garden</i>	A.W. Darnell	Reeve	21/-	Books of the Week
30-May-32	<i>Garden-Making by Example</i>	G.C. Taylor	Country Life	10s 6d	Books of the Week
22-Jun-32	<i>Lewis Carroll</i>	Walter de la Mare	Faber and Faber	3s 6d	Books of the Week
22-Jun-32	<i>Judicial Wisdom of Mr Justice McCardie</i>	Albert Crew	Nicholson & Watson	7s 6d	Books of the Week
22-Jun-32	<i>I Lost My Memory</i>	Anon	Faber and Faber	7s 6d	Books of the Week
22-Jun-32	<i>The Dissolution of Empire</i>	Meriel Buchanan	John Murray	15/-	Books of the Week
22-Jun-32	<i>John Clare</i>	J.W. & Anne Tibble	Cobden Sanderson	21/-	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>Criticism</i>	Desmond MacCarthy	Putnam	7s 6d	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>Freedom in the Modern World</i>	John MacMurray	Faber and Faber	6/-	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>History of the Russian Revolution</i>	Leon Trotsky	Gollancz	18/-	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>Lenin</i>	James Maxton	Peter Davies	5/-	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>In Search of Wales</i>	H.V. Morton	Methuen	7s 6d	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>On Foot in Yorkshire and On Foot in the Peaks</i>	Patrick Monkhouse	A. Maclehose	—	Books of the Week
27-Jun-32	<i>A Detective in Sussex</i>	Donald Maxwell	John Lane	6/-	Books of the Week
20-Jul-32	<i>A Letter to a Young Poet</i>	Virginia Woolf	Hogarth Press	1/-	Books of the Week
20-Jul-32	<i>A Letter to a Modern Novelist</i>	Hugh Walpole	Hogarth Press	1/-	Books of the Week
20-Jul-32	<i>The Savage Pilgrimage</i>	Catherine Carswell	Chatto & Windus	7s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Jul-32	<i>The Discovery of Europe</i>	Paul Cohen-Porthiem	Duckworth	10s 6d	Books of the Week
20-Jul-32	<i>Get Through That French Oral</i>	Felix de Grand'Combe	Hachette	1/-	Books of the Week
25-Jul-32	<i>The Villages of England</i>	A.K. Wickham	Batsford	12s 6d	Books of the Week
25-Jul-32	<i>The Cottages of England</i>	Basil Oliver	Batsford	21/-	Books of the Week
25-Jul-32	<i>A Superficial Journey Through Tokyo and Peking</i>	Peter Quennell	Faber and Faber	12s 6d	Books of the Week
25-Jul-32	<i>People of the South</i>	Alan Pryce-Jones	Cobden Sanderson	—	Books of the Week
17-Aug-32	<i>Golden Horn</i>	Francis Yeats-Brown	Gollancz	8s 6d	Books of the Week

17-Aug-32	<i>Margaret Outram</i>	Mary Frances Outram	John Murray	15/-	Books of the Week
17-Aug-32	<i>Hitler</i>	Emil Lengyel	Routledge	7s 6d	Books of the Week
17-Aug-32	<i>The Book of the Garden</i>	Arthur Stanley	Nicholson & Watson	6/-	Books of the Week
17-Aug-32	<i>Hardy and Half-Hardy Plants</i>	A.W. Darnell	By the Author	35/-	Books of the Week
31-Aug-32	<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	Mona Wilson	Peter Davies	5/-	Books of the Week
31-Aug-32	<i>Kamet Conquered</i>	F.S. Smythe	Gollancz	16/-	Books of the Week
31-Aug-32	<i>The Heart of England</i>	Edward Thomas	Dent	3s 6d	Books of the Week
14-Sep-32	<i>Akbar</i>	Laurence Binyon	Peter Davies	5/-	Books of the Week
14-Sep-32	<i>The Waverley Pageant</i>	Hugh Walpole	Eyre and Spottiswoode	5/-	Books of the Week
14-Sep-32	<i>The Life of Lord Cromer</i>	Marquis of Zetland	Hodder & Soughton	25/-	Books of the Week
19-Sep-32	<i>Memoirs, Vol IV 1849-1897</i>	Prince von Bulow	Putnam	25/-	Books of the Week
19-Sep-32	<i>Selected Essays</i>	T.S. Eliot	Faber and Faber	12s 6d	Books of the Week
26-Oct-32	<i>The Letters of D.H. Lawrence</i>	Ed. by Aldous Huxley	Heinemann	21/-	Books of the Week
26-Oct-32	<i>Etruscan Places</i>	D.H. Lawrence	Secker	15/-	Books of the Week
26-Oct-32	<i>The Common Reader: Second Series</i>	Virginia Woolf	Hogarth Press	10s 6d	Books of the Week

## Appendix 3: West Indian Script Indexes

Compiled from West Indies Script Indexes, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham

Note: When programmes are broadcast across two dates, both dates are indicated and separated with a /.

Date	Programme	Name
26-Jun-40	West Indians Part in the War	Marson, Una
28-Oct-40	Carry On West Indies	Marson, Una
5-Apr-41	Calling the West Indies	Moyne, Lord
15-Apr-41	Calling the West Indies	Freeman, W.G.
24-May-41	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
10-May-41	Calling the West Indies	Paget, Hugh
17-May-41	Calling the West Indies	Paget, Hugh
24-May-41	Calling the West Indies	Paget, Hugh
31-May-41	Calling the West Indies	Paget, Hugh
29-Jun-41	Calling the West Indies (CTWI): Newsletter	Adams, Robert
5-Jul-41	CTWI: Newsletter	Adams, Robert
13-Jul-41	CTWI: Newsletter	Adams, Robert
30-Aug-41	Calling the West Indies	Eytle, Ernest
7-Sep-41	Calling the West Indies	Mackie, A.D.
6-Sep-41	CTWI: Jamaica Bomber Squadron	Sabine, Noel
28-Sep-41	CTWI: India	Bokhari, L.A.
2-Oct-41	CTWI: Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore	Cox, Philip
5-Nov-41	West Indies' War Effort: At Home Today	G.H. Gordon
5-Oct-41	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
9-Nov-41	CTWI: London As I Found It	Wilson, Harold
16-Nov-41	CTWI: "Close up" (henceforth Close Up)	Marson, Una
7-Dec-41	CTWI: Russia Fights On	Henriques, Fernando
7-Nov-41	CTWI: Birth of Trade Unions	Henriques, Fernando
13-Dec-41	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
30-Nov-41	CTWI: Services of Imperial Institute	Marson, Una
13-Dec-41	CTWI: Experiences of a Billeting Officer	Cousins, Winifred Dr.
3-Jan-42	CTWI: Boxing at Edinburgh University	Fraser, G.
1-Jan-42	CTWI: Robert Burns	Mackie, J.D.
4-Jan-42	CTWI: Bible as Great Literature	Spaight, Robert
14-Feb-42	CTWI: Life in the W.A.A.F.s	Kelly, Rosemary
28-Feb-42	CTWI: Women in Business	Miller, Elsa
15-Feb-42	CTWI: Poetry in Time of War	Strong, L.A.G.
2/3-May-42	CTWI: Newsletter	Cargill, Morris
3/4-May-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
10/11-May-42	Calling the West Indies	Dunbar, Rudolph
17/18-May-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
26/27-Jul-42	Close Up	Marson, Una

2/3-Aug-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
30/31-Aug-42	CTWI: In Scotland Now	Kennedym, A. Scott
4-Sep-42	Why Spend Money on Education in West Indies	Lewis, Arthur, Dr.
26/27-Sep-42	CTWI: Visit to Scotland	Marson, Una
27/28-Sep-42	CTWI: Just Coloured Folks	Scaife, John
25/26-Sep-42	CTWI: Aberdeen in Wartime	Tate, Joyce
20/21-Sep-42	CTWI: Colonies	Limmern, Alfred
11/12-Oct-42	CTWI: Discovery Day	Marson, Una
25-Oct-42	Mostly for Women: Home & Family, Life in the West Indies	Jackson, Mrs L.E.
1/2-Nov-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
8/9-Nov-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
14/15-Nov-42	CTWI: In Dieppe Raid	Helsick, Osmund, Sgt
15/16-Nov-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
26/27-Nov-42	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
29/30-Nov-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
6/7-Dec-42	Close Up	Marson, Una
10/11-Dec-42	CTWI: At the Barbecue	Marson, Una
19/20-Dec-42	CTWI: Newsletter	Marson, Una
17/18-Jan-43	Close Up	Marson, Una
1/2-Jan-43	CTWI: New Year's Greeting	Marson, Una
31-Jan/1-Feb-43	Close Up	Marson, Una
23/24-Feb-43	Message Party	Marson, Una
6/7-Mar-43	Newsletter	Singh, Bahadun
6/7-May-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Marson, Una
1/2-May-43	CTWI: Bermudians in R.A.F	Bernard, Robert P/O
13/14-May-43	CTWI: Women Maintain Home Front	Lea, Mrs
15/16-May-43	CTWI: West Indian Diary	Meyerowity, H.V.
20/21-May-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Jackson, Lily Mrs
8/9-May-43	CTWI: What The English Think of The West Indies	Morris, Sam
22/23-May-43	CTWI: BBC at War Exhibition	Reid, Robert
27/28-May-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Westerly, Robert
3/4-Jun-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Porke, Miss
24/25-Jun-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Marson, Una
17/18-Jun-43	CTWI: Women Maintain The Home Front	Walker, Edith Miss
4/5-Jul-43	CTWI: American Independence Day	Marson, Una
3-Sep-43	Tonight's Talk	Constantine, Learie
26/27-Aug-43	Movements in Education	Howell, J.A.
30-Sep/1-Oct-43	Why Educate Adults?	Darling, George
5/6-Dec-43	CTWI: What is Happening in Scotland?	Mackie, Albert D.
12/13-Dec-43	CTWI: Save the Children Federation	Shipler, Guy Dr.
19/20-Dec-43	CTWI: Dean of St Paul's	Matthews, Walter Dr.
20/21-Jan-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
2/3-Jan-44	New Year's Talk	Moody, Harold
3/4-Feb-44	CTWI: Memory Lane	Marson, Una

24/25-Feb-44	CTWI: Higher Education	Stooks, Mary Mrs
27/28-Feb-44	CTWI: Housewife's Tale	Stone, E. Laurie Mrs
6/7-Feb-44	CTWI: Chinese Women	Anderson, Eleanor
9/10-Mar-44	CTWI: International Women's Day	King, Beatrice
16/17-Mar-44	CTWI: Talk on Pushkin	Guershooon, A. Dr.
23/24-Mar-44	CTWI: Talk on Pushkin II	Guershooon, A. Dr.
30/31-Mar-44	CTWI: Talk on Pushkin III	Guershooon, A. Dr.
26/27-Mar-44	CTWI: Writing for Children	Mean, Stella Miss
18/19-May-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
11/12-May-44	CTWI: Wapping	Grimble, June
28/29-May-44	CTWI: Air Raid Shelter	Grimble, June
14/15-May-44	CTWI: Women in Engineering	Haslett Caroline
25/26-May-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
21/22-May-44	CTWI: Ambulance Service	Miller, Elsa
23/24-May-44	CTWI: Mahatma Gandhi	Polak, H.S.J.
1/2-Jun-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
6/7-Jun-44	CTWI: Message Party	Marson, Una
8/9-Jun-44	CTWI: Message Party	Marson, Una
1/2-Jun-44	Calling the West Indies	Strong, L.A.G.
15/16-Jun-44	CTWI: Short Story Writing	Strong, L.A.G.
22/23-Jun-44	CTWI: Short Story Writing II	Strong, L.A.G.
20/21-Jun-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
26/27-Jun-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
13/14-Jun-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
4/5-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
11/12-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
25/26-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
16/17-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Goddard Scott
18/19-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
16/17-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
27/28-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Potter, Frederick
30/31-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Derriman, James
30/31-Jul-44	Calling the West Indies	Goddard, Scott
1/2-Aug-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
8/9-Aug-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
15/16-Aug-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
22/23-Aug-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
24-Aug-44	CTWI: Boys' Club	Swanzy, H.J.
29/30-Aug-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
12/13-Sep-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
17/18-Sep-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
26/27-Sep-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
24/25-Sep-44	CTWI: Women's Part in Family Life Today, By A Social Worker	Woodside M, Mrs.
3/4-Oct-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
10/11-Oct-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una

17/18-Oct-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
24/25-Oct-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
15/16-Oct-44	CTWI: British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (B.E.L.R.A)	Marson, Una
14/15-Nov-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Carter, John
7/8-Nov-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
19/20-Nov-44	CTWI: Spotlight in Paris	Dunbar, Rudolph
26/27-Nov-44	CTWI: Canadian Poetry	Birney, Carle Major
21/22-Nov-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
28/29-Nov-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
31/1-Nov-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
5/6-Dec-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
12/13-Dec-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
19/20-Dec-44	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
3/4-Dec-44	C.V.[Caribbean Voices], Calling the West Indies	De Songa, Troo P/O
10/11-Dec-44	C.V. Calling the West Indies: Memories of West Indies	Harrison, Norman Rev.
31/1-Dec-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
28/29-Dec-44	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
2/3-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
9/10-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
14/15-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
16/17-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
21/22-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
23/24-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
25/26-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Lindsay, J.A.
28/29-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
30/31-Jan-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
4/5-Feb-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
6/7-Feb-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
13/14-Feb-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
20/21-Feb-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Eytle, Ernest
24/25-Feb-45	CTWI: West Indian Diary	Tudor, Cameron
27/28-Feb-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
6/7-Mar-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
13/14-Mar-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
20/21-Mar-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
25/26-Mar-45	CTWI: Caribbean Voices	Marson, Una
3/4-Apr-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
17/18-Apr-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
10/11-Apr-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
15/16-Apr-45	Calling the West Indies	Marson, Una
24/25-Apr-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
1/2-May-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
8/9-May-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
22/23-May-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
29/30-May-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una



3/4-Jun-45	CTWI: West Indian Prisoners of War	MacGregor, J.R. Lieut
5/6-Jun-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
12/13-Jun-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
19/20-Jun-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
26/27-Jun-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
10/11-Jun-45	CTWI: Caribbean Voices	Marson, Una
8/9-Jul-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
31-Jul/1-Aug-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
7/8-Aug-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Marson, Una
14/15-Aug-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Cargill, Morris
23/24-Aug-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Miller, Elsa
23/24-Aug-45	CTWI: Caribbean Voices	Marson, Una
11/12-Sep-45	CTWI: West Indian Party	Grimble, June
2/3-Sep-45	CTWI: Bermuda	Ridgway, Athelston
30-9/1-Oct-45	CTWI: British Honduras	Ridgway, Athelston
7/8-Oct-45	CTWI: Dominica	Ridgway, Athelston
13/14-Oct-45	CTWI: Trinidad	Ridgway, Athelston

## Appendix 4: West Indians Giving Messages

Statistics for 1941 compiled from documents found in R46/92, REC. GEN. Calling the West Indies, Files 1&2, 1940-1950, BBC WAC. Statistics for 1943 compiled from Programmes as Broadcast Logs, 1 May 1943 to 22 June 1943, BBC WAC.

### Breakdown:

#### Island Affiliation

February- June 1941

Country	Percentage of total
Antigua	1.45%
Barbados	15.94%
British Guiana	20.29%
British Honduras	2.90%
Dominica	1.45%
Jamaica	36.23%
Montserrat	1.45%
St Kitts	1.45%
St Lucia	2.90%
Tobago	2.90%
Trinidad	13.04%

#### Gender breakdown

May-June 1943

Gender	Percentage
f	25.64%
m	74.36%

### Full List of Message Givers

Date	Name	Country	Gender	Affiliation/Occupation (where known)
3-Feb-41	Gunner Fonseca	—	m	Army
3-Feb-41	Gunner Ferdinand Skeete	Barbados	m	Army
3-Feb-41	Bombardier Whittaker	—	m	Army
8-Mar-41	Sergeant da Costa	Jamaica	m	RAF
25-Mar-41	Arthur Todd	—	m	RAF
25-Mar-41	John Dixon	—	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Adam O. Parris	Barbados	m	Royal Engineers
19-Mar-41	Private John Challenor	Barbados	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Norman Carrington	Barbados	m	Navy
19-Mar-41	K.B. Bender	British Guiana	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	James Turpin	British Guiana	m	Army
19-Mar-41	John Grant Biddle	British Honduras	m	Fleet Air Arm
19-Mar-41	Vivian Benjamin Hazell	Jamaica	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Nigel Carman	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Ralph Carman	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Owen Carman	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Owen Turvill	Jamaica	m	Navy
19-Mar-41	Neville Junor	Jamaica	m	Navy
19-Mar-41	Winston Stewart	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	L.D. Lord	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Kenneth Osorio	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Leslie Patterson	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Bertram Burrowes	Jamaica	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Oswald Watkis	Jamaica	m	Navy
19-Mar-41	Leslie Rerrie	Jamaica	m	Army
19-Mar-41	Frank Murray	Jamaica	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Richard Watson	Jamaica	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Beavan Archibald	Tobago	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Bruce Archibald	Tobago	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	Alan Walker	Jamaica	m	RAF
19-Mar-41	John Richards	Trinidad	m	Army
26-Mar-41	V.O.F. Finlayson	—	m	—
26-Mar-41	K.A. McNeill	—	m	Hill End Hospital
26-Mar-41	F. Hawthorne	—	?	Mornington Crescent
26-Mar-41	Joselyn Haase	—	f	Harringay
26-Mar-41	Sapper W.D. Hall	—	m	Army
26-Mar-41	Iran G. Zitman	—	m	—
26-Mar-41	Dr A. I. Boyd	—	m	Doctor
26-Mar-41	W.R.A Pilgrim	—	?	—
26-Mar-41	Private L. Patterson	—	m	Army
26-Mar-41	Marguerite Lynch	—	f	Nurse

26-Mar-41	M.A. Carty	—	f	—
31-Mar-41	Arthur A. Waldron	Barbados	m	RAF
31-Mar-41	P.W.A. Mackey	British Guiana	m	Army
31-Mar-41	Sergeant Blank	British Guiana	m	RAF
31-Mar-41	R.S. Jones	British Guiana	m	Army
31-Mar-41	G.S. Jones	British Guiana	m	RAF
31-Mar-41	C.C. Seaford	British Guiana	m	Army
1-May-41	John Dennis Lenagan	Trinidad	m	RAF
1-May-41	James Keith Rostant	Trinidad	m	RAF
1-May-41	John L.H. Richards	Trinidad	m	RAF
26-May-41	R.H. Redpath	Jamaica	m	Army
17-Jun-41	Lt. Owen Maxwell Henzell	Jamaica	m	Army
17-Jun-41	Hugh Etienne	St Lucia	m	
16-Jun-41	Allan Jennings	Jamaica	m	Army
16-Jun-41	Michael R.M. Thacker	Jamaica	m	Army
16-Jun-41	Herbert A. Brown	Jamaica	m	Army
16-Jun-41	Grey Doyle Cumberbatch	Barbados	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	P.L. Archer	Barbados	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	E.W. Barrow	Barbados	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	G.A. Barrow	Barbados	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	Violet Milliner	Jamaica	f	WAAF
16-Jun-41	W. Eaves	Jamaica	m	Army
16-Jun-41	F.W. Farfan	Trinidad	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	A.W. Martin	Trinidad	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	R.A.C Alston	Trinidad	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	J.P. Alcazar	Trinidad	m	Navy
16-Jun-41	B.H. Alcazar	Trinidad	m	Army
16-Jun-41	G.A. Armstrong	British Guiana	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	V.E. Camacho	British Guiana	m	Canadian Air Force
16-Jun-41	C.L. De Freitas	British Guiana	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	Robin Grant	British Guiana	m	Navy
16-Jun-41	K.E. White	British Guiana	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	C.E. Blee	British Guiana	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	Harold Bancroft	Barbados	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	J.E. Alves	St Kitts	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	D.B. Barnard	St Lucia	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	B.T. Cookman	Dominica	m	RAF
16-Jun-41	J.G. Biddle	British Honduras	m	Fleet Air Arm
16-Jun-41	Bridget O'Dowd	British Guiana	f	Army
16-Jun-41	Murial Otway	Montserrat	f	A.T.S
16-Jun-41	M.D.W. Sisnett	Barbados	f	W.R.N.S
16-Jun-41	Monica A. Nugent	Antigua	f	Nurse

17-Jun-41	Donald A. Walker	Jamaica	m	Army
12-Feb-42	Ivan G. Zeitman	British Guiana	m	Student
1/2-May-43	P. Robert Bernard	Bermuda	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Ned Dyett	—	m	Army
4/5-May-43	Winifred Dawkings	—	f	Army
4/5-May-43	Francis Gosling	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Wingood	—	?	RAF
4/5-May-43	John Watlington	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Harry Darrell	—	m	Navy
4/5-May-43	Julian Marryshow	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Daphne Bourne	—	f	Nurse
4/5-May-43	Clyde Griffith	—	m	Army
4/5-May-43	Richard Amory	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Ovid Marks	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Patricia Bell	—	f	Army
4/5-May-43	Dave Urich	—	m	—
4/5-May-43	Malcom Scott	—	m	Army
4/5-May-43	Hugh de Verteuil	—	m	RAF
4/5-May-43	Albert Sarjeant	—	m	Navy
4/5-May-43	Herbert Young	—	m	—
4/5-May-43	Geoffrey Boon	—	m	Army
4/5-May-43	Campbell Yearwood	—	m	—
4/5-May-43	Winifred Dalton	—	f	—
4/5-May-43	Joseph Bckles	—	m	Craftsman
22/23-Jun-43	Beryl Cuthbert	—	f	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Arnold Kelshall	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Collins Joseph	—	m	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Inez Gontles	—	f	—
22/23-Jun-43	Robert Pickering	—	m	Navy
22/23-Jun-43	John Clarko	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	John Lord	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Edwin Went	—	m	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Lucy Whitney	—	f	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Nellie Whitney	—	f	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Geoffrey Skinner	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Philbert Wilson	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Pat Macduff	—	m	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Pat Macduff's sister	—	f	—
22/23-Jun-43	Barbara Duncombe	—	f	Army
22/23-Jun-43	Cecil Phillips	—	m	RAF
22/23-Jun-43	Maurice Abraham	—	m	Army

## Appendix 5: Rose Macaulay's BBC Broadcasts

Compiled from BBC Genome, *The Listener*, and BBC Script Indexes, BBC WAC.

Date	Programme Title	Service
17/03/1926	Weather forecast and 2nd News Bulletin: Chats with Famous Authors	2LO
19/02/1927	Rose Macaulay reading a Short Story	2LO
01/04/1927	Debate between Rose Macaulay, L. Du Garde (L. du G. of Punch) on the question- Is Chivalry Dead?	2LO
24/02/1928	A Debate	5GB (Experimental)
17/02/1934	Seven Days' Hard	National
19/01/1936	The Spice of Life- 2	Regional
19/05/1937	Should Blood Sports be Prohibited?	National
04/09/1937	What is Wrong with the Cinema?	National
28/05/1939	Confound the Experts	Regional
26/03/1941	Any Questions?	Forces
02/04/1941	Any Questions?	Forces
05/05/1942	The Brains Trust	Home
10/05/1942	The Brains Trust	Forces
26/04/1945	What Does It Mean?	Home
24/05/1945	What Does It Mean?	Home
14/12/1945	Quiz Team	Light
18/02/1946	The World and His Wife	Light
30/04/1946	The Brains Trust	Home
04/06/1946	Books and Writers	Light
28/07/1946	Time for Verse	Home
10/08/1946	A.B.C Spelling Bee	Home
11/10/1946	Book Talk	Home
14/11/1946	The Critic on the Air	Third
16/11/1946	Living Writers—E.M. Forster	Third
21/11/1946	The Critic on the Air	Third
05/12/1946	The Critic on the Air	Third
13/03/1947	Imaginary Conversations	Third
03/10/1947	Bed	Third
15/11/1947	Books and Authors	Light
22/12/1947	Woman's Hour	Light
08/02/1948	The Critics	Home
13/02/1948	The Critics	Home
15/02/1948	The Critics	Home
27/02/1948	The Critics	Home
05/03/1948	The Critics	Home
08/04/1948	The Critic on the Air	Third
29/04/1948	Stump the Storytellers	Light

30/05/1948	Ask Me Another	Home
01/07/1948	The Critic on the Air	Third
19/09/1948	The Critics	Home
26/09/1948	The Critics	Home
01/10/1948	The Critics	Home
03/10/1948	The critics	Home
10/10/1948	The Critics	Home
17/10/1948	The Critics	Home
24/10/1948	The Critics	Home
31/10/1948	The Critics	Home
07/11/1948	The Critics	Home
21/01/1949	The Critics	Home
23/01/1949	The Critics	Home
30/01/1949	The Critics	Home
06/02/1949	The Critics	Home
13/02/1949	The Critics	Home
20/02/1949	The Critics	Home
27/02/1949	The Critics	Home
06/03/1949	The Critics	Home
11/03/1949	The Critics	Home
30/04/1949	The Short Story	Third
09/07/1949	In My Library	Third
02/01/1950	Half-Century Quiz	Home
08/03/1950	The English Novel	Home
04/06/1950	A Year I Remember (1913)	Third
22/10/1951	Swimming for Pleasure	Third
28/10/1951	The Critics	Home
04/11/1951	The Critics	Home
11/11/1951	The Critics	Home
18/11/1951	The Critics	Home
25/11/1951	The Critics	Home
02/12/1951	The Critics	Home
12/10/1952	The Critics	Home
19/10/1952	The Critics	Home
26/10/1952	The Critics	Home
02/11/1952	The Critics	Home
09/11/1952	The Critics	Home
16/11/1952	The Critics	Home
02/05/1954	The Critics	Home
09/05/1954	The Critics	Home
16/05/1954	The Critics	Home
23/05/1954	The Critics	Home
30/05/1954	The Critics	Home
15/06/1954	Talking of Changes in Morals	Home
06/02/1955	The Critics	Home
13/02/1955	The Critics	Home

20/02/1955	The Critics	Home
27/02/1955	The Critics	Home
06/03/1955	The Critics	Home
13/03/1955	The Critics	Home
13/06/1956	Woman's Hour	Light

### **Breakdown of Macaulay's Radio Appearances by Service**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
2LO	3.41%
5GB (Experimental)	1.14%
Forces	3.41%
Home	64.77%
Light	7.95%
National	3.41%
Regional	2.27%
Third	13.64%

## Appendix 6: Elizabeth Bowen's BBC Broadcasts

Compiled from BBC Genome, *The Listener*, and BBC Script Indexes, BBC WAC.

Date	Title	Service	Fee
17/10/1941	"Strength of Mind": Do Women Think Like Men?	Home Service	8 guineas*
04/12/1941	The Living Image-1	Home Service	8 guineas
05/12/1941	"Strength of Mind": Do Conventions Matter?	Home Service	8 guineas
23/01/1942	The Living Image- 2	Home Service	—
08/03/1942	New Judgement: Elizabeth Bowen on Jane Austen	Home Service	—
14/11/1942	London Revisited: As Seen by Fanny Burney	Home Service	—
17/05/1943	Weekly Book Talk by Elizabeth Bowen.	Overseas Chinese Service	—
16/08/1943	Weekly Book Talk by Elizabeth Bowen.	Overseas Chinese Service	—
13/09/1943	Weekly Book Talk by Elizabeth Bowen	Overseas Chinese Service	—
04/05/1945	"New Judgement": Elizabeth Bowen on Anthony Trollope	Home Service	—
25/06/1945	Book Talk- New and Recent Fiction	Home Service	12 guineas
16/07/1945	Book Talk- New and Recent Fiction	Home Service	12 guineas
14/09/1945	Henrietta Post	Home Service	—
06/01/1946	Return Journey	Home Service	£4
08/02/1946	Quiz Team	Light Programme	—
01/07/1946	This is London, 'Bloomsbury'	Overseas African Service	—
27/08/1946	Modern Short Stories, "The Demon Lover"	Home Service Midland	—
06/11/1946	The Tommy Crans	Third Programme	—
02/03/1947	"The Crisis"	Third Programme	20 guineas
13-14/08/1946	The Reader Takes Over	North American	7 guineas
06/06/1947	Kaleidoscope	BBC TV	—
13/07/1947	The Next Book	Light Programme	—
13/07/1947	Books and Authors	Light Programme	10 guineas
15/09/1947	Tears, Idle Tears	Home Service	—
16/03/1948	Impressions of Czechoslovakia	European Service, Czechoslovakia	—
05/05/1948	Look At All Those Roses	Home Service	—
05/06/1948	PM. Telling	Third Programme	—
10/07/1948	The Artist in Society	Third Programme	20 guineas, 20 shillings
08/08/1948	Songs My Father Sang Me	Third Programme	—
16/08/1948	New Judgement: Elizabeth Bowen on Jane Austen	Third Programme	—
21/10/1948	"Sandition"	Third Programme	—



10/03/1949	A Year I Remember- 1918	Third Programme	—
02/11/1949	Books That Grow Up With One	General Overseas	15 guineas
14/11/1949	The Mechanics of Writing	Pacific Service	7 guineas
16/12/1949	Town Forum from Banbury	Midland	—
10/05/1950	How I Write: A Discussion with Glyn Jones	Welsh Home Service	15 guineas, £.2.9 fare and £1.7.6 expenses
15/12/1950	A Conversation Between Elizabeth Bowen and Jocelyn Brooke	Third Programme	17 guineas
06/04/1951	Woman's Hour	Light Programme	—
04/08/1951	The Cult of Nostalgia	Third Programme	20 guineas
20/11/1951	Woman's Hour	Light Programme	—
21/08/1952	Conversation on Traitors	Home Service	20 guineas
31/05/1953	Coronation	Third Programme	20 guineas
01/03/1955	English Writing	Overseas Service, London Calling Asia	—
02/06/1955	Talking of Books	General Overseas Service	—
26/09/1956	Truth and Fiction: Story, Theme, and Situation	Home Service	40 guineas**
03/10/1956	Truth and Fiction: People: The Creation of Character	Home Service	40 guineas
10/10/1956	Truth and Fiction: Time, Period and Reality	Home Service	40 guineas
16/03/1960	Frankly Speaking: Interview, 1959	Home Service	—
19/07/1956	On Not Rising to the Occasion	Home Service	—

\*N.B.: A guinea was used to refer to 21 shillings long after it was replaced by the pound as a unit of currency. It referred to £1.05 in decimalized money.

\*\*40 guineas in 1956 was £42, worth roughly £1000 today, according to the National Archives currency converter, based on prices for 2017. It was the equivalent of a month of wages for a skilled tradesman. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result>

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- L1/1, 269/1, Jean Rowntree, Left Staff File
- L1/290/1, Marson, Una Maud Victoria, Left Staff File 1
- L1/290/2, Marson, Una Maud Victoria, Left Staff File 2,
- L1/377/1 Audrey Russell, Left Staff, 20/6/42-30/4/51
- L1/455, John Grenfell Williams, Left Staff File, 4/11/1940-Deceased 28/12/1954
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