Radio Drama and Modernism in early 20th Century Britain

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Declaration of authorship

I Timothy Simon John Crook hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the development of political audio/radio drama in the context of modernism. It seeks to make an original contribution to the knowledge of sound drama and modernism by closely studying representative texts before and during the Great War (1914-18), the 1920s and 1930s and subjecting them to discussion of the following theoretical themes: the modernist aesthetic and historicist and empirical context; Agitational contemporaneity versus Institutional containment (Macmurray-Kavanagh, M.K.) and dramatic censorship (Tony Aldgate, & James Crighton Robertson).

There are three phases that divide into the three core chapters of the thesis. Phase 1 explores the origin of the sound play in the medium of the phonograph at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and how those foundations developed into the question of whether there were modernist dimensions to audio drama before and during the First World War. Phase 2 investigates the modernist sound playwriting during the 1920s of Great War veteran Reginald Berkeley and his political agitational contemporaneity in the context of the BBC as a media institution. Phase 3 investigates the modernist sound playwriting of D.G. Bridson and Joan Littlewood, produced by Olive Shapley, and under the editorial leadership of Archie Harding at the BBC in Manchester in the 1930s. They were involved in creating political radio dramas that also negotiated issues of institutional and cultural censorship. All three phases are framed by a broadening understanding of audiogenic and radiogenic modernism during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The contribution of new knowledge in this research is the investigative discovery of the aesthetic origination of the sound drama form as proto-audio drama before and during the Great War. The thesis analyses new censorship dimensions to Reginald Berkeley's experience as a modernist playwright writing for the BBC and makes a further contribution to new scholarship through the discovery of original modernist scripts by D.G. Bridson that were directly censored by the BBC through the banning of their broadcast while in mid-rehearsal and after Radio Times scheduling.
The analysis seeks to demonstrate a modernist interrelationship between the phonograph age of sound dramatic production and expression, and that developed on the early broadcasting platform of the BBC during the 1920s and 1930s.

A key imperative of the thesis is to address the question of whether the political subversion in theme combined with the origination of form can be successfully argued to be a clearly identifiable dimension of modernist sound drama.
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Chapter 1 Introduction, literature review, and methodology

The seeds of linking phonograph audio play, modernism and radio drama

The inspiration for drawing the links between phonograph audio plays and the early years of radio drama were first explored in the text Radio Drama: Theory and Practice published in 1999. The phonograph represented a significant age for sound drama before the development of its radio platform. A detailed reference was made to the production by Major A.E. Rees during the Great War of ‘In The Trenches’ which in a sequence of 3 minutes and 28 seconds presented the listener with a ‘complex, sophisticated and highly entertaining performance by a large cast with a range of synthesized sound effects that create a clear sound design.’\(^1\) It was concluded that ‘here is a propagandist and popular drama being communicated with clarity on a wax phonograph and predating production techniques which were to become standard five to six years later.’\(^2\) What was not appreciated at the time was that Major Rees had in fact written and created a six-part series on the Great War published and distributed by Columbia Records in 1917. ‘In The Trenches’ was only one part. The productions encompassed ongoing characterization and a continuing dramatic narrative of two soldiers leaving the Home Front to go to France and experiencing a variety of forms of action, including a night attack, and returning to their homes. The quality of the production had characteristics identified as the successful components and aspects of BBC Radio Drama in the first books which recommended the best techniques for producing what became known as the microphone, wireless, broadcast and radio play.

What is so remarkable about the significance of these sound texts is that they were created in the acoustic recording age when horns not microphones were used to capture sound through the vibrations of needles on wax to fix a much more limited dynamic sound range for reproduction. Twenty years of research since 1999 have uncovered and revealed a range of achievement, innovation and evidence of modernist sound technique fixed by wax cylinder and shellac phonograph disc which demonstrates that sound drama was a thriving and significant listening experience from the late Victorian age of the

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\(^1\) Crook Tim, Radio Drama Theory & Practice, (London: Routledge,1999), p.33

\(^2\) Ibid.
1890s, through the Edwardian period of the first decade of the twentieth century and then accelerated and expanding in scale during the First World War. The phonograph age of audio drama with modernist exigencies and dimensions of style, technique and culture originated before the radio age, and overlapped and complemented modernist radio achievements through the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, the modernist culture of phonograph sound drama operated with powerful political motivation and messaging, and had been used for the purposes of political propaganda.

This is the missing link that represents the core of original contribution of academic analysis in the story of modernist sound drama in this thesis. After *Radio Drama*’s publication in 1999 there has been no evidence of any further academic research and exploration of how audio drama practice may have been informed or simply presaged by the sound drama aesthetic artform in phonograph production from the end of the 19th century to the onset of the development of broadcasting sound dramas on the radio from the early 1920s.

*Radio Drama* also devoted an entire, though very short chapter to ‘Radio drama as modernity’ with a focus on Hilda Matheson’s *Broadcasting* in which the BBC pioneer of talks and promotion of modernists was quoted as saying:

Drama, throughout the ages, has been presented as an art, a show, in which vision was at least as important as hearing. How far can broadcasting hope to translate the appeal to the eye into the appeal to the ear? How far must it seek for a new literature and a new drama? And how far- to look even deeper- can any form of art, - most of all, perhaps, the intimate art of poetry – hope to make itself understood and appreciated when it is diffused indiscriminately through millions of loud speakers to the whole general public?4

However, in this chapter the role of sound/radio drama in modernism was not fully explored and developed apart from acknowledging that James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf through their exploration of subjectivity, dream, memory and the unconscious could be said to have been imitating or parodying the new medium.

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3 Ibid pp 12-20
In 1935 Matheson had reviewed the record of the BBC in terms of its speech and entertainment programming for the academic journal *Political Quarterly* and identified the modernist potential of ‘feature programmes’ that used all the methods of talks, drama, music, actuality reading or interviews and represented ‘the real core of broadcasting. It is in this connection that it is most true to speak of an “art” of radio.’\(^5\) She was also concerned about the institutional containment imposed on the Talks Department that she felt compelled to resign from in a row over censorship four years before.

One year after the publication of *Radio Drama* Andrew Crisell in the *Journal of Radio Studies* genuflected at the idea that radio drama had taken over the old genre of stage drama after attempting to reproduce it closely and ‘gradually modified it into something more suited to its own character.’\(^6\) He argued that it became the “‘theatre of the invisible”, severing drama’s recent connection with spectacle and renewing its pristine association with speech.’\(^7\) The title of Crisell’s article ‘Better Than Magritte’ (2000) held a modernist resonance by referencing an artistic association with the internationally acclaimed Belgian surrealist painter.

Crisell observed:

And it takes no more than the sound of a bathroom shower to make us visualize rain in a tropical forest. Hence, even more powerfully than Magritte’s famous surreal painting ‘The Key of Dreams,’ which points up the arbitrariness of the connection not only between verbal signs and visual signs but between both of these and the real world, radio undermines the quiddity of things: Its pigeons are umbrellas, and its horses coconuts. And if, as is likely, modern radio has found more sophisticated evocations of sounds than these naïve hand-made effects, the case is unaltered, for it is still true that many of radio’s recognizable sounds are not what we think they are. Because the medium offers nothing else, they are both implicitly believed and inherently untrustworthy.\(^8\)

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7. Ibid.
8. Crisell, p. 468
Although Crisell did not define his understanding of three key distinctive features of radio drama as ‘modernist radiogenic’, it could be argued that he was beginning to constitute an explanation of such a phrase. He emphasised the following qualities:

1. The substitution of an inner landscape for the outer world and the adoption of a flexible attitude to time and space, which can expand or contract according to the subjective requirements of the characters.
2. The creation of a fluid, indeterminate environment in which the distinctions between fact and fantasy are often blurred.
3. The use of precise, terse language as a kind of weapon against the overwhelmingly problematic and disorderly nature of experience.\

Crisell acknowledged the historical role of Lance Sieveking who was appointed by BBC Radio in 1928 to research, create and experiment and ‘working on the assumption that the listener’s visualizing faculty was virtually boundless he developed vast dramas involving multiple studios. These were linked to a central mixing desk, or dramatic control panel, at which the producer was installed like a conductor before an orchestra.’\textsuperscript{10} Crisell also noted Sieveking’s more ambitious creation \textit{Kaleidoscope} in 1929 that had been subtitled ‘A Rhythm Representing the Life of a Man from Cradle to Grave’, had a cast of more than 100 located in eight studios, and made copious use of sound effects.

\textit{Radio Drama} in 1999 had recognized the significance of Sieveking’s contribution to the development of radio drama with analysis of his modernist manifesto for creating in the sound medium that he titled \textit{The Stuff of Radio} and was published in 1934. Full analysis was given to Sieveking’s definition of the dramatic and artistic effects of sound beyond words and music: The Realistic, Confirmatory Effect; The Realistic, Evocative Effect; The Symbolic, Evocative Effect; The Conventionalized Effect; The Impressionistic Effect and Music as an Effect.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{9} Crisell, p. 472 \\
\textsuperscript{10} Crisell, p. 466 \\
\textsuperscript{11} Crook, pp. 70-73
\end{flushleft}
Sieveking’s passionate and detailed book is a highly significant text setting out a powerful, enthusiastic and comprehensive published declaration of the artistic potential of radio drama. It serves as a vital historicist benchmark and tool for analyzing the modernist characteristics of what was done in sound drama before 1934 and, indeed, afterwards. In his lively and distinctive style, Sieveking used the contents page to explain what he was trying to do:

Observations on a new art, comparing its technique with that of other arts, such as: Theatre, Television, Novel, Talking Picture, Opera, Poem, Music, and Silent Film. Also an account of the Mystery of Painting with Sound, a discussion of other people’s books on Radio, some prophesies about the future, and some suggestions for “Home Broadcasting,” the new Parlour Game.¹²

Sieveking’s modernist manifesto has been hiding in plain sight as a treasure trove of information and revelation about radio drama’s intrinsic modernism that was not merely a reflection of modernist prose or an instrumental symbolism and metaphor for the representation of the audiogenic and radiogenic in prose and poetry.

What has also been missed, even by Sieveking himself, is that the first book written exclusively about radio drama and published in 1926 was also not only a modernist phenomenon in publication, but additionally contained many modernist aspirations with the recognition of the poetic potentiality and spatial dimensions of sound drama and its connection with human consciousness. Sieveking was rather patronizing about Gordon Lea’s Radio Drama and How to Write It. In his referencing of it under the subtitled section ‘Other People’s Books on Radio Drama’ he mockingly observed:

One sentence has stuck in my memory: ‘...the radio actor’s aim must be to radiate personality...to convey atmosphere by cooperation with other radiating personalities....’ It gives me a deliciously warm feeling on cold, foggy London days to think of those radiating personalities. I think of them as being something like the Gas, Light and Coke people’s advertisement of ‘Mr Therm’- certainly radiating personality if ever there was one!¹³

¹³ Sieveking, p. 49.
Audio-drama’s first modernist manifesto

Gordon Lea was an early studio manager and producer based in the BBC’s local station in Newcastle upon Tyne. In 1924, he was profiled by the Radio Times in an article titled ‘People in the Programmes’ as a ‘Poet, Dramatist and composer.’ His credits disclosed participation in radio drama production as producer, playwright, and actor. He was as much of the radio drama auteur as Lance Sieveking claimed for himself in The Stuff Of Radio. And he was fully supported by the BBC’s first Director of Productions R.E. Jeffrey, who wrote in the introduction that ‘Radio Drama has a great future. This future lies not only with those lone souls who spend their time and thought in front of the microphone, suffering the slings and arrows of uninformed criticism, but also with those millions to whom the microphone, via transmitter, broadcasts their efforts’. Jeffrey was recognizing the significance of ‘the listener’s part’ and the idea that he who listens learns. Jeffrey and Lea were infused with great hope and optimism and this was shared by the first Managing Director of the BBC, John C.W. Reith, who in one of the first books on British broadcasting in 1924, Broadcast Over Britain, enthused about how radio drama offered the opportunity for realism and imagination to combine as ‘The voices of actors in a city studio can be superimposed on the actual sounds of the circumstances and surroundings in which they are supposed to be acting. It may be the breakers on a beach a hundred miles away. It is an immense asset to know that the sounds are real. The imagination is thrilled by the knowledge. The spirit of the listener is transported into the true regions of the drama; its effect is enhanced tenfold.’ He added: ‘Naturally, much of the success of the radio play depends on the listener.’

15 Lea, Gordon, Radio Drama And How To Write It (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1926), pp.11-12.  
16 Lea, p. (ibid 11).  
17 Reith, John Charles Walsham, Broadcast Over Britain (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924) pp.166-7  
18 Ibid.
Gordon Lea advanced his 1926 explanation of what he saw as the artistic promise of drama made specifically for radio with the prophesy: ‘We shall find, I think, a new sphere of art, achievement in which will react upon literature to its permanent enrichment.’\(^{19}\) He talked about a new literary form ‘which is full of possibilities’ and ‘here is the new clay for moulding’\(^{20}\) and invited the potters to come forward to take radio drama from its cradle and to pioneer and experiment.

Lea immediately grasped the importance of the role of the listener by means of headphones or loudspeakers: ‘Objectively, they see nothing, but subjectively they can see everything. This is what the radio dramatist has to bear in mind.’\(^{21}\) Lea regarded the significance and participation of the listener as so crucial he devoted an entire chapter titled ‘The Listener’s Part’. There is certainly a case for arguing that Lea may well have been one of the first radio drama philosophers or poets. This is because his pedagogy and criticism were philosophical and poetic in style. His language throughout emphasizes the intrinsic over the instrumental: ‘All art is an expression of imagination- the radio scene is beyond art. It is reality itself, not an isolated expression of imagination, but imagination itself.’\(^{22}\) He realized that radio drama offers the dramatist ‘a more spacious structure, whose architecture is more artistic and nearer truth.’\(^{23}\)

Gordon Lea exhorted the idea that radio drama liberates the imagination by scattering the problem of perspective and opening up a new world to the dreamer of dreams: ‘Anything that is conceivable in the imagination of the dramatist is capable of complete expression and interpretation to the imagination of the playwright’s world. If they wish to set their play in the heart of the buttercup, the imagination of the hearer will provide the setting.’\(^{24}\)

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19 Lea, p. 23.
20 Lea, p. 91.
21 Lea, p. 38.
22 Lea, p. 40.
23 Lea, p. 33.
24 Lea, p. 41.
He recognized the special intimacy of radio work: ‘The listener is in direct touch with the player—there is no intervening convention—no barrier. Soul speaks to soul.’ Lea’s text is a celebration of sound drama as an intense political, social and cultural conjunction of human voice and word, the dialogic fusion of the spoken and written word, of everyday chatter and enduring literature. His understanding of the poetic aesthetic is beautifully expressed when he talks about the voices of the player in radio drama coming out of silence and ‘they were […] like jewels against the background of black velvet.’

Lea thereby opened the debate about how best to write radio drama through finding a dramatic regulation of performed consciousness. For the auteur, or producing collaboration of playwright, director/producer and performer, he connected the necessary bridges between orchestration of sound through the audio-dramatic score and its representation of reality and human consciousness through performance and production. When he wrote about the importance and value of music it was in poetic rather than utilitarian terms: ‘From out this darkness grew green music, colouring the mind and pointing the emotions to their destined end.’ He granted a cultural and artistic importance for the writer in radio drama: ‘…the one real essential is something behind the text – the idea or dramatic purpose of the author,’ and connected this with the importance of appealing to the individual listener: ‘The radio drama does not make its appeal to a crowd but to an individual…for what will appeal to a crowd will almost certainly appeal to the individual, but it is by no means certain that what will appeal to the individual will appeal to the crowd.’ He recognized the significance of voice as the agency of characterization where an actor’s shape and physical characteristics are irrelevant: ‘What is written in the text will be given pure and untrammeled to the mind of the listener.’ He realized that through what became a convention of interior voice and listener’s point of hearing, radio drama was the ideal

25 Lea, p. 69.
26 Lea, p. 72.
27 Lea, p. 21.
28 Lea, p. 32.
29 Lea, p. 37.
30 Lea, p. 39.
medium for the aside and soliloquy. ‘…in stage work the “Aside” and the “Soliloquy” were incapable of sincere use. In radio work they can be used with every appearance of sincerity and truth.’

Lea emphasized that in radio drama the unstageable does not need a scene break or transition: ‘Illusion once created need never be broken in the radio play. The dramatist can be as extensive as he likes, since the whole world or any part of it can be his setting.’ The suspension of disbelief and art of illusion in sound drama is, therefore, much more fluid and not so much confined by the physical boundaries of the physical stage set or filmic location. The dramatist has direct access to the listener on the emotions of the play and they are therefore immune when ‘the house is made to “rock with mirth.” In the quietude of your own room, you can react truly and naturally and so be sincere. All this makes for truth and reality.’ He directed new practitioners to the craft about the needing of a professional attitude rooted in the sound medium. The radio dramatist needs not write to communicate a crowd-psychology: ‘In conversation with a friend you can use a direct method, an intimate method, which would not be suitable for an orator’s platform. The radio play gains just this intimacy which a stage-play can never hope to have.’

Even as early as 1926 with the technological limits of sound production at that time being on the cusp between mechanical and electrical recording, he advised against an over-immersive indulgence of sound for sound’s sake. While ‘the horizon of the dramatist’s dreams is widened beyond all knowledge, some restraint needs to be exercised in respect of sound-effects…these should be used sparingly. An ounce of suggestion is worth a ton of irritation.’

Lea set the course of debate on the ideal dramatic structure of story-telling in audio drama and it has not changed much since 1926. He recognized and discussed the merits of the narrator method and the self-contained method. This is the binary of telling and showing. He accepted that using a narrative voice offers the chance to characterize an interesting angle and develop sympathy and tension in the

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31 Lea, p. 39.
32 Lea, p. 42.
33 Ibid.
34 Lea, p. 43.
35 Ibid.
way of Shakespearean drama. The narrator can create ‘mind pictures’ and bridge dramatic action. Narrative voice is a good and convenient method of dramatizing prose/novel writing.\footnote{Lea, pp. 44-53.}

Lea made it clear that he preferred the ‘self-contained method’ as do most contemporary writers and directors. He said while the narrator method can knit together and make coherent long stage plays ‘as a form for original radio drama, it is not good.’\footnote{Lea, p. 53.} By removing the narrator, the writer creates a total mental vision so that the listener can effectively overhear the drama: ‘It can be made as startling and realistic as if the listener were overhearing something in the next room through a half-open door – with the advantage that the people in the next room obligingly let the eavesdropper know all about it.’\footnote{Lea, p. 54.}

Lea advanced that in the self-contained method, the scenery and setting is indicated by the characters themselves and what they say: ‘…this can be done quite naturally and effectively. The characters should be made to see everything objectively and to think of what they are doing objectively, so that this will appear in their speech […] be made to produce an illusion of naturalness.’\footnote{Lea, p. 55.} He advised writers to avoid making their characters give crude word pictures of where they are when the language is not natural to their personalities. The word picture needs to emerge gradually. Exposition needs to be subtle: ‘…this illusion of appearance and costume is necessary…should be done by means of the dialogue in a manner to stimulate the listener’s imagination.’\footnote{Lea, pp. 56-7.}

He argued that dramatic action is better than witty dialogue: ‘…I started out with the theory that plays which depended mainly on witty dialogue and very little on action would be more intelligible to the listener and so be more successful. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the contrary was the case.’\footnote{Lea, p. 57.}

It could be argued that Lea had an holistic multi-sensory recommendation for playwrights conjuring the colour, smell, touch and texture of their characters’ experiences. He was enthusiastic about
establishing speed and distance through movement – known as kinesics (speed) and proxemics (distance) in drama.\textsuperscript{42} It might also be argued that Lea was rather postmodernist during a modernist time by articulating the radio drama experience as an embodiment of relationship between performance and listening participation. There is something phenomenological about his observation that: ‘By the very fact that the listener is called upon to give so much of his own personality to the radio-play is his enjoyment and appreciation of it intensified […] and he gains through the medium of the human voice a mental pageantry of colour and delight which no artist in the world can emulate.'\textsuperscript{43}

When discussing the technique of radio actors, Lea recognized that voice acting requires absolute control of the voice and actors need to concentrate their thinking behind the voice enunciation and expression. Lea emphasized that in radio acting, the performer needs to concentrate on ‘his thinking and the regulation of his consciousness […] his aim must be to radiate personality—the personality of his particular part—to convey atmosphere by co-operation with other radiating personalities and to do all this through the medium of the voice.'\textsuperscript{44} It will thus be seen that his deployment of the metaphor of ‘radiating the personality’ was rooted in a modernist and psychological observation of dramatic performance in terms of ‘regulating consciousness’ and more profound and aesthetically considered than Sieveking’s dismissive joke about the Therm advertising catchphrase.

Gordon Lea’s text had a powerful intervening impact on the appreciation, and development of radio drama at the BBC in Britain. Reith directed that copies of the book should be sent to all of the BBC’s centres for radio production. The purpose disclosed in BBC minutes was to disrupt the influence and hold that stage drama had on those seeking to create drama on the radio and convert and evangelize the radio drama producer/director to the unique advantages of creating story telling for the listener’s imagination.

Christina S.L. Pepler in her PhD thesis ‘Discovering The Art of Wireless: A Critical History of Radio Drama At the BBC, 1922-1928’, recognized how powerfully the BBC’s managing director had

\textsuperscript{42} Lea, pp. 62-4.
\textsuperscript{43} Lea, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{44} Lea, pp. 75-9.
endorsed Lea’s guide and manual with its circulation to all main and relay stations. Reith added a covering memorandum explaining that the book would provide ‘further assistance in developing the different dramatic technique which is required for our medium. It occurs to me that in many of our productions there is too much striving for theatre effect and too little attempt at discovering the actual radio effect when the play is received in distant homes.’

Reith realized that ‘staginess’ needed to be diminished.

However, Pepler did not fully appreciate the significance of Lea’s text and criticized it for lacking the ‘extra dimension brought to radio by Sieveking’ and others. She condemned Lea for seeking in his first two chapters to ‘irreverently and falsely … establish radio’s superiority over stage as a medium for drama.’ She observed his ‘apparent impertinence’ of engaging an ‘earnest demolition’ of the qualities of stage drama and saw this as ‘evidence of the weakness of Lea’s argument’ that showed ‘how little sense of radio’s strength or aesthetic identity he really had.’

Pepler had been overcritical of Lea’s hubris in wanting to lead the new cadre of radio drama apostles and disciples in audio drama production at the BBC to place less reliance on the traditions and conventions of stage theatre.

The close content analysis of wax cylinder and phonograph audio drama in this thesis identifies how British sound and radio drama would inevitably be influenced and effectively stylized by the heritage from Victorian and Edwardian melodramatic and declarative theatre, grand guignol and the culture of music hall and variety performance before live audiences.

In her excoriation of Lea’s debunking of stage theatre, she extracts a quotation from his book that actually constitutes an excellent modernist reflection on the possibilities offered by sound drama: ‘All art is an expression of imagination – so that at the best a stage-scene is a second-hand affair – whereas the radio-scene is beyond art – it is reality itself, not an isolated expression of imagination, but

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45 John Reith, BBC Written Archives, R19/276, letter dated 20th December 1926.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Pepler, p.147.
imagination itself. Pepler confirms that Lea articulated ‘interesting and valid thoughts about the aesthetic nature of the medium – intimacy instead of crowd psychology, the closeness of control the writer may exercise, the fact that radio drama deals directly with the imagination of the listeners and with an inward, subjective rather than a visual and therefore to some extent objective dramatic illusion or reality.’ Pepler’s dissertation is not the only academic treatise that has consigned Lea’s text into the dustbin of indistinct, unfocused, uncertain, ‘misconceived and ineptly expressed…muddled and inappropriately aggressive’ analysis of how not to write and make wireless/radio drama.

Roger Wood in his PhD thesis ‘Radio Drama at the Crossroads: The history and contemporary context of radio drama at the BBC’ (2008) said Lea’s book was ‘not what it seems; in reality it is a guide to writing stage drama which seems to have been overtaken during the writing by Lea’s enthusiasm for the new medium. He offers no practical advice to the writer…’ There is a later section in Wood’s thesis where he gives Lea much more credit for appreciating an ambitious potential of the radio drama medium in contrast to the second BBC Director of Drama Productions, Val Gielgud, appointed to succeed R.E Jeffrey in 1929, and who published How to Write Broadcast Plays in 1932 with inclusion of three of his own radio plays. Gielgud had also set out his views on the future of radio playwriting with a series of six articles for the Radio Times between May 24th and June 28th 1929 under the generic title ‘The Wireless Play.’

Wood recognized that when Lea ‘switches to radio his prose comes to life. Lea is a peripheral voice, not a Savoy Hill insider. His ideas are often half-formed, like the medium itself, but his saving grace is his boundless enthusiasm. Lea saw radio as the future of drama whilst for Gielgud it would always be a “Cinderella Medium.”’ In continuing his analysis of the difference in theory held by Gielgud and Lea, Wood emphasized that Lea was opposed to the idea that pure radio drama was a play of

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50 Lea, p.40.
51 Pepler, p.148.
52 Pepler, p.150.
54 Wood, p.73.
discussion: ‘…I started out with the theory that plays which depended mainly on witty dialogue and very little action would be more intelligible to the listener. Imagine my surprise when I discovered the contrary was the case. By a mistake, the first play I produced for radio was one full of action.’\textsuperscript{55} Wood fully acknowledged that Gordon Lea had written ‘the world’s first published manual on the craft of the radio play’\textsuperscript{56} and furthermore, he was ‘the first to recognize that radio drama was a mass medium experienced individually.’\textsuperscript{57} Wood also identified that Lea’s appreciation of the radio play being effectively performed in private for the listener would be something fully recognized by the later BBC radio fiction experimentalist, Lance Sieveking, in his 1934 text \textit{The Stuff of Radio}.\textsuperscript{58} Sieveking’s enthusiasm for radio drama being ‘a “mystery” in the old sense; a sense beyond human reason; a kind of secret rite’\textsuperscript{59} was certainly heralded eight years earlier in Lea’s consideration of the direct imaginative interaction with individual listeners, and the realization that ‘This widens the dramatist’s scope…’\textsuperscript{60}

Alan Beck was less vituperative than Pepler, but like Wood, still critical of what he saw as the inadequacies of Lea’s approach and curriculum vitae in his study of BBC radio drama during the 1920s \textit{The Invisible Play- History of Radio Drama in the UK; Radio Drama 1922-8}. He emphasized how Lea’s experience in theatre and radio appeared to be limited to regional repertory practice in Newcastle Upon Tyne and his BBC credits restricted to participation in plays of ‘either thirty minutes, or in the case of the double bills, fifteen minutes each.’\textsuperscript{61} Beck argued that ‘In view of the rapid changes in production technique and aesthetic just happening, especially multi-studio production in London, it was written too soon perhaps, and it was not revised and reissued.’\textsuperscript{62} Beck questioned if

\textsuperscript{55} Lea, p.57.
\textsuperscript{56} Wood, p.73.
\textsuperscript{57} Wood, p.74.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Sieveking, p.15
\textsuperscript{60} Lea, p.37.
\textsuperscript{61} Beck, Alan, \textit{The Invisible Play- History of Radio Drama in the UK; Radio Drama 1922-8}, Staff Research published on C.D., University of Kent, 2000, 6.4.3.
\textsuperscript{62} Beck, 6.4.1.
Gordon Lea had ever visited Savoy Hill and produced there. He condemned Lea for omitting everything that Sieveking would be able to address in his *The Stuff of Radio*—‘knowledge of the newest technology now being pioneered … the creation of a studio suite, with multi-studio production, fading, echo and the expansion into elaborate effects with a separate effects studio.’\textsuperscript{63} But as has already been indicated, Sieveking’s book was published eight years later in 1934. Lea fails to receive any credit for philosophizing and recognizing the intrinsic artistic achievement and potential of sound drama that most likely reprised the practice in phonograph story telling pre-radio and was certainly based on his own experience and understanding of sound drama production for the radio medium. His was an unacknowledged modernist approach.

**Radio Drama, Modernism and the Avant-garde**

Martin Shingler advanced a considerable measurement of the relationship between avant-garde and modernist radio in his article ‘Some Recurring Features of European Avant-Garde Radio’ for the *Journal of Radio Studies* in 2000. He discussed what he saw as the dominant features of European avant-garde radio namely: montage, the radical/irrational language technique of glossolalia, and sound distortion. By the time he wrote his analysis a number of English-language texts on radiophonic experimentation had been published by American university presses including Allen Weiss’s evaluation of Antonin Artaud’s work in *Phantasmic Radio* (1995), and the edited anthologies: *Wireless Imagination* (1994), by Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead, *Radio Rethink* (1994), by Daina Augatis and Dan Lander and *Radiotext(e)* (1993) by Neil Strauss. Shingler had no engagement whatsoever with either the proto-radiogenic work created by phonograph or Gordon Lea’s 1926 text on radio drama. He identified Lance Sieveking as ‘the most notable and enthusiastic exponent of experimental radio in Britain, embracing various modernist devices.’\textsuperscript{64} He recognized Sieveking’s drawing down of the practice and philosophy of Soviet montage film makers and how techniques of close-ups, mixes, fades and superimpositions could be expressed in the radio medium:

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

When one comes to analyze the process of making and of receiving radio plays and films, more and more unsuspected similarities emerge. For instance, in 1932 I was interested to notice that Mr. V.I. Pudowkin (Russian film director) had been thinking along exactly the same lines as I had, in the matter of tempo generally, and the close-up of time in particular.\(^{65}\)

Shingler pinpointed Sieveking’s modernist deployment of slow-motioning the rhythm of sound and performance in his broadcast play *Intimate Snapshots* (1929 & 1930) where he had ‘slow-motioned small pieces of speech in several places, sometimes in order to emphasize meaning of words as words, and sometimes in order to give them special significance as sound form.’\(^{66}\) Sieveking had designated this technique as ‘Time-Sound Close-up’ and he described how the final line of the play was articulated with ever decreasing speed: ‘That’s the beauty of - it - Sir - if – you – take – my- meaning.’\(^{67}\) Shingler highlighted Sieveking’s appreciation of how ‘the actress moved closer to the microphone as she delivered this line and spoke in tempo to music, which was gradually faded up, producing a slowly thudding and insistent percussive effect with the notes as “much like words as her words had been like notes.”’\(^{68}\) The music was derived from a jazz record ‘played very slowly on an electric gramophone, its amplified and long, drawn-out thuds having “an almost terrifying significance.”’\(^{69}\)

Shingler argued that Sieveking had created a new genre of broadcasting that was unique to radio—the feature which was the true stuff of radio characterized by montage and orchestration. This appeared sometimes in the guise of a mosaic of poems recited between music: ‘the feature was associated with a degree of apparent formlessness, randomness, or discontinuousness (akin to modernist literature of the 1920s, such as Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.’\(^{70}\)

\(^{65}\) Sieveking, p. 35.
\(^{66}\) Ibid.
\(^{67}\) Sieveking, p. 36.
\(^{68}\) Shingler, p.201.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) Shingler, p.201.
Sieveking was making full use of the Dramatic Control Panel that enabled him to break down and reassemble radio programmes live on air by coordinating different sounds such as actors, musicians, choruses and sound effects from different studios. His *The Stuff Of Radio* and ambitious and elaborate ninety minute multi-studio live productions such as *Kaleidoscope I and II* demonstrated the artistic value of sonic montage, audiogenic mosaic and radiogenic bricolage. The meaning of bricolage here is artistic and literary in the sense of designing the programme with different sound materials that have different intertextual meanings. Shingler concluded that avant-garde radio was a movement that self-consciously opposed conventional narratives, structures and textures and could be defined as:

(1) Radical juxtaposition, exposing the constructed nature of radio works that are otherwise easily (and ordinarily) disguised by invisible edits;
(2) The liberation of speech from highly regulated protocols;
(3) The liberation of words from associative or referential meaning, to render them abstract forms just like musical notes;
(4) The inversion of the established hierarchy of radio in which speech is used as the primary signifier and the nonverbal sounds (i.e. music, noise, and silence) operate as secondary or supportive codes.\(^71\)

Shingler also acknowledged that there is an inevitable slippage between the application of the terms ‘modernism’ and ‘avant-garde.’\(^72\) They are by no means synonymous and the recognition of radio artwork does not need to be limited and hierarchical.

**Radio Plays- Recognising the modernity in a new art-form**

A more expansionist approach to the idea of radio modernism can be applied to other sources of discussion of the wireless, radio, microphone and broadcast play being distributed to listeners by BBC transmitters during the 1920s. In the very first years of BBC Radio transmission, its London station 2LO employed a resident ‘dramatic critic to the British Broadcasting Company’, Archibald Haddon,

\(^{71}\) Shingler, p.209.
who would always begin his reports with the moniker ‘Hello Playgoers!’. In 1924 he had published a volume of his scripts; some of which included his reflections on the early beginnings of radio drama.

On 9th April 1924 he turned his attention to Lewis Casson’s production on 2LO of Maeterlinck’s *The Death of Tintagiles*. He interpolated his review with the details of a letter he received from a listener in Falkirk, Scotland, who explained to him that she was partially blind. The BBC’s production for her was high pleasure: ‘I, sitting here in the dark, saw the poor little boy in a faint; his big, strong sister protecting him, his head resting on her beating heart.’\(^73\) Haddon concluded: ‘I ask you, listener, to remember that letter when you feel disposed to drop your headphone during the performance of a radioplay. This new art form has a mission to fulfil beyond the immediate requirements of our own individual pleasures— a mission to humanity at large. What are we here for except to help each other— the strong to help the weak, the weak to help the afflicted, the afflicted to give hope to the hopeless?’\(^74\) The significance of this criticism was to elucidate the political, ethical and social role of sound drama.

In 1931, Tyrone Guthrie engaged thoughts about the microphone play with an introduction to the publication of three of his works written specifically for the medium. *Squirrel’s Cage, Matrimonial News, and Flowers Are Not For You To Pick*, were intended to be experimental and he hoped ‘that they may have something to say.’\(^75\) He wrote eloquently that though the radio broadcast play is denied ‘all these sensual sops to Cerberus […] the mind of the listener is the more free to create its own illusion.’\(^76\) Guthrie echoed Lea when he wrote:

> Because its pictures are solely of the mind, they are less substantial but more real than the cardboard grottoes, the calico rosebuds, the dusty grandeur of the stage; less substantial and vivid, because not apprehended visually, more real because the impression is partly created by the listener himself. From the author’s clues the listener collects his materials, and embodies

\(^74\) Ibid.
\(^76\) Ibid.
them in a picture of his own creation. It is therefore an expression of his own experience—whether physical or psychological—and therefore more real to him than the ready-made picture of the stage designer.\textsuperscript{77}

Guthrie appreciated as a writer that the listener’s impressions of the microphone play were more intimate and more subtle when received privately at home and ‘not coarsened by being flung into an auditorium, where individuals are fused together into one mass, which becomes a single crowd personality, easily swayed to laughter or tears, but incapable of the minute pulsations of feeling, the delicate gradations of thought which each member of the crowd experiences when alone.’\textsuperscript{78} The deployment of the developing multiple studio technique in \textit{Squirrel’s Cage}—one for the actors, one for the chorus, one for the ‘noises’, and one for the orchestra, all balanced by a mixing ‘control panel’ would bring to the sound play the effect of superimposed photography in films and endures in present day technology through digital multi-tracking.

As indicated earlier, in 1932, the second BBC Director of Productions, Val Gielgud, like Guthrie, offered a triple bill of his own plays but his introduction was rather apologetic and defensive. He showed a lack of confidence when describing the radio play as the Cinderella of drama and ‘infant in arms,’\textsuperscript{79} compared to stage theatre. In the \textit{How to Write Broadcast Plays} introduction he devoted many paragraphs to emphasizing that his own plays included were not ‘artistic masterpieces’ and were interesting more for ‘their shortcomings than for their merits.’\textsuperscript{80}

Gielgud did not advance at all on the manifesto for radio playwriting set out by Gordon Lea in 1926 and concentrated on ‘Some Practice Hints’, ‘The Question of Length’, ‘Clarity of Treatment,’ and a series of instrumental concerns about the elements of mixing machinery, the question of subject, the importance of music, the question of characters and a final plea for comedy playwriting: ‘This field of Broadcast Comedy lies practically virgin before all aspirants to honours in writing plays for

\textsuperscript{77} Guthrie, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{78} Guthrie, p.10.
\textsuperscript{80} Gielgud, p. 13.
It has to be said that Gielgud’s volume must have seemed rather unsatisfactory for any writers considering the radio medium in 1932. It lacked inspiration, over-stressed negativity and failure but, as he rather hinted, may have offered up the merits of looking at scripts which fell short of exploring the potential of the new art form. It could be argued that Gielgud lacked the modernist spirit and ethic. His approach was operative and instrumental.

**Audio-drama’s Second Modernist Manifesto**

In contrast, Lance Sieveking’s 1934 *The Stuff of Radio* was an explosion of creativity. He positively raged against Tyrone Guthrie’s tendency to interpolate his reflections on the status of radio drama with an expression of stage theatre’s lack as an art form. As for his BBC colleague Val Gielgud’s book *How to Write Broadcast Plays*, he found ‘a great many things with which I disagree violently. But that is only natural, for in life I disagree with him on almost every subject, even about the desirability of being alive at all.’ Sieveking picked apart and debunked practically every aspect of Gielgud’s guide to writing radio drama, but the essence of their cultural divide can be best explained in their respective attitudes to the role of the mixing desk introduced to the BBC in the late 1920s, somewhat grandiloquently named: ‘The Dramatic Control-Panel.’ Sieveking growled: ‘He thinks the instrument should be “operated”, I think that it should be “played.”’

Sieveking was an evangelist for sound drama in the context of modernism to break out of any prescribed literate straitjacket. Gielgud and other authors advising on a utilitarian approach to writing audio-drama discouraged any scripting of the radiophonic or audiogenic—those aspects of sound-based drama that are artistically special and expressive of the sound medium. As has already been mentioned Sieveking conjured a new lexicon for writing the sound drama creatively and effectively with his setting out of six effects in sound that can be montaged with words and music to conjure an impactful bricolage of sonic artistic expression.

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81 Gielgud, p. 35.
82 Sieveking, p. 57.
83 Sieveking, p. 58.
84 Sieveking, p. 66.
Sieveking argued that ‘It is axiomatic that every Sound Effect, to whatever category it belongs, must register in the listener’s mind instantaneously. That is one of the primary considerations which should weigh with authors and producers continually.’\textsuperscript{85} Sieveking made sound effects and music as much of the artistic responsibility of the radio playwright as the director, producer or sound designer, should any production have the luxury of all these additional roles.

Sieveking also developed Gordon Lea’s earlier discussion when he led with the assertion at the beginning of his chapter 8 ‘Writing for the Microphone’: ‘The art of writing plays for the wireless medium is an art, the practice of which may be treated in the same general terms as any other art, since it is subject to the same aesthetic and emotional laws as any other art.’\textsuperscript{86} Sieveking tore up the terms and conditions approach of writing radio plays: ‘To begin at the beginning: the radio dramatist must ask himself, what are all the things that people see subconsciously? In his play, what are the things which, not seeing, they will desire to see? What are the things which, desiring to see, they will, in some form, see? Helped and prompted by him, to what degree? And the degree of his mastery of the technique by means of which those problems can be solved, may be estimated by the degree in which not only he but his audience is unaware of its presence.’\textsuperscript{87}

Sieveking explained that the radio dramatist is more like the composer of music rather than a novelist or stage playwright: ‘…he \textit{hears} what he writes, conceives and works out his play before his mind’s ear. He is more like the composer than the theatre playwright in this respect, for whereas the theatre playwright has to see his play as it goes along and hear it also, the radio dramatist and the musician are dealing only with things to be heard.’\textsuperscript{88} Sieveking excitedly enthused that the radio dramatist has by far the greater orchestra to write for since the field of expression is not only the tone, pitch, volume, timbre and general character of musical instrumentation but words and ‘every sound in the world which may be taken in its original form, or imitated; which may be used realistically or in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Sieveking, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
some abstract way.’ In short, Sieveking’s grand principle of audio drama writing was that the world is your audience and orchestra, and this is an open-ended phenomenon.

**Scholarship linking drama, radio and modernism**

Two PhD/DPhil dissertations of the early 1990s investigated the history of early twentieth century BBC radio feature culture and a discussion of the relationship between radio drama as an art-form and poetry. Jeanette Thomas’ ‘A history of the BBC features department 1924-1964’ for the University of Oxford completed in 1993 contained early chapters that identified the first formal recognition of the feature programme with the establishment of the Research Section as an independent unit in 1929. Thomas observed that during this time and following the absorption of the Research Section into the Drama Department, ‘there was an efflorescence of experiment in the form of radio.’ A second chapter concentrated on the origins of documentary programmes based on documents, and the first use of ‘actuality’ field recordings at BBC Manchester. In 1994 Mary L. James completed a thesis for the University of Hertfordshire titled ‘British Radio Drama: a critical analysis of its development as a distinctive aesthetic form.’ James argued that radio drama is a specialised form of poetic drama, described as ‘poetic drama of the air’ which can express structuring techniques resembling those of poetry, symbolism, and subject-matter capable of embodying mythic themes and patterns. James discussed how poetic radio dramatists from the 1940s created the ‘audial equivalent of “poetry of the theatre.”’

Neither Thomas nor James focused their analysis in respect of issues of censorship, modernism, and the heritage and parallel practices of phonograph sound drama and poetics.

Margaret Fisher’s *Ezra Pound’s Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933*, published in 2002, is a significant cultural and academic text linking poetic expression by a modernist poet to large-scale and ambitious experimental production by Archie Harding, one of the leading pioneers of the

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89 Sieveking, p. 75.
92 Ibid.
radio feature programme, who became intimately and professionally connected with the modernist work of D.G. Bridson in Manchester during the 1930s. Fisher wrote:

Together, Harding and Pound broke technical and theoretical ground in the production of opera for radio. Harding produced Pound’s opera-for-radio *The Testament of François Villon* on October 26 and 27, 1931. The transmission, a studio performance from the BBC’s Savoy Hill headquarters on the Thames River, was one of the first electronically enhanced operas to be broadcast in Europe. It featured the use of artificial echo throughout the performance to distinguish scenic location, and the operation of an electronic audio mixing board to combine prerecorded passages with live performance. With access to the most up-to-date recording technology, Harding arranged for a steel tape recording to be made of the penultimate rehearsal to provide immediate playback for the performers’ edification.\(^{93}\)

Douglas Kahn said: ‘Margaret Fisher’s learned book places Pound’s radio operas on the backdrop of the European avant-garde, the inner works of the ‘B.B.B.B.C.,’ and Pound’s own formidable breadth of ideas, to provide us, for the first time, with comprehensive case studies of modernist radiophonic experimentation.’\(^{94}\) However, David Hendy later argued that Fisher failed to fully appreciate the significance of modernist origination at the BBC. He questioned and challenged her statement that ‘Unlike cinema, the new radio art was evanescent, practiced behind walls of commercial or state officialdom, largely by producers and technicians who did not operate like an avant-garde, and according to film and art historians achieved little of artistic significance.’\(^{95}\)

Todd Avery’s *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922-1938* published in 2006 investigated how modernist writers negotiated their representation in political and economic talks with the moralistic, nationalistic and imperialistic directives of the BBC which at that time was a media institution commanded with some authoritarian energy by the managing director and Director-General John Reith. The narrative explored the tensions and participation of modernist thinkers, artists and

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\(^{94}\) Fisher, back dust-cover blurb.

\(^{95}\) Fisher, p.45.
writers such as Harold Nicolson, H.G. Wells, T.S. Eliot, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, and Desmond MacCarthy. As an academic text its main relevance to this thesis lies in how their non-conservative and unconventional leanings as a form of agitational contemporaneity could be voiced in the context of this early institutional containment. But Avery’s study did not encompass the tensions and aesthetic struggles of sound drama and feature writers and producers. The editor of BBC Talks Hilda Matheson would resign in 1931 over the censorship of Harold Nicolson’s talk on James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. This event received more cogent investigation, reflection and discussion by Charlie Dawkins in ‘Harold Nicolson, *Ulysses*, Reithianism: Censorship on BBC Radio, 1931’ in *The Review of English Studies* (2016). Nicolson was an author, diplomat, and politician, and husband to Vita Sackville West and associated with the Bloomsbury group.

During this period there was some scholarly advance in the modernist engagement with radio though it could be argued again that its focus on radio drama was very limited. *Broadcasting Modernism* (2009) edited by Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle and Jane Lewty argued that ‘radio led to changes in textual and generic forms, providing a new perspective for modernist studies even as it reconfigures the landscape of the era itself’.96 The editors conceded, however, that early broadcasts were rarely recorded and consequently, textual evaluation of radio drama from the 1920s and early 1930s, as with Angela Frattarola’s work, was predicated on analyzing surviving scripts and descriptions of sound. The volume did include a chapter by Martin Spinelli in which he explored the ‘Radiogenic Modernist Literature’ present in the work of Orson Welles’s *War of the Worlds* (1938) and Norman Corwin’s *On A Note of Triumph* (1941). Calling both director/auteurs ‘Masters of Sacred Ceremonies’, Spinelli highlighted the play-within-a-play structure of *War of the Worlds* as proving most threatening to institutional power- ‘perhaps the truest testament to the program’s assault on conventionality.’97 He argued that in Corwin’s *On A Note of Triumph* the microphone reappears ‘to

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collapse geographical space into radio space’ and that this could be identified as ‘expanding and integrating another radio literary trope.’

In 2009 Angela Frattarola had two articles published which advanced the connection between literary modernism, sound and radio: ‘Developing an Ear for the Modernist Novel: Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce’ in *Journal of Modern Literature* and ‘The Modernist “Microphone Play”: Listening in the Dark to the BBC’ in *Modern Drama*. The first reflected a growing trend in literary studies to recognize the ‘sound and auditory experience in the modernist novel.’ She argued that in addition to being inspired and influenced by sound technologies, modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce used sound and auditory experience to ‘subvert traditional Enlightenment notions of self and narrative, which tend to privilege sight.’ She sought to demonstrate how these novelists connected ‘their characters through shared listening, how music and nuances in voice are able to represent the ineffable and how stream of consciousness is a part of the auditory imagination.’ She concluded that ‘much of the formal experimentation associated with modernism is dependent on this representation of sound and auditory experience.’ A number of academic monographs have been published exploring the intersection of sound technologies with literature. Timothy Campbell’s *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi* (2006) investigated the impact of radio communication in experimental literary expression with references to Ezra Pound’s Cantos, and F.T. Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto. Two notable recent examples discussing the sonic dimensions of literature are Angela Leighton’s *Hearing Things: The Word of Sound In Literature* (2018) and Patricia Pye’s *Sound and Modernity in the Literature of London 1880-1918* (2017).

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98 Spinelli, p. 81.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
In her later article on ‘The Modernist “Microphone Play”’ Frattarola argued strongly that early BBC Radio drama cohered with ‘what we have come to associate with modernist aesthetics.’\textsuperscript{102} In her content analysis of published plays by Richard Hughes, Tyrone Guthrie, du Garde Peach, Louis MacNeice, D.G. Bridson and even Val Gielgud she declared that plays ‘certainly startled audiences’\textsuperscript{103} and exhibited ‘typical modernist formal innovations such as stream of consciousness and multiple points of view.’\textsuperscript{104} She referenced Sieveking’s 1934 \textit{The Stuff of Radio} as ‘echoing a high modernist valorization of aesthetics over didactism’\textsuperscript{105} and also picked up on his slow-motioning experimentation with special effects in the 1929 play \textit{Intimate Snapshots} ‘to defamiliarize speech that normally would be perceived absentmindedly.’\textsuperscript{106} Frattarola was able to read stream of consciousness, linguistic experiment, fragmentation, the psychological make-up of characters, and mythic paradigms variously in Richard Hughes’ \textit{Danger} (1924), Tyrone Guthrie’s \textit{The Flowers Are Not For You To Pick} (1930), \textit{Squirrel’s Cage} (1929) and \textit{Matrimonial News} (not broadcast until 1938), Lawrence du Garde Peach’s \textit{Ingredient X} (1929), Val Gielgud’s \textit{Exiles} and \textit{Red Tabs}, (1930) D.G. Bridson’s verse play \textit{Aaron’s Field} (1939) and Louis MacNeice’s \textit{The Dark Tower} (1946). She equated the modernist ideal of art as a transient and solitary experience with the solitary nature of the listener’s aesthetic engagement of imagination.

\textbf{David Hendy’s research and analysis of Lance Sieveking as radio’s originating modernist}

David Hendy’s discovery and study of Lance Sieveking’s original scripts and papers from his late 1920s experimental modernist radio features has resulted in a fundamental academic shift in the approach and scope of radio modernism to drama and feature programming. In a series of key academic journal articles Hendy has challenged and countered the dismissal of Sieveking’s

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{102} Frattarola, Angela, ‘The Modernist “Microphone Play”’: Listening in the Dark to the BBC,’ \textit{Modern Drama}, (Winter 2009), 52:4, 449-468, (p.450).
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Frattarola, p. 452.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Frattarola, p. 453.
\end{itemize}
achievements as some brief and largely irrelevant ‘whimsical piece of formal experimentation.’¹⁰⁷ Paddy Scannell condemned Sieveking for being at the centre of a ‘closed little enclave of art and literature’¹⁰⁸ whose attempts to create a new aural art were ‘banal or pretentious.’¹⁰⁹ In ‘Painting with Sound: The Kaleidoscopic World of Lance Sieveking, a British Radio Modernist’ (2012), Hendy argued that Sieveking’s achievements on British radio in the 1920s ‘should be acknowledged as a legitimate participant in any study of native modernism.’¹¹⁰ Hendy complained with considerable justification that the modernist story has been framed with the literary or cinematic experiment coming first. Academics were far too often prone to the trope that radio’s only function had been as some kind of inspiration for literary responses in modernist novel prose, or as a platform through which modernist icons such as Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and T.S. Eliot could disseminate their art, craft and ideas. Hendy believed radio should be respected as ‘a source of original ideas in itself.’

… ‘radio modernism’ needs to be understood as something more than just modernism on the radio: it needs to embrace the idea of radio being an integral part of the modernist project, with the potential of finding its own distinct language and role. […] it is even possible to argue that his most experimental work, in programmes such as Kaleidoscope, presaged developments in early sound film, specifically in ways later adopted by directors such as Alberto Cavalcanti and Humphrey Jennings at the General Post Office Film Unit. Thus, just as a group of film directors found a way of using avant-garde techniques in the institutionally sponsored framework of the GPO, Sieveking was able to assimilate, and then help consolidate a set of modernist influences within an equally important institutional setting, namely the BBC. In doing so, he ensured not just British radio had a richer texture than it might otherwise have had; he also helped to define the emerging profession of the radio producer- as someone working in an intrinsically synthetic art.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Hendy, 2013, p. 172.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
¹¹⁰ Hendy, 2013, p. 171.
Hendy’s seminal academic work on Sieveking has extended across three further academic articles: ‘Biography and the Emotions As a Missing “Narrative” in Media History: A case study of Lance Sieveking and the early BBC’ in *Media History* (2012); ‘Representing the fragmented mind: Reinterpreting a classic radio feature as “sonic psychology”’ in *The Radio Journal – International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* (2013) and ‘The Great War and British Broadcasting: Emotional Life in the Creation of the BBC’ in *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* (2014). In each, Sieveking serves as a core case study whereby the lives and attitudes of founding figures at the BBC are evaluated for their memories and experiences of the First World War. To what extent did these gestate ‘a pervasive “sonic-mindedness”’, which involved not just a heightened sensitivity to noise but the cultivation of a more critical approach to listening.’

Sieveking was a veteran of the Royal Flying Corps, had been shot down and been a prisoner of war. He could be said to have been ‘flying’ the dramatic control panel during the daring and ground-breaking live modernist feature productions of the late 1920s. Hendy observed that Sieveking noted in his diary ‘the delicious irony that the (BBC) Company’s Savoy Hill headquarters had been the very same building in which he had been demobbed several years before. The BBC he declared pointedly, was itself a new kind of “Air Force.”’

Hendy contended that many of the programmes that Sieveking ‘made in the 1920s and 1930s should be understood as highly personal responses to the artistic and political world trends of the period’ and that the BBC at the time should be considered as a matrix of complex emotional community rather than a total institution.

Hendy gave tribute to Sieveking’s achievement in showing how radio had an intrinsic capacity to express psychological interiority in a natural dramatic form: ‘It is a means of representing the

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subjective viewpoint, of speaking aloud a person’s private thoughts. It is, in short, the psychological medium par excellence.¹¹⁵

Siev eking made no references or allusions in The Stuff of Radio to specific sound story telling in the phonograph form, but he did describe how sound recording on records was used in his play Intimate Snapshots.¹¹⁶ The BBC collaborated with the Gramophone Company to capture the sounds of the London Underground at Belsize Park. Sieveking observed: ‘The records have been in use on and off ever since for a variety of purposes both realistic and impressionistic.’¹¹⁷ Sieveking also described how he recorded symbolic records for his modernist collaboration in 1929 with the photographer Francis Bruguière. In Beyond this Point Sieveking wrote a text designed to be inseparable and integral to the photographs:

The idea was that where words failed, the abstract photographic design stepped in, and said in shape and tone what could not be said in words. Sentences broke off on one side of the design, and new sentences began on the other side. I went further than this. I made gramophone records to go with certain parts of the book. We only needed Beachcomber’s ‘slight smell of foxes’ to have been complete. But we certainly achieved ‘absolute collaboration’ in that Bruguière’s photographs were not illustrations but part of the text, as were the gramophone records also.¹¹⁸

This synaesthetic experiment has been analysed by Anne McCauley in ‘Francis Bruguière and Lance Sieveking’s Beyond This Point (1929): An Experiment in Abstract Photography, Synaesthesia and the Cinematic Book’.¹¹⁹ However, the gramophone records referred to and recorded by Sieveking do not

¹¹⁶ Sieveking, p.68.
¹¹⁷ Sieveking, pp. 68-69.
¹¹⁸ Sieveking, p.72.
appear to have survived and the complete ‘inseparable and integral’\textsuperscript{120} relationship between photographic art, prose art and sound art cannot now be fully experienced.\textsuperscript{121} But this work remains a remarkable achievement in the poetic convivencia of modernist artistic endeavour in photography, prose and sound. The radiogenic dimension in some of Sieveking’s writing is evident across pages 128 to 131 with the text typography intersecting and bridging Bruguière’s photographic plate:

\begin{quote}
A great wind blew across your face, a great, warm
smooth wind, and all the
[Abstract modernist photographic image by Bruguière at page 129]
the all and, wind smooth,
warm, great a, face your across blew wind great A.
….Quiet background of music on a string quartet, something unplaceable-
Possibly an arrangement of Beethoven through Ravel by Walton ….It fades
Down. Sunlight and peace, and a voice saying quietly, as one reading from a
Hammock swung between two trees in an orchard:-
  Will not the rustle of the trees remain
  Music on evening air?
  Will not the earth smell sweet after the rain?
  May not the joy be yours which friendship lends
  Though memory holds no past of other friends?
  \textit{Fade up the music again, and then fade it out.}\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

Sieveking is embedding aspects of a radio drama script into the texture of written avant-garde literature. The synaesthetic intensity of the writing gestates imaginative feelings and emotions that embrace and cross-fade between imagism, touch, and the sonorous and aural sensation.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Lance Sieveking’s son Paul confirmed by email correspondence 21/03/2020 that he and his family were not able to find any of the records associated with this exhibition and there is no prospect of their being present in the archives held by Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA.
\textsuperscript{122} Sieveking, Lance and Bruguière, Francis, \textit{Beyond This Point}, (London: Duckworth, 1929) pp. 128-131
The phonograph recordings were produced for a multimedia installation exhibition at the Warren Gallery to launch the book Beyond This Point. Audiences viewed thirty-five images created by Bruguière from the Beyond This Point volume and his experimental surrealist film Close Up while listening to sonic Sieveking’s performance of his text. Anne McCauley observed that ‘Most reviewers ignored the Warren Gallery show, and lambasted the book for its abstruseness.’¹²³ It seems that only one newspaper review, headlined ‘Picturised Emotions of an Author’ in the Daily News and Westminster Gazette noticed the presence of the gramophone.¹²⁴

Sieveking later gave a more detailed description of the phonograph and photographic art exhibition project at the two room, first floor gallery run by Dorothy Cecil Warren, niece of Lady Ottoline Morrell, and her husband Philip Coutts-Trotter who owned a jade mine. In his 1957 autobiographical volume The Eye of the Beholder, Sieveking recalled: ‘Bruguière and I had the first room, and his photographs on the walls were added to not only by piles of our books, but several strange gramophone records that I had made, of parts of the book.’¹²⁵ He described Bruguière as ‘the great American photographer’¹²⁶ who had provided abstract photographs of light whereas ‘Looking back, I see that I contributed concrete descriptions of darkness. The text broke off in mid-sentence above each photograph, and the reader was supposed to continue through the abstract design until he came to my next sentence, which had no beginning and didn’t join on to the broken sentence above, except by whatever idea the reader might have got from the photograph. What fun we had in the twenties.’¹²⁷

In 2013 Lance Sieveking’s son Paul published Airborne: Scenes From The Life of Lance Sieveking, Pilot, Writer & Broadcasting Pioneer, and included substantial passages of a previously unpublished memoir his father left with the BBC Archives. Lance Sieveking offered a more precise description of how the audio he created related to the photographic and prose content of the book.

¹²³ McCauley, p.61.
¹²⁴ McCauley, p 65.
¹²⁶ Sieveking, p. 264.
¹²⁷ Ibid.
…I wrote a book called *Beyond this Point* with the famous American photographer Francis Bruguière (pronounced ‘Broogaire’). It was an example of absolute collaboration. The text was intended to be inseparable from the abstract photographs. They were integral parts of each other. Sentences broke off on one side of the design and the ends of other sentences continued on the other side. I also made a gramophone record of part of the book which ‘should be heard while looking at the design on page 123’. The book also dealt in attitudes towards various experiences common to all humanity, analyzing possible lines of behavior. The photographic designs, some of them made of nothing but beams of different-shaped light, were intended to give the reader, in a few seconds of contemplation, an understanding of something which it might have taken a thousand words to convey in full.128

There is a contradiction here in Sieveking’s recollections. The BBC memoir refers to one record: *Eye of the Beholder* to perhaps several. We are left to speculate on the context of the phonograph produced that should have been ‘heard while look at the design on page 123.’ The photograph itself is entirely abstract and interspersed between the words ‘Surely there was nothing to wait for—now? Only one thing was’ and ‘and the table jarred a little, a glass tinkled against another.’ The section of the book is titled ‘Attitudes Towards Social Ruin’ and the sequence between pages 119 and 125 ‘Suicide.’

The written text disturbingly articulates the stream of consciousness of somebody about to shoot himself in the head:

You were alone. Altogether alone. The drawer was locked. With a quick jerk you had it open and you put your hand on the revolver within. The barrel was cold and hard as you pressed it against your forehead. Quick! Never hesitate before unpleasant things that have got to be done, like when you were a little boy and paused fearfully at the top of the slithery slide at the baths and all at once a bigger boy who hated you jumped up behind and with his weight bore you down swish swash swosh into the water and down down underneath it till the water filled your mouth and stomach and your head felt as if it would burst and you would never get to the surface what would your family think don’t think of that too late can’t explain never understood not thought of these possibilities nothing left to live for now trickle of blood when they found the body

sprawling ugly dark room love light happy days hope and everything—pull, pull, PULL—BANG!"¹²⁹

This is a quite shocking articulation of the consciousness of interior depressive despair and self-destruction- the like of which would have faced hard censorial pressures at the BBC of 1929 and the need for referencing up and Ofcom broadcasting code regulation in 2019. It is fascinating to speculate on how Sieveking produced the sound accompaniment to the abstract photograph and written text.

The Sieveking and Bruguière show was followed by an exhibition of D.H. Lawrence’s paintings including ‘One painting of three nuns coming upon a youthful gardener asleep under a tree in a surprising attitude. He had discarded most of his clothes and revealed much that, one supposes, nuns seldom if ever see.’¹³⁰ Sieveking later regretted failing to buy a very large book of Lawrence’s ‘splendid colour-reproductions’¹³¹ because Scotland Yard subsequently raided the gallery and seized all the paintings on the grounds that they were obscene. Sieveking was informed that the police ‘staggered by Lawrence’s paintings, started to search the adjoining offices and soon came upon Bruguière’s photographs, some of which contained shapes which looked not unlike women’s breasts.’¹³² There is no reference to any of the detectives checking the records containing Sieveking’s sound accompaniments for evidence of audiogenic indecency.

Lance Sieveking’s delight in being associated and peripherally involved in this celebrated event in early 20th century censorship history was extended in the memoir he left with the BBC when he recalled: ‘There were also some fine reproductions of William Blake in the gallery which caused a lot of headshaking by the police. Sad to relate, Lawrence and Blake were not prosecuted together. But it was touch and go until they asked for Blake’s address…’¹³³

¹²⁹ Sieveking & Bruguière 1929, p.125.
¹³⁰ Sieveking, p.265.
¹³¹ Ibid.
¹³² Sieveking, p.266.
¹³³ Sieveking 2013, pp.223-5.
McCauley credits the photographic, graphical text and sound art experiment with consolidating ‘the influences that led in the late 1920s to a British version of surrealism.’\textsuperscript{134} She added that ‘Looking back to the Symbolists’ interest in synaesthesia and the theosophists’ belief in a “vibratory ether” variously carrying sounds, colors and thoughts, the authors accepted that art should consist of universally legible forms (textual or pictorial) that would trigger emotional responses in the reader’s or viewer’s unconscious.’\textsuperscript{135} It is very frustrating that the sound dimension of this ‘melding of text and still photography that reflected the most advanced thinking about the expressive potential of new media in the 1920s’\textsuperscript{136} has not survived.

**The Modernist Turn in Literature, Radio and other Multidisciplinary Studies**

It could be argued that from 2014 there has been a substantial acceleration of published scholarship that serves to legitimize and contextualise an academic narrative linking radio drama, politics, propaganda and modernist culture. In *Broadcasting In the Modernist Era* (2014) edited by Matthew Feldman, Erik Tonning and Henry Mead, the editors explained that even though some of the authors studied in the volume, such as Forster, Priestley and Orwell may not be recognized as ‘unambiguously “modernist”’, ‘the interwar arrival of broadcasting as a mass phenomenon certainly was.’\textsuperscript{137} They also accepted as their guiding theme ‘the intrinsically modern embrace of broadcasting by leading European Artists’ and what Timothy Campbell defined as the ‘radio imaginary.’\textsuperscript{138} They then linked the political and modernist imperative by declaring ‘Whether in broadcasting ideological propaganda or radio drama, both the putative possibilities and constraints of this new medium offered a rich source of energy for creative licence in the modernist era- whether for good or ill.’\textsuperscript{139}

The focus on Irish literary modernism on the radio by Emily C. Bloom in *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968*, (2016) addressed the relationship of authors such as Louis

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\textsuperscript{134} McCauley, p.61.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{139} Feldman et al, p.2.
MacNeice, Elizabeth Bowen, W.B. Yeats and Samuel Beckett and the BBC. Damien Keane in Ireland and the Problem of Information: Irish Writing, Radio, Late Modernist Communication (2014) further advanced modernist reflection on the radio work of Irish writers during the interwar period. The connections and symbiosis between Samuel Beckett’s radio production and twentieth century modernism was analysed in Steven Connor’s monograph Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination (2006).

The modernist dimensions of creative radio communication during the Second World War for the purposes of propaganda have profound academic consideration in Melissa Dinsman’s Modernism at the Microphone: Radio, Propaganda, and Literary Aesthetics During World War II (2015) and Ian Whittington’s Writing the Radio War: Literature, Politics and the BBC, 1935-1949 (2018). Modernism, propaganda and radio drama are fusions of interest in both texts. Allan Hepburn analysed the modernist symbiosis between radio and literature that is strongly present in the work of Elizabeth Bowen who had been encouraged by BBC Radio producers during the Second World War to contribute talks, features and drama. In ‘Acoustic modernism: BBC Radio and the Little Girls’ (2013) Hepburn argued that her broadcasting experience had a marked impact on her fiction to the extent that much of her novel The Little Girls is ‘implicated in a complex sound world.’ Hepburn’s consideration of the radio and novelistic prose linkage gives credence to the positioning of radiophonic experience causing the effect on the literary style. He explained this as noise confronting language and sound confronting meaning:

The radio had a defining effect on Elizabeth’s style. As a broadcaster, she developed habits of listening and editing that carried over to her fiction. Like taped broadcasts, novels register voices and sounds, then transmit them outwards to audiences. Bowen’s radiophonic style cultivates listening.

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141 Hepburn, p. 144.
In 2014 Ian Whittington thought that developments in the expanding academic remit and intersection of modernist studies across disciplines merited the mapping on what had been achieved and had the potential for future exploration. In ‘Radio Studies and 20th Century Literature: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Remediation’ he argued that the new wave of literary radio scholarship had with additional related developments: ‘fostered newly integrated approaches to the study of radio as a medium that intersects not only with literature but with other media.’\(^{142}\) He assigns a section to ‘Radio and the New Modernist Studies’ where scholarship is striving to achieve ‘an understanding of how radio and other media alternately compete and conspire to craft individual, regional and national subjectivities.’\(^{143}\)

On May 19\(^{th}\) 2016 the one day conference hosted by the British Library on ‘Radio Modernism: Features, Cultures and the BBC’ inspired a special issue of *Media History* (2018) edited by Aasiya Lodhi and Amanda Wrigley. A key focus of the conference was on the theme of features, cultures and modernisms with a recognition that as early as 1928 the *Radio Times* had used a full-page article to explain the feature programme as a mixture of ‘music, drama and talk, constituting “an original form of expression, peculiar to broadcasting.”’ In the 1920s, such features were a result of artistic experiments in the direction of producing ‘radiogenic drama, as distinct from dramas that were to an extent derivative of the stage.’\(^{144}\) The conference and special issue significantly frames the approach of this thesis in being able to embrace the academic spirit of radio and sound modernism. As Lodhi and Wrigley explain:

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\ldots \text{it champions the expansive conception of modernism which includes the people and the words of the early twentieth century literary movements but also radio as a technology, a site of cultural production and impactful on the individual’s experience of daily life. Radio in itself is multiply expressive of many modernities that can be examined through a number of lenses which relate to perceptions and experiences of individual and collective identities (e.g. race, class and gender).}
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\(^{143}\) Whittington, 2014, p.638.

The expansive conception is also open to the inherent intermediality of artistic and cultural practices.145

The Media History special issue included a number of contributions that engage issues and interests covered in this thesis. Amanda Wrigley’s ‘Afterlives of BBC Features’ investigated the intermedial afterlives of BBC radio programming; particularly ‘literary’ radio features which took full advantage of ‘the modernist aesthetics of imaginative radio, often written by established poets and playwrights-published soon after first broadcast.’146 Reginald Berkeley’s script of The White Chateau broadcast in 1925 was in fact the first ever BBC radio programming afterlife in terms of the book publication of a radio drama or feature script. Berkeley’s radio work also resonated across other media. Wrigley’s paper emphasized how such intertextual and intermedia publications ‘kept works alive in the public imagination beyond the ephemeral moment of first broadcast and, it is argued, contributed to the sense (for audiences past and scholars present) of an informal canon of literary radio features.’147

Todd Avery in ‘Waves, Aestheticism, Radio Drama and Virginia Woolf’ injected a new cultural theory about the background and aesthetic root of Lance Sieveking and Tyrone Guthrie’s experimental modernist plays and features produced for the BBC in the late 1920s. He argued that radio modernism’s aestheticist inheritance can be traced to the Victorian discourse of Matthew Arnold’s contemporary, Walter Pater. Todd builds on his respect for Paddy Scannell’s view expressed in 1986 that when the BBC ‘began exploring the possibilities of radiogenic drama in a “Special Research” unit, it was “encouraged by the Victorian notion of art for art’s sake.”’148 Avery has the view that the new media ecology of experimentation in the 1920s and 1930s at the BBC:

…created an opportunity for writers to become aestheticist-inspired modernist composers of sound. Some took full advantage of this opportunity, as can be seen in the cases of the radio

145 Lodhi & Wrigley, p. 162.
147 Ibid.
dramatists Lance Sieveking and Tyrone Guthrie. Sieveking and Guthrie conceived their experimental radio dramas at the turn into the 1930s in explicitly aestheticist terms; they were aware of their role as creators of impressions; and they deliberately strove to achieve the condition of music and to encourage new habits of listening- new ways of “catching wandering sound.”

Avery asserted that these objectives define Sieveking and Guthrie as ‘Paterians in the radio age.’ Avery concluded that the work of these radio feature/dramatists represent art for art’s sake ideals and combined with the then modern preoccupation with the metaphor of waves:

…constitute a living presence in early radio drama, just as they do in the modernist fiction of Virginia Woolf. The radio modernism of early microphone plays, and their ethical as well as their aesthetic crux, can be measured by the extent to which they invite us to hear other lives, and to imagine our own, as rhythms approaching the condition of music.

Alex Goody’s article ‘BBC Features, Radio Voices and the Propaganda of War 1939-1941’ investigated the creative and political exigencies and problems of producing radio drama and features as propaganda during war-time. She explored in great depth how the feature series Shadow of the Swastika (1939-40), Narvik (1940) and The Battle of Britain generated ‘tensions between political and aesthetic conceptions of the radio feature between 1939 and 1941.’ She explained that the ‘friction arose between anxieties about the presence of the radio voice and its reception by listeners, and the BBC’s attempt to use the power of the radio medium to present a real account of the war.’ Goody identified a negotiation between political expediency, technology, radio aesthetics, the exigencies of war and the affectivity of sound. This could be seen as a war-time context through radio experience of the binary between institutional containment and agitational contemporaneity.

\[149\] Avery, 2018, p. 183.
\[150\] Ibid.
\[151\] Avery, 2018, p. 190
David Hendy provided an Afterword for the ‘Radio Modernisms’ special issue that helped cement some recurring interests in the interdisciplinary field. He identified a shared interest in studying the collage output of writers and radio producers:

….using montage techniques to remove “the centring” effect of an omnipotent narrator […] We see it plainly in Todd Avery’s insightful exploration of the metaphorical power of “waves”, both in Tyrone Guthrie’s radio work and Virginia Woolf’s writings and again in Alex Goody’s thorough exposition of the contrast between the BBC’s “polyphonic” wartime features and Nazi radio’s more concentrated styles of vocal address.\(^{153}\)

It was inevitable that the radio modernisms conference discussed how far encompassing the academic modernist radio encounter should be. Picking up from an observation by the novelist Jonathan Raban about radio being an intrinsically mongrel form, Hendy speculated that as radio is so chaotically eclectic, perhaps the channel for enquiry should be kept open with media mainstream issues. He concluded that the ‘true modernist soul of this endlessly fascinating medium’\(^{154}\) could be discovered ‘beyond the classic texts, and amidst the banalities of cheap, mass-produced, daytime radio.’\(^{155}\) Here is an important connection with studying the cheap and mass-produced entertainment records of the phonograph age for their modernist properties, when the image of the dog with his ear to the horn of the gramophone listening to ‘His Master’s Voice’ was as pervasive in the public imagination as the branding of a Coca-Cola can. As Pamela L. Caughie explained in ‘Audible identities: passing and sound technologies (2010), ‘slippage between the live and recorded, the original and the copy, is precisely the achievement of sound technology; it is not a mistake but what makes it work. In that


\(^{154}\) Hendy, 2018, p. 287

\(^{155}\) Ibid.
slippage lies the key to a new, modernist understanding not just of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, but of subjectivity itself.\textsuperscript{156}

**Chapter Two- Phonographs, Art, Propaganda, and the Modernist Context of World War:**

**Research and Methodology**

This chapter focuses on sound drama production prior to the onset of the “Radio Age” that underwent a pioneering development during the Great War. This was achieved by the making, publication and distribution of short audio dramas acted with sound effects and music in front of horns that channeled sound vibrations onto a needle that cut grooves in a wax master which could then be used for pressings on wax cylinders and phonograph discs for reproduction. There is no evidence of any extensive academic research and analysis of the content of dramatic phonograph entertainments. They were usually categorized for sale as ‘Descriptive’ cylinders or records and signified a minority element of the material produced and sold by the first record/sound phonograph companies at the turn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. There is no evidence that any of the scripts originated by the writers, performers and producers have survived for future historical examination. However, unlike the first two decades of British BBC programming, the very fact that they are recorded artefacts means the short sound dramas and ‘descriptive’ performances from this period survive as media texts in their audiogenic form. The special sonic characteristics of the audio-dramas can be closely studied notwithstanding the hiss, wow and crackle of the acoustic/mechanical recording process and the wear of playback via needles on gramophone records since their manufacture one hundred to one hundred and twenty or so years ago.

There was no large media institution such as the British Broadcasting Company/Corporation that has archived papers and original releases. But many of the record company catalogues have survived and historians associated with the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society such as Arthur Badrock and Frank Andrews have compiled company histories and compendia of catalogues. In 1977 Alexander Ross and the Scottish Council For Educational Technology published *British Documentary*...

Sound described briefly as ‘A list of historically interesting cylinders and discs recorded at 78 r.p.m. Ross explained: ‘Well over a million recordings have been made. The compiler of this list has probably seen a hundred thousand in thirty-five years; he cannot claim to have heard a tenth of that number.’ Another example of historical catalogue publication was Brian Rust’s *Gramophone Records Of The First World War: An HMV Catalogue 1914-18* published in 1975.

Most of the 127 sound files collated for this research project have been copied from phonograph discs and cylinders acquired over a twenty-year period from private sales, antique fairs and donations. A small number have been curated in specialist CD collections of First World War records, compilations of specific artists such as ‘The Wireless Nuisances: Clapham and Dwyer’, ‘Votes For Women’, ‘Mabel Constanduros: The Buggins Family’, ‘The Great War’ and the four part CD collection ‘Oh! It’s A Lovely War.’ Another important published CD source contains excellent archived examples of Russell Hunting’s allegedly obscene performances in the late 1890s ‘Actionable Offenses: Indecent Phonograph Recordings from the 1890s’ (2007). Ninety-five per cent of the phonograph sound files curated in this project have been derived from the acquisition of the original records and cylinders and transferring them into the digital format.

Russell Hunting is a very significant and wholly unappreciated figure in the modernist development of audio drama. His narrative starts the analysis of this research project with uncanny precision. His creativity in characterization and performance in front of acoustic horn recording machines not only pushed the boundaries in the possibilities of dramatic performance in the sound medium but also the social and legal sensibility on what was regarded as criminally obscene. Hunting was targeted by anti-indecency campaigners, prosecuted and jailed. His audio performance art, if it is possible to call it that, was censored by the state with the severe sanction of imprisonment.

On his move to Britain at the beginning of the 20th century he pioneered montage and sound based audio plays. Sound predominated over the word in productions such as the ‘Departure of the

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Troopship”\textsuperscript{158} and the ‘Homecoming of the Troopship.’\textsuperscript{159} Politically they became sonic anthems and mythologies for the power and reach of the British Empire and Great Britain’s dominance of global shipping, trade and naval prowess. Parallel to his creativity and commercial ingenuity with soundscape phonographs, he continued to develop his comic character Michael Casey. The multi-voiced sound-based narratives were artistically and intrinsically unique for aural popular entertainment and two of the examples included in the curated archive sound folder, ‘Casey Listening to the Phonograph’\textsuperscript{160} and ‘Casey’s Telephones. Talking by Michael Casey’\textsuperscript{161} demonstrate a fascinating ironic use of sound performance to mock and play with mechanical sound communication devices that were modern for their time. On the outbreak of the First World War, Russell Hunting was responsible for originating, directing and, indeed orchestrating ‘The Battle of the Marne’\textsuperscript{162} with sound effects and a musically scored narrative that qualifies for recognition in relation to Lance Sieveking’s manifesto for Sound Effects based audio-dramatic art.

Entertaining storytelling through dramatic performance was mobilized for the purposes of improving recruitment and disseminating patriotic endorsement recordings. This section of the thesis presents these dramas as being political in the context of their propagandist purpose. The analysis gives prominence on the sound dramatization of the myth of “The Angels of Mons” released by Regal in 1915. The recording is examined as a text for its significance in terms of propaganda, style of audi-drama, and any cultural role it may have played in the media of the First World War. The Regal disc continued the phonograph tradition and genre of creative and intensively devised and performed ‘descriptive sketches.’ This chapter explores why a sound phonograph was used to dramatize the myth that angels intervened to assist the British Expeditionary Force to resist the German Army invading France through Belgium in 1914. A number of historians have discussed the First World War as being a theatre for the first modern media war, in which the process of propaganda was modernized. It is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Audio track 38.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Audio track 40.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Audio track 125.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Audio track 115.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Audio tracks 44 & 51.
\end{itemize}
strongly argued that ‘The Angels of Mons’ phonograph and the many examples from this genre of descriptive sketches fully support this analysis.

The short sound drama play may well have had significant relevance to the cultural phenomena of spiritualism, modernism and patriotic Christianity identified as being important during the Great War. The research offers further new scholarship by expanding out to consider other sound dramas produced in this period and analyzing their significance as ‘propagandist modernism’ in the context of the first mass multi-media war and the ‘machine’ of propagandist deceit using mythology and representations of reality; blending and juxtapositioning symbolism with naturalism against the late Victorian and Edwardian preoccupation with spiritualism.

This chapter researches and develops more contextual themes connected to aesthetic, ideological and philosophical preoccupations in contemporary media. For example, the lack of resistance in phonograph ‘descriptive sketch’ to engagement in what became total war is compared with theatre texts and performance during the period such as Vernon Lee’s Ballet of the Nations; a present day morality tale. There are no phonograph equivalents of the art analysed by Grace Brocklington in Above the Battlefield: British Modernism and the Peace Movement, 1900-1918.

It can be argued that during the Great War period the cultural and literary context was not dominated by modernist texts. Modernism can be argued to be present in the higher cultural forms. This can be cited as an explanation for modernism not being pervasive and influential in the wider cultural context. But a close analysis of many of the sound texts present in the wide range of phonograph productions from the early 1900s through the Great War and beyond demonstrates audio dramatic modernism in content, style, and an industrial scale of entertainment in the sound communicative context. There is no doubt at all that the production by Major A. E. Rees for Columbia of ‘On Active Service’ across three phonograph records each containing roughly 3 minute 30 second episodes represents a

\[163\] Audio track 53.
\[165\] Audio tracks 35, 36, 47, 48, 49, & 50.
remarkable and unprecedented audio-drama achievement. Over 21 minutes of original sound drama with characterization and rich sound based performance provides a dramatic representation of the Great War uniquely in the oral medium. Nothing like this has survived anywhere else in the world and nothing like this appears to have been produced by the UK or US record industries before it. The analysis of each episode has been made possible by combining private acquisition of one record and access to the others held by the Imperial War Museum.

Investigation of any writers/producers identified as the authors of significant audio drama phonographs is subject to the contingency of access to databases, surviving archives and any biographical publication that might be extant. Major Rees was an active commissioned officer while he produced his sound phonographs for the Columbia record company and it was possible to trace his service file in The National Archives.

The cultural contextual links yield significant inter-media relationships between sound phonograph and literature. For example, the tropes of resurrection mythologies arising out of the Angels of Mons legend justify some referencing and appreciation of the work done on Virginia Woolf and death; particularly 1918-19. The intensity of mourning was also determined by the Spanish Influenza catastrophe that did in fact cause more casualties than death by combat.

This chapter also informs a parallel development of the phonograph dramatic form through the 1920s and 30s parallel to the onset of radio drama culture at the BBC. The modernist discourse endures through the identification of comedic and entertainment 78 rpm performances that concatenate with their origination and transfer to the radio medium. One of the questions asked includes whether the multi-vocal Michael Casey canon inspired and informed the multi-voiced first British radio sitcom ‘The Buggins family’, created and performed by Mabel Constanduros. The three to four-minute sketches identified as BBC broadcast performances in more than 250 Radio Times entries during the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s became an inter-media phenomenon in 78 rpm record, novel and newsreel cinema.

Phonograph audio drama production was not directly subject to any regulatory body censorship apart from the existence of criminal and civil laws pertaining to obscenity, official secrecy, and libel.
There is no evidence of the content of wax cylinder or phonograph production being subject to criminal prosecution or civil litigation in Great Britain. No legislation was passed to extend Lord Chamberlain’s licensing of dramatic performance from stage theatre to sound reproduction for phonograph players. 1912 was the year when The British Board of Film Censorship was established as a non-governmental body to advise on film classification following the Cinematograph Act 1909, which required cinemas to have licences from local authorities. Its remit had no coverage or interest in phonograph content, and neither was there any legislation seeking to regulate the sound content of the record industry whether musical or word-based performance. 1912 also inaugurated the establishment of the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee that was a joint government and press industry body set up to send warning notices to newspaper editors when publications were deemed to risk harming national security. Its operation followed legislation for the Official Secrets Act in 1889, and 1911. Again, there is no evidence that any record release was judged to have required the committee’s attention. It can, therefore, be concluded that any censorship of phonograph content would have been restricted to the production company’s institutional containment and internal culture. No archives have survived, emerged or been found during the period researched for this thesis to demonstrate tension between creative content makers and any concerns by the production companies that content should be changed, or deleted.

Chapter Three Reginald Berkeley- Pioneering Modernist Playwright and Political Radio Drama as Agitational Contemporaneity- Research and methodology

The chapter engages an explanation of how the tradition of modernist sound play and feature in phonograph overlapped with the development of the art of radio drama through BBC Broadcasting. In 1929-30, Columbia Record productions of The Trooping Of The Colour,\textsuperscript{166} The Trumpeter,\textsuperscript{167} and The Death of Nelson\textsuperscript{168} used the new electric recording technology. They reveal highly sophisticated and modernist production of sound ballads where performance, music, and voice combine to express

\textsuperscript{166} Audio tracks 45 & 46.
\textsuperscript{167} Audio tracks 73 & 74.
\textsuperscript{168} Audio tracks 75 & 76.
cultural pageantry and indeed a political representation of Imperial and national identity. The utilization of close-microphone technique for vocalized storytelling by Edgar Wallace for Columbia Records in 1928\textsuperscript{169} many years before his BBC debut suggest a pioneering of the proto-talking book. The quality of writing, performance and production was clearly a successful precursor to the BBC radio institution of \textit{Book At Bedtime}. The symbiotic parallel between the BBC Radio and phonograph ages of sound feature production is superbly represented by ‘The Sinking of the S.S. Kensington Court by a German Submarine and subsequent rescue by R.A.F. Flying Boats’ in 1939. \textsuperscript{170} Consequently, it is important to realise that radio drama at the BBC during the 1920s was not innovated in a sound medium vacuum. There is some irony in there being so little archive and record of what BBC programming actually sounded like during this decade. Phonographs have survived because the technology of production and playback fixes the recording in time. Only the shellac or acetate disc needs to survive unscathed.

The modernist experiments in radio drama achieved by Reginald Berkeley can therefore only be read and imagined. The key contribution of new research on the significance of Berkeley in this project is that he was clearly a pioneering radio drama modernist before Lance Sieveking began to dance his ‘Stuff of Radio.’ Berkeley specialised in experimental scripting of sound design in original plays for broadcasting. These were sometimes intensely political and in the case of the last submission he made to the BBC far too controversial to be produced for transmission. Berkeley’s writing and BBC censorship crisis have been extensively analysed by Christina S.L. Pepler, Alan Beck and Roger Wood. The research in this project can be distinguished from their impressive work in the way Berkeley’s modernist credentials and development are recognized and the discovery of a background of disruptive process that made his estrangement through \textit{The Machines} saga inevitable. He was a star of theatre playwriting, a successful though also controversial early screenwriter for the film industry,\textsuperscript{171} a significant politician with a high public and media profile, and he was sensitive to interference and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{169} Audio tracks 100 & 101.
\textsuperscript{170} Audio track 112.
\end{footnotesize}
any exercise of what he regarded as inappropriate transformation and editing of his works without his consent.

All of his radio scripts were published in either pamphlet or book form. His file at the BBC Written Archives is available for reading and understanding of the BBC’s point of view. In relation to the Machines affair he also published the angry correspondence between the parties in 1927. The digitization of newspaper archives by the British Library now gives access to national and regional newspaper articles that show Berkeley often went to press when the BBC threatened to do anything he did not like. There were publicly embarrassing spats played out in public before Machines. For example, the seminal live production and broadcast of The White Chateau in 1925 was blighted by a row instigated when the BBC felt that a new play for radio could not be sustained beyond half an hour. If they had prevailed, it would have been truncated by half. In 1926, the BBC cut the end of Berkeley’s play The Quest of Elizabeth on the grounds that the death of the central character, a young girl killed in a car accident, would have been too shocking for listeners. The only problem is that nobody at Savoy Hill thought to warn the playwright and obtain his consent. This was a clumsy bastardization of a play experimenting with the writing and exploration of human consciousness that was shifted in time and place.

Berkeley had a contribution to make about the development of original playwriting for the microphone and this is evident in articles he wrote for the Radio Times. The White Chateau, transmitted on Armistice night 1925, used originally composed music with symphonic purpose and its contrapuntal expression with sound effects represents a development of the modernist dimension of radio playwriting that has not been hitherto acknowledged. Its role and impact as political audio drama have not received the attention they merit. The play’s significance as the first anti-war play to reach such a wide audience, again has not been properly appreciated. This was the first full-length radio play written for and broadcast by the BBC and the first to be published in book form. This play had aspects of modernist expression in style conveying a powerful political pacifist message that went unchallenged, perhaps because it resonated at the time with a growing consensus on the need to memorialize the Great War with a pacifist consideration, or at the very least profound understanding
that a global war on such a scale of human loss and devastation must be avoided. *The White Chateau* was also the first BBC originated radio play to transfer into a successful stage theatre run in the West End of London. Heinz Kosok is the only recent example of a cultural academic giving the play critical and historical endorsement. In his study of 200 plays dealing with the Great War, Kosok observes that Berkeley’s work ‘stands out as the most ambitious project to present a building (The White Chateau itself) that is equally real and unmistakably symbolic.’

When Berkeley delivered his new play *Machines*, BBC executives recognized its importance as a development of the modernist form. It was compared to Fritz Lang’s 1927 film *Metropolis*. However, one year after the General Strike, a script which was a thinly veiled political attack on capitalism, named political parties, and identifiable politicians and newspaper barons, combined with a sub-plot of adultery, was more than likely to provoke caution, apprehension and media institutional censorship. The *Machines* censorship row was an endgame for Berkeley’s radio drama writing career with the BBC. This was not the case four years later when Harold Nicolson’s plan to discuss James Joyce’s *Ulysses* was blocked on the eve of broadcast. Charlie Dawkins in ‘Harold Nicolson, *Ulysses*, Reithianism: Censorship on BBC Radio, 1931’ describes how Nicolson patiently adjusted to the situation over some weeks and found that he would be permitted to speak, subject to some conditions. The radical discussion of James Joyce survived. The head of talks Hilda Matheson did decide to resign over the issue, though her decision was regretted by her friend H.G Wells who said in his article for her memorial book published by The Hogarth Press in 1941 that it had been a mistake and lamented that broadcasting would have been served better by her staying and fighting her cause on the inside of the institution. Berkeley’s estrangement from the BBC was a failure of compromise or endurance of authorial integrity.

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173 Dawkins, p. 558.  
The analysis of Berkeley’s radio plays is, unfortunately, all script based. None of his work that was broadcast has been successfully archived. Only a short trail for a 1933 production of *The White Chateau* appeared to be accessible via the BBC sound archive administered by the British Library/National Sound Archive. It appeared not to be long enough to reveal the rich and complex aspects of modernist and symbolic sound created by Berkeley for the listener’s imagination. Unfortunately, the documentary trace record of the trail from the 1933 production could not be matched with anything surviving into the 21st century from the BBC’s sound archives. Exhaustive searches were unable to locate the recording disc that had been most likely lost, misplaced, destroyed or stolen.

Berkeley’s army service records have not been released to the National Archives due to his continuing service after 1918, though it has been possible to trace the court records of his divorce proceedings that are held at the National Archives. They assist in providing a biographical backdrop to his exploration of adultery in *Machines*. The detail of his service history can be constructed via his military file in the New Zealand Archives where he was university educated and originally commissioned, and his own writing of the history of the Rifles provides detailed narrative and referencing of the military action he personally experienced as a frontline infantry officer for which he received the Military Cross. His frontline experiences in the Great War emotionally and creatively inform the tone and core of meaning of *The White Chateau*.

Previous academic studies of Berkeley’s radio drama work and experiences at the BBC have not investigated the frame of censorship in terms of his parallel experiences in professional theatre. This thesis explores the consideration and fate of *The White Chateau, The Quest of Elizabeth*, and *Machines* within the institutional containment of Lord Chamberlain’s licensing. *The White Chateau* and *The Quest of Elizabeth* were both approved for production in the theatre in 1926 and 1927 with documentary reports evaluating their artistic and cultural worth and providing endorsements which are absent from the BBC Written Archives. One card index suggests the Lord Chamberlain rejected *Machines* and certainly returned the manuscript to Reginald Berkeley. We know that he organized the stage production of *Machines* at the Arts Theatre Club in November 1930, which was the mechanism
and device that could be adopted at that time to outmanoeuvre the Lord Chamberlain’s exigences of state theatre censorship. Censorship could only intersect with public theatre presentations. Theatre club membership presentation meant minority audiences, but this was certainly preferred to silence and invisibility. The stage production of *Machines* would be reviewed in detail by the *Manchester Guardian*. However, the correspondence file that would have provided the explicit explanation of the Lord Chamberlain’s refusal to license *Machines* for public theatre audiences though indexed, has not at the time of writing been located in the British Library archives. Librarians have been kindly searching the scores of boxes in which they are stored and so far without success. If found it will assist in providing more detail about the background and context of this hugely important censorship narrative in British dramatic history. The statutory involvement of the Lord Chamberlain in approving theatre scripts means that the stage scripts of *The White Chateau* and *The Quest of Elizabeth* can be compared with the radio drama versions. There is irony that the Lord Chamberlain’s refusal to grant a license to *Machines* means that the theatrical script has not been archived. The correspondence file, if and when discovered, may provide an explanation of its rejection as well as any protestations that Berkeley may have made himself.

This chapter also widens out an appreciation of original modernist political radio playwriting that was produced and broadcast without apparent censorship in 1928 and 1929. H.G. Wells was, of course, at the time the most prominent political science fiction writer. His short stories and novels would not be dramatized by the BBC until 1933, but in 1928, ‘The Greater Power’ by Francis J. Mott, and X by George Crayton were two originally created microphone plays for the BBC that were experimental in content and style and metaphorically political about the machinery and science created by man. The modernist achievements of Reginald Berkeley and Lance Sieveking were complemented and bridged by experimental science fiction that was equally radiophonics.

**Chapter Four- Direct BBC censorship of modernist texts by D.G. Bridson and his negotiation with Joan Littlewood and Olive Shapley of ‘institutional containment’- Research and Methodology**
This chapter seeks to develop the analysis of censorship and politics in audio and radio drama modernism to embrace a narrative of tension and pioneering origination in the dramatic radio feature form at BBC Manchester during the 1930s.

The primary research approach here on issues of dramatic censorship is guided by the academic work of Tony Aldgate, James Crighton Robertson and M.K MacMurraugh-Kavanagh. The political nature of the writing of Berkeley, Bridson and Littlewood (produced by Shapley) is rooted in the creative representation of history through an addressing of the present. This could be construed as a journalistic and propagandist function. A theory of recognizing the strategy of intervention in the process of ‘Drama’ into “News’ with ideological underpinning has been fully explored by M.K MacMurraugh-Kavanagh in a series of academic journal articles investigating what she described as the tension between ‘agitational contemporaneity’ and ‘institutional containment’ in relation to the BBC television *Wednesday Play* productions of *Up The Junction* and *Cathy Come Home* in 1965-66.175 The phrase ‘agitational contemporaneity’ was coined by the Canadian television drama producer Sydney Newman who pioneered the direction and development of new television drama in Britain’s commercial and public broadcasting sectors. When Head of Drama Group at the BBC in 1966, he was quoted in a newspaper article as seeking to foster drama that would win audiences, headlines and ‘provide the extra flash of orange every three weeks or so.’176

Tony Garnett and Ken Loach, the co-producers of *Up The Junction*, addressing backstreet illegal abortion, and *Cathy Come Home*, challenging social housing conditions, were avowed Marxists. Garnett explained in 1993 that he had a commitment to “‘to be out in the world where people were living”, to transfer “drama” (events which happen to other people) to the domain of real life as it is lived.”177

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177 Ibid.
This model of analysis is therefore applied to existing histories on BBC radio feature making of the 1920s and 30s and investigative research for the thesis that generates new knowledge and scholarship about the censorship and tension between creation and control of modernist radio texts.

For example, the BBC established an institutional separation of radio drama and experimental ‘features’ in 1928. In reality both departments in the ensuing decades produced mixtures of the wholly fictional and dramatization of reality. The Prix Italia award winning verse play Under Milk Wood by Dylan Thomas in 1954 was produced by Douglas Cleverdon for ‘Features.’ On the other hand, BBC Features edited by Laurence Gilliam in 1950 presented a portfolio of scripts from productions that were mainly drama-documentaries such as The Last Days of Hitler by H. R. Trevor-Roper, A Year I remember: 1900 by Compton Mackenzie, and British Justice by Jennifer Wayne.

This thesis advances the view that the concept of Newman’s ‘agitational contemporaneity’ had been present in sound dramatizations in the 1920s and 30s. This accounts for the denial of production and broadcast of Reginald Berkeley’s commissioned play Machines in 1927. Crisis In Spain (1931) produced by Lance Seiveking, and described as originally ‘composed’ by E.A. ‘Archie’ Harding and John Watt,178 pioneered the sound representation of reportage. This was contemporary in the sense that it reported global reaction to the election of Spain’s first republican and socialist government and the abdication of the Spanish monarchy. It was agitational in the sense that it used drama-documentary to address international political controversy. The Radio Times entry described it as ‘the first English example of the reporting in Radio form of contemporary events […] The programme contains no comment; the facts themselves are dramatic enough.’179

Harding’s follow up feature New Year Over Europe (1932)180 included the statement that one third of Polish income was being diverted to funding the country’s ministry of war. The complaints from the Polish government allegedly resulted in Harding being told by the BBC’s Director General John Reith

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179 Ibid.
that he was being sent to the northern city of Manchester where his capacity to cause trouble would be much diminished.\(^{181}\)

The attempt at ‘institutional containment’ here was post publication and the fact that it was broadcast prior to complaint and a process of content control or chastisement could be accounted for by the fact the author and producer were part of the media institution. Berkeley always remained a writer and artist on the outside.

After the frisson of political reaction to the broadcasting of E.A. ‘Archie’ Harding’s controversial features in London, he was transferred to head the documentary and feature production unit based at BBC Manchester. He was an avowed Marxist, though not a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In his executive producing role at BBC Northern Region, he encouraged and commissioned the young left-wing poet and author, D.G. Bridson, who had the unique experience of writing two radio plays that were censored by the BBC during live rehearsals and after they had been scheduled for broadcast in the *Radio Times*.\(^{182}\) The original contribution of research in this part of the thesis is the analysis of the two censored scripts, *Prometheus* and *The Scourge* from 1934 and 1935, that unusually have been retained by the BBC’s scripts unit. While *Prometheus* was published in *Criterion* and a copy exists in Bridson’s collection of papers held by Indiana University, it would appear the BBC has the only surviving copy of *The Scourge*. The BBC’s fortunate retention of these documents permits full analysis of scripts in a censorship scenario in which a BBC playwright, to use Bridson’s own words, became ‘the only writer to get himself twice into the *Radio Times* without being able to get himself onto the air.’

Bridson survived these intense and frustrating professional humiliations. After being rejected for a staff position because of suspicion over his political attitude, he was successful in his next application and went on to survive the effective negotiation of his political imperatives in writing and production.

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and the operation of BBC institutional containment. D.G. Bridson’s panoramic 1936 radio drama *The March of ‘45* is evaluated for its modernist resonances and political issues, as is the 1939 production and broadcast of *The Classic Soil*, written by the member of the Communist Party, Joan Littlewood, who was being monitored by the Security Service MI5, and produced by former Communist Party member, Olive Shapley. *The Classic Soil* had an explicit Marxist agenda by exploiting the frame of historical retrieval of a Victorian enquiry into poor housing conditions by Friedrich Engels to confront and address the poverty and injustice of the present-day situation in Manchester. Shapley described it in her memoirs as ‘probably the most unfair and biased programme ever put out by the BBC.’

The analysis in this chapter addresses the question of why something so biased and politically agitational could be broadcast.

The cultural and political context of the BBC Manchester features operation has received considerable scholarship and attention by Paddy Scannell in his chapter ‘Features and Social Documentaries’ in *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume One 1922-1939* (1991), ‘Broadcasting and the politics of unemployment 1930-1935’ in *Media, Culture and Society* (1980), and “‘The Stuff of Radio’: Developments in Radio Features and documentaries before the War’ in *Documentary and the Mass Media*, edited by John Corner (1986). Ian Rodger’s *Radio Drama* (1982) analysed the innovation in BBC features achieved by Harding and Bridson in the chapter titled ‘The Revolution in Diction’ and argued that Joan Littlewood and Ewan McColl’s participation in these developments had a significant influence on the style and work of their Theatre Workshop Company. He also explored instances in the middle to late 1930s of political, religious, and aesthetic censorship by the BBC of other writers such as Tyrone Guthrie and R.F. Delderfield. Peter Black in *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World* (1972) argued that the professional relationship between E.A. Harding and D.G. Bridson led to the radio broadcasting of all the people as propaganda and not just their representation through Southern middle-class educated voices. The cultural and political context of the BBC Manchester features is also fully explored by Keith Williams in *British Writers and the Media*

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There is a large body of staff files, documentation and scripts held by the BBC Written Archives in relation to D.G Bridson, Joan Littlewood, A.E. ‘Archie’ Harding, and Olive Shapley. Again, the serendipity of institutional archiving throws up surprises. None of the original production scripts of Berkeley’s broadcast plays have survived. There are no specific individual production files of artists’ contracts, producer notes and production/broadcast scheduling. The transmission scripts of *The March of ’45* and *The Classic Soil*, however, by BBC Northern Region have survived and they can be compared with the original sound recordings of their respective broadcasts in 1935 and 1939 and fully studied for content and style in their original radiophonic form. The sound archive of these productions used in this research project was donated by former BBC producer Bennett Maxwell, thus bypassing the need to negotiate access via the British Library’s National Sound Archive. Maxwell explained the prevalence of sound copies of these works because of A.E. ‘Archie’ Harding’s enthusiastic use of these works for his production instruction courses from 1936 onwards.

D.G. Bridson’s patience and toleration of catastrophic censorship of his first major works *Prometheus* and *Scourge* led to his appointment to a staff position and skillset in negotiating and understanding the shifting bulwarks and sensitivities of BBC institutional containment. Over time his agitational contemporaneity won a place for northern working-class voices in BBC Radio features in the late 1930s and a committed Communist activist in theatre and radio writing such as Joan
Littlewood could participate in that. A careful textual study of D.G. Bridson’s censored scripts does however, raise an important question about the cultural cost to radio of lost opportunity and achievement. *Prometheus*, had it been broadcast, reviewed, reproduced and archived would have been recognized as the first experimental modernist radio verse play that engaged and dramatically debated the abiding political crisis issue of its time- how to temper the injustices of capitalism with the imperatives of worker representation, or fair distribution in the rewards for Labour. This thesis argues that it was a lost masterpiece; something T.S. Eliot realized, but could not salvage through publication in an obscure periodical. Consequently, Bridson’s verse play achievements in the modernist radiogenic genre would begin with *The March of ’45*, and Archibald MacLeish in the USA would perhaps achieve more recognition of political radio verse achievement with *Fall Of The City* on CBS in 1937.

Any balancing of institutional containment with agitational contemporaneity is a compromise with cultural loss usually debited from any account of advantage and disadvantage to the history of radio literature and broadcasting. This is equally true of Bridson’s first recorded encounter with BBC censorship when the lechery sequence of his poem ‘The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins’ was excised from broadcast in November 1934 of the programme feature *Jannock: A Malicious Medley of the North*. What was lost has never been found. He did not reproduce it in his publication of the dramatic poem in 1950.\(^\text{184}\) This publication when compared to the original broadcast script retained in the BBC Written Archives matches a representation of six deadly sins, and curiously rewrites and polishes much of the scansion and word selection of the production script. Bridson offered no explanation of why he did not restore in 1950 that which was considered indecent to broadcast in 1934.

‘Colleging’, BBC political monitoring and the Security Service

The extent of BBC, Security Service and Metropolitan Police Special Branch monitoring of the broadcasting activities of Joan Littlewood and her husband Ewan MacColl became apparent with the release to the National Archives first of MacColl’s file KV 2/2175 (1932-1951). The public release in 2006 disclosed that:

A watch was initiated on his activities, and steps were taken to ascertain his exact status (i.e. whether directly employed by the BBC or not). In January 1939 the Lancashire police reported Miller’s performance at a rally: ‘my officer has been making enquiries regarding a youth named Jimmy MILLER who was the MC for the dancing…and showed exceptional ability as a singer and musical organiser.’ A watch was kept on Miller and Littlewood’s broadcasting activities, and police mounted a ‘discreet supervision’ of Oak Cottage in Higham Lane, Hyde, where the Millers were living, and reports of activities and visitors are on the file.185

The content of this file and that relating to Joan Littlewood inevitably gives rise to supposition that MI5 and Special Branch may have been monitoring and keeping under surveillance the political and broadcasting activities of D.G. Bridson, Archie Harding and Olive Shapley. They each had various Marxist, Communist Party and socialist allegiances and backgrounds. The research methodology has, therefore, embraced a strategy of seeking Freedom of Information Act requests to the BBC and Security Service for any ‘security surveillance’ files maintained on key subjects of this academic enquiry namely Reginald Berkeley, D.G. Bridson, Archie Harding, and Olive Shapley. Berkeley was a Liberal Party politician and it seems incongruous that his political activism as a writer would attract Security Service attention, but historical research necessitates establishing the exculpatory as much as seeking access to archive documentation that has been retained.

The statutory exclusions present in the UK Freedom of Information Act and reluctance of state security bodies to disclose such information, even in an historical context have been longstanding, though it has been academically justifiable to pursue the making of the requests with as much skill and persistence as possible.

BBC security vetting of its employees began in 1937 and was exposed by the Observer newspaper in 1985 in a report disclosing that staff and contributors being monitored as potential subversives had a triangular red tag known as ‘the Christmas tree’ stamped on their files. A retired Brigadier Ronnie Stonham operated the system part-time behind the door of Room 105 in old Broadcasting House.

Examination of BBC personnel files accessible to researchers at BBC Written Archives reveals that Harding, Littlewood and her husband Jimmy Miller/Ewan MacColl had ‘Christmas tree’ stamps, but they are not apparently present in the surviving files and papers relating to Bridson, and Shapley, or indeed Berkeley. The process of referring BBC staff and contributors to MI5 if political security issues were triggered by their ideological beliefs and political activism was known as ‘Colleging’ because ‘College’ was a BBC institutional code for MI5.

Freedom of Information requests for MI5/Security Service files were placed with the Home Office on the basis that under the Security Service Act 1989, it is the government Department operating for the Secretary of State for the Home Office to which the Security Service is statutorily accountable in government. The strategy is also founded on the fact that the Security Service, like other named ‘Security Bodies’ is not justifiable in FOI applications and appeal process. The requests to the Home Office have been rejected, appealed by internal review, rejected after appeal to the Information Commissioner and were considered on an appeal to the First Tier Tribunal for Information Rights with a hearing on 21st January 2020. The methodology in research engaged here has been exhausting and time-consuming, but emboldened by a ruling from the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg, in Magyar Helsinki v Hungary 2016, that declared a standing right to public interest information under Article 10 Freedom of Expression for historical research purposes.

The ruling of Judge Hazel Oliver 17th February 2020 represented a significant breakthrough in advancing the cause of Article 10 freedom of expression human rights and English common law right to historical state information. The judge concluded:

In any event, the appellant does have the remedy of judicial review if he requests information directly from the Security Service. This is potentially more expensive than this type of appeal, but nevertheless an available and effective remedy. The appellant can also complain to the Information Commissioner if a public authority relies on section 23 FOIA, and raise human rights arguments about the application of that exemption. He may also be able to complain using
human rights arguments about a refusal by the Security Service to engage with a FOIA request.\textsuperscript{186}

Judge Oliver followed the reasoning of Judge Alexander Marks in the parallel FOI case also pursued and explained below, that the Security Service prior to 1989 was not part of the Home Office and as the Home Office did not hold the information requested, the freedom of expression right to the historical state information could not be considered. However, she went further in explicitly recognizing that a historical researcher under the Magyar ruling did have a legal route via judicial review and, more particularly, directly putting in requests to the Security Service and then challenging the denial of Article 10 FOI rights in an appeal to the Information Commissioner. This case is now at the stage of an application for permission to appeal before the Upper Chamber.

The pursuit of these FOI historical research rights has engaged another case running in tandem relating to research into the history of political activism by staff and students at Goldsmiths, University of London. The legal principle arising is the same and this case has been tried at the Information Tribunal level and is now on application for leave to appeal at the Upper Tribunal (equivalent High Court). At a hearing on 5\textsuperscript{th} February 2020 before Judge Wright it emerged that he was the same judge considering a test case on whether the ECtHR ruling in Magyar enabled the recognition of a standing right to state information in the UK Freedom of Information legal regime. This case involved an appellant called Derek Moss in relation to local authority information and had been opposed by representation from the Cabinet Office. I and the Home Office agreed an adjournment until that case had been ruled on, and there was further consideration of joining my other historical research FOI appeals.

These test cases challenge the absolute exemption blocking historical researchers from requests for files and information held by the intelligence and security bodies relating to people and events so long

\textsuperscript{186} Judge Hazel Oliver, Between Professor Tim Crook and Information Commissioner, Appeal Reference: EA/2019/0282, (London: Ruling of First-tier Tribunal General Regulatory Chamber Information Rights, 17 February 2020) p.8
ago it is argued that there can be no risk to national security by their release into the public domain. It may be the case that the Home Office route of challenge may be foiled by higher court backing of the statutory position that it did not hold the documents requested at the time of the FOI applications. However, the challenges are being re-booted through direct FOI requests to the Security Service and then appealed if they are ignored on the basis that as a Security Body it has no statutory remit to confirm or deny the holding of the documents and, furthermore, to address any acknowledgment for an FOI request made to it.

The FOI appeal for Metropolitan Police Special Branch files at the Information Tribunal in relation to the Goldsmiths historical research project has been stayed pending a future decision by the Upper Tribunal in the case of Moss. This vital issue on whether the legal implications of Magyar v Hungary can enable all FOI requests made to public bodies in Britain to have a more supportive public interest balancing exercise for historical research is not expected to be resolved for a number of years. Were the statutory exemption in respect of UK Security Service files and those of other security bodies broken down, then this research project would have made a considerable contribution to the jurisprudential development of information rights in academic projects.

This complex adjunct to the Radio Drama and Modernism research project could have future significance if the FOI cases being run achieve traction at higher levels in the UK legal system. For example, if the cases result in a ruling that the FOIA absolute exceptions are incompatible with Article 10, or it is accepted that MI5 was the constitutional and legal responsibility of the Home Office before 1989, this could open a gateway for FOI applications for historians to security body files for all public interest research projects. It would amount to legal recognition in the UK of a standing right to state information in this area and thus serve democratic accountability and academic research objectives.

The BBC and Security Service infrastructure of vetting and surveillance of staff and contributors that was operating for over fifty years has to be investigated in relation to any academic enquiry and analysis of the ideological imperatives of writers and producers creating political and aesthetically challenging and disruptive programmes.
Chapter Two  Phonographs, Art, Propaganda, and the Modernist context of the World War

A modernist everyday street encounter with soundscape sonic art in the Edwardian Age of the United Kingdom

It was a Saturday in Belfast in the late summer of 1905. Shoppers and passers-by in Donegall Street suddenly found themselves enveloped by the sound of a crowd of people standing and waiting on a port quay, not their shopping street. Instead they could hear their conversation and remarks being heard about a ship arriving. Somebody said: ‘Come on, stand back please!’ In the distance the deep throb of the steam siren of a transport ship was heard and the approaching music of a band on board was playing ‘Home Sweet Home,’ which increased in volume and intensity with the ship approaching the quayside. Then enthusiastic and happy shouts and greetings of the crowd filled the street as recognition of friends and relations on board rang out with cries and cheers. This was followed by a bright and sonorous bugle sounding the ‘Fall In’ and the troops could be heard marching onto the shore to the tune of the ‘British Grenadiers.’ Many in the sonic crowd fugue disrupting and occupying Donegall Street could be heard recognizing Lord Roberts, the commander-in-chief and hero of the British Imperial Army that eventually won the Boer War in South Africa, and which had come to an end only three years before. They shouted out his name: ‘Lord Roberts! Look Lord Roberts!’ Wild bursts of cheering filled Donegall Street as the band played ‘See the Conquering Hero Comes.’ This evocative mosaic of soundscape and story-telling lasted exactly two minutes and eleven seconds. It was ‘broadcast’ into the centre of Belfast, Northern Ireland through twenty-six feet of gun-barrel tubing, a kind of early acoustic and mechanical public address system.187

This was a sound play, and undoubtedly a play made purely for the sound medium. It was created and produced by an American actor, performer and pioneering phonograph entertainment producer called Russell Hunting. It was recorded and released by the Gramophone Company in London and this remarkable stunt was clearly an advertising ploy by the record shop, Messrs Smyth & Co., then

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occupying number 85 Donegall Street. ‘The Homecoming of a Troopship’\textsuperscript{188} made 114 years ago has survived and can be heard with all its distinct dramatic aural twists and turns in the present day. It is a mini-play without dialogue. The experience in listening to it now is still modern and imaginatively haunting. This was not recorded actuality. This was staged performance involving crowds of actors, and many musicians all moving in and out of a very narrowly positioned recording funnel point at the head of a large horn made and positioned to channel sound waves onto a glass diaphragm that cut a representation of the sound waves onto a wax master-disk.

Interesting questions are raised. How was this orchestrated by Hunting? Did he write a script that could be followed by the performers? How were the major sound effects cued in? How was it rehearsed? How many times did they have to do this before they got it right? How could Hunting monitor the rehearsals and live performance? Was it a case of trial and error and listening back to masters to be discarded until everybody performed the complex montage to perfection? In 1905 there was no editing technology in the sense of being able to cut and join sequences of recorded sound at different times. All of the soundscape had to be performed live and successfully without mistakes.

Acoustical recording never yielded high fidelity because its dynamic range was so limited. The difficulties of recording acoustic and mechanical sound before the electric age will be investigated more closely later. However, a further question to ask is how this sound drama would fare against the suggested principles of creating successful radio drama written by Gordon Lea in 1926? The argument presented here is that Lea’s text was a modernist audio drama production manifesto.

Hunting and his sound drama company certainly demonstrated the importance and value of music.\textsuperscript{189} In the ‘Homecoming of a Troopship’ it is used for emotional, nostalgic and patriotic effect. The listening here, to quote Lea, is a subjective experience for listeners ‘Objectively, they see nothing, but subjectively they can see everything.’\textsuperscript{190} Hunting was striving for the realization of art as an expression of imagination. For the listener ‘Anything that is conceivable in his imagination is capable

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Audio track 40.
\item Lea, p. 21.
\item Lea, p. 38.
\end{enumerate}
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of complete expression and interpretation to the imagination of his world."\textsuperscript{191} Hunting has decided to set his play and sound scene on the quayside when a Troopship is docking with disembarkation. Hunting has created a near perfect example of what Lea advocated as the superior ‘Self-Contained Method’ in radio drama style and structuring: ‘…a form which needs no Narrator, no programme, not even the announcement of a mind-picture. It will indicate scenery, character, costume, all action-everything in fact which is necessary to the complete mental vision of the play, in the text of the play itself, with such additional help as may be required from music and sound-effects.’\textsuperscript{192} Hunting and the Gramophone Company produced a quintessential modernist sound play in 1905. It was ‘drama that is “overheard.”’\textsuperscript{193} It was as startling and realistic as ‘if the listener were overhearing something in the next room through a half-open door.’\textsuperscript{194}

\textbf{The Montage War Drama- Battle of Marne 1914}

Nine years later Russell Hunting created another sonic collage this time bringing to life in the imagination of phonograph listeners the tragedy of death and fighting at the Battle of the Marne- a key military victory for the French and British at the beginning of the First World War. The allies managed to stop the Kaiser’s army reaching Paris. It was the beginning of entrenched front-lines and a largely static Western Front until the break-outs and more fluid fighting in 1918.

This was a Diamond record, called ‘The Battle Of the Marne’\textsuperscript{195} which, again, like ‘The Homecoming of a Troopship’ was constructed using Lea’s ‘self-contained’ method. No over-arching narrative voice shouting out a telling of what is happening, but sequential, montaged, cross-faded and mixed sound showing and stimulating the imagination on what is happening.

Hunting’s production seems to avoid the theatrical texture of so many other Great War battle sound re-enactments where single rifle shots are represented by hitting a snare drum, or repeated bangs on it

\textsuperscript{191} Lea, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{192} Lea, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Audio track 51
to simulate a machine gun. No siren whistles to reproduce the whiz and whine of artillery shells, or indeed the bashing of a bass drum to somehow conjure the exploding detonation of heavy artillery fire.

‘The Battle of the Marne’ is spatiality and perspective. Somehow Hunting achieves large sweeps of push and pull movement of troops, action and people. At the beginning there is an almost symphonic cascade of trumpeting buglers echoing their calls in outward and inward directions of perspective. The initial dialogue is naturalistic:

Will you have your coffee now, Colonel?
What time is it Wilkins?
Four o’clock sir.

In the first ten seconds the production has mixed three streams of sound: the trumpeting reveille spreading in circles through the military encampment, the stirring and conversational hubbub of the soldiers and the dialogue between the Colonel and his batman. The crowd perspective and bugle calls sound realistic and convincing. They set a convincing atmosphere; not at all melodramatic.

A horse rider approaches from the distance with the animal snorting- sound effects created by coconut shells and vocal performance and mimicry. The positioning of the messenger ‘Back from headquarters, Colonel!’ gives a sense of distance and authentic mise-en-scène. The Colonel reads the message. He shouts for his orderlies. They are heard approaching rapidly on horseback. The overall ambience of more and more soldiers getting up for the day intensifies second by second. All of this action and meaning has been established in only 43 seconds.

The Colonel then issues his order:

Orderlies. Convey the following message to your units. You will probably be attacked at sunrise. Hold your positions for the village at all costs. Prepare for a general advance with all your forces.

What then follows is the sound of large numbers of actors simulating the sound of horsemen riding, troops marching, buglers trumpeting, and there is a military band playing ‘The Red, White and Blue’
that succeeds in building in strength and intensity through movement. The sound is dynamic in texture. It conveys movement. With a cry of ‘Halt’, the Colonel then gives a speech to his troops:

Now men, the enemy has marched almost to the gates of Paris. The time has now come for us to show the world whether we belong to the bulldog breed or not. Now men, what are you going to do?

The soldiers respond with roars and battle-cries punctuated with the shout ‘We’re going to kill’em. Kill’em!’ This is blood-curdling drama. There is no sense of chivalry being extended to the sensibility of the listener, or symbolically to the ‘enemy.’ The Colonel responds:

That’s the spirit my boys. Now my soldiers. I want you to fight. Fight for right and justice. Fight for your King and above all fight for the British Empire. Now to the north of the village and hold it at all costs. Hold it boys to the last man!

The buglers then call the troops into action and the record develops into a full-scale sonic panorama of battle sounds. It is possible to make out the sound of shell-bursts, commands from officers, followed by the screams of the dying and wounded. The battle montage is over 40 seconds in duration. It could be argued that the sound representation in style is aspiring more to realism than grand guignol. The record avoids finishing with a triumphant victory march. The Battle of the Marne was in fact the second ‘B’ side of a 78 rpm disc with the mini-dramatic performance of ‘A Church Service on the Battlefield’ for the first ‘A’ side. This dramatic representation presents a thoughtful and mournful service remembering and paying tribute to the fallen.

There can be no doubt that these productions served an obvious political and propagandist objective in setting the cause of war fighting ‘above all for the British Empire’, but it was also conveying the emotion that war involves killing and dying. It could be seen as an aural equivalent of the Battle of the

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196 Audio track 44. Note:- this record was of very poor quality due to wear over time so the definition of sound for Side A is much less distinct than the recording derived from copying the playback of a cylinder version of Side B.
Somme documentary film released by the government for distribution in British cinemas in 1916 and caused people in the audience to faint and cry when they saw images of dead soldiers on the battlefield being buried and of wounded soldiers being carried to the first aid stations by their comrades.

It is possible to confirm the powerful modernist credentials of Russell Hunting’s ‘The Battle of the Marne’ by engaging its exemplification of Lance Sieveking’s 1934 manifesto for purposeful sound effects set out in The Stuff of Radio. This serves as an historicist comparison since it is being argued that Sieveking’s treatise stands as the second modernist manifesto for creating radio drama after Gordon Lea’s first manifesto published in 1926. They are the nearest texts in time to ‘The Battle of Marne’ that discuss and advocate the exigencies of sound drama as an artform.

1. *The Realistic, Confirmatory Effect*, which amplifies without adding to the dialogue: e.g. the sounds of a ship labouring in a storm (storm referred to in dialogue); or the sound of a bath-tap running (bath referred to). These are certainly deployed in the production by Hunting and ‘Diamond Dramatic Company’ credited on the original record. These are represented by the dispersal of orderlies through riding and the marching and engagement in battle.

2. *The Realistic, Evocative Effect*: e.g. the use of Morse to suggest a mental conception of ships a great distance away; church-bells, bees buzzing and a mowing-machine, evoking an emotion of peacefulness. The spatial overlapping of buglers trumpeting their Reveille qualify for the Evocative effect definition as is their future use in the montage of effects representing the mustering and call to action.

3. *The Symbolic, Evocative Effect*: e.g. a record of abstract rhythm of a churning and insistent nature, definitely not classifiable under the usual heading of “music”, used to express confusion in a character’s mind. While not obviously present in Hunting’s ‘The Battle of the Marne’, it could be argued that the Edison Amberol, Wax Cylinder, 3018, Musical version of the Battle of the Marne fully deploys musical sounds for symbolic/evocative effect and additionally for impressionistic effect. It was marketed as ‘a descriptive’, yet all of the describing and indeed the

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197 Sieveking, pp. 65-66.
198 Audio track 52.
rhythm of narrative is not through acting, words and sound effects, but by music alone. The emotion, and vicissitudes of the battle are scored and performed by the New York Military Band.

4. *The Conventionalised Effect:* *e.g.* the average sounds made for trains and horse in a radio-play, which have long been accepted by the audience just as they have long accepted the ‘sunset’ in the theatre. Though they are, in fact, completely ‘convinced’ by it at the moment, they know subconsciously that it is very far from the real thing. The horse sounds and many of the battle sounds would fit into this category.

5. *The Impressionistic Effect:* *e.g.* a quick and comic fanfare used to mark the exits and entrances of a character in a dream; or the use of artificial echo or a voice, to indicate that the speaker is dead; or choral shouting of repeated phrases to startle the listener and mark in his mind the crisis in the character’s mind.

6. *Music as an Effect:* *e.g.* a Beethoven Symphony faded against Jazz, symbolic of the sacred and profane love-forces in the characters of *Kaleidoscope* (...) Or the repeated insistent unfinished phrase on the organ in Mr. Petre, used to express his loss of memory. The band playing ‘The Red, White and Blue’ while apparently moving to battle could be seen as an effective use of music as an effect. It is symbolic of the martial and patriotic spirit of the British Army’s participation in this battle to protect Paris and France from annihilation.

It can be argued that ‘The Battle of the Marne’ complies with Sieveking’s stricture that ‘It is axiomatic that every Sound Effect, to whatever category it belongs, *must*, register in the listener’s mind instantaneously.’ The tally for Hunting’s production against Sieveking’s modernist sound manifesto is four out of six. It should also be fully appreciated that Hunting was producing in the acoustic sound recording age where the play’s performances were directed into sound horns; not microphones. The mixing and cross-fading had to be achieved by the physical moving and blocking of large numbers of people, musicians and sound effects performers in one space. Sieveking had all of the progressive

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199 Sieveking, p.65.
advantages of multi-use studios, an echo chamber studio, separate effects studios, and the ‘Dramatic Control Panel’ an early mixing desk by which he could manipulate levels and fading in and fading out. Hunting’s sound in level and fade was directed as a physical and almost balletic dance of sound generation into a very narrow recording pick-up field and substantially restricted dynamic range.

**Great War Descriptive Sketches**

‘Descriptive sketches’ produced for the phonograph from the end of the nineteenth century and developed through the First World War to overlap with the radio age of sound transmission and reception are powerful sources and examples of modernist sonic art. The sketches, along with speeches, recitations, and a few actual documentary interviews, represent a wider cultural communication in recorded sound apart from music. The significance of this audio production and practice and its engagement with everyday life has not been fully appreciated by historians. As previously indicated the research for this project began in 1999 with the initial discovery of a single Columbia shellac 78 rpm phonograph record which dramatized a short story from the First World War. It seemed to be trace evidence of a practice and art in mechanically recording audio drama before the onset of radio drama.²⁰⁰ After analysing ‘In The Trenches’, devised by Major A.E. Rees for the Columbia Phonograph Company in 1917, it was possible to discover many more dramatized performances of different aspects of the Home Front and sound re-enactments from the Western Front. It seemed evident that this genre was a hybrid of drama and documentary as many attempts were made to represent actual events through performance. There was an intensity of craft in telling stories through song, single speech narrative, dialogue, music, sound effects and representations of documentary and the actuality of everyday life and human society. The style of aural story-telling was often a bricolage of different sound sources, and the intertextual weaving of the sound texts resembled the hallmarks of what became later defined by the BBC as the radio feature.

‘In The Trenches’ was in fact one part of a series of six episodes in an ongoing narrative titled ‘On Active Service’ featuring the characterization of two British soldiers, Tippy and Ginger, leaving

²⁰⁰ Crook, p.33.
home, going to war in the trenches and then returning as heroes. These sketches were more fictional than factual. Across a total of more than 21 minutes of sound drama, epic aspects of the First World War were enacted with a sophistication of production and performance values that heralded the later aspirations of the BBC from 1922. Major Rees produced a three-disc set for Columbia and it would appear that this is the earliest surviving example of a sound drama series.\textsuperscript{201} The central involvement of a senior and serving army officer in this creative and politically propagandist project is important evidence of these sound plays being created by military personnel on active service. They were thus at the centre of the intermedia propaganda matrix of First World War media production.

The sound dramas emerging from the Great War included the production in 1915 of ‘The Angels of Mons’. This is given concentrated analysis because of its links to other media representations, including music and film, and a wider controversial debate about the veracity of the myth that Christian Angels intervened to help the British Expeditionary Force’s retreat from Mons in 1914. This will involve a textual analysis of the short play’s transcription, which is included in full. As with ‘The Battle of the Marne’ there will be a discussion of its qualities as a sound drama; the cultural and social context of phonograph listening on domestic machines; its relevance to spiritualism; its significance in terms of being a modernist text; and the extent to which phonographs were part of a modernist form of propaganda during the First World War.

As ‘The Angels of Mons’ dramatized an actual war event, it is important to investigate the context of factual representations of the conflict. This includes the release two months later by the same record company of 19-year-old Edward Dwyer’s account of the retreat from Mons and his experiences in subsequent trench warfare. Dwyer’s eye-witness account merits detailed comparison with ‘The Angels of Mons’ drama because they both demonstrate how the phonograph was used for the purposes of recruitment.

Little audio drama of BBC radio was either recorded or archived prior to the 1930s. The microphone plays of the 1920s can be studied from their original scripts and descriptions of what they

\textsuperscript{201} Audio tracks 35,36,47-50.
sounded like. It would therefore appear that the pioneering work of descriptive sketch artists for Britain’s phonograph industry 1914–1918, and the years preceding it, represents the earliest surviving record of audio drama.

**Sound storytelling and the Descriptive Sketches during the Great War**

A number of studies have focused on the role of music and lyrics. The period was attended by a successful and expanding production and reception of phonograph/record entertainment and communication. The leading record companies such as HMV (Gramophone Records), Columbia and Regal produced a sub-genre of sound performance records that were variously advertised as ‘Descriptive sketches’, ‘Recitations’, ‘Talking’, ‘Political Records’, and ‘Speeches’. The dramatised performances of factual and fictional events were what would now be described as ‘faction’ or docudrama. They appear to be evidence of an attempt to use sound recording to dramatise contemporary events of the Great War.

The production technology of this period limited the duration of the phonograph mini-plays. Surviving texts are, therefore, linear framed within three to three and a half, and sometimes four minutes. Contextual influences and reference points may be derived from ‘the musical hall lightning cartoon sketch’ that Cate Haste said was transferred to film by private companies such as Neptune Films working closely with the War Office Cinematograph Committee in 1916. Haste also discussed the invention by the Ministry of Information in 1918 of the ‘film tag’, a two-minute form of narrative in which the parable of ‘Save Coal’ or ‘Buy War Loans’ would be placed at the end of newsreels. Humour, wit and comedy would be deployed to accelerate the message in a genre that many decades later would be described in propaganda analysis as ‘infotainment’.

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205 Ibid.
Pre-Great War Context, ‘The Departure of the Troopship’ - a Boer war origination?

The ‘descriptive sketch’, documentary, recitation and performance phonograph genres have a history prior to the 1914–1918 conflict. The chief recorder of the British Gramophone Company, Fred Gaisberg, noted in his 1946 memoirs that he was responsible for producing a descriptive record during ‘the Boer War period’ of 1899–1902 titled ‘The Departure of the Troopship’. This was the precursor to the series of Troopship productions made at the time and would include ‘The Homecoming of a Troopship’ evaluated at the beginning of this chapter. A media constructed sound image of a troopship taking men to and from war represents a powerful and iconic symbol of empire protected and advanced by the biggest navy in the world and used to deploy troops to far off wars. The resonance is political and cultural. Gaisberg said that the sound performance consisted of ‘crowds at the quayside, bands sounding ‘All ashore,’ farewell cries of ‘Don’t forget to write,’ troops singing ‘Home, Sweet Home’, which gradually receded in the distance and the far-away mournful hoot of the steamer whistle.’206 Gaisberg credited the authorship of the piece to ‘my good colleague Russell Hunting’ who was responsible for staging the recording.

He proclaimed that: ‘The record became enormously popular and eventually historic. It brought tears to the eyes of thousands, among them those of Melba, who declared in my presence that this record influenced her to make gramophone records more than anything else.’207

‘The Departure of the (a) Troopship’ features in the catalogues of the first sound cylinder and flat 78 rpm disc producers of the early 20th century. It has been possible to trace and analyze several versions some of which have been uploaded to YouTube by collectors.208 The dramatizer identified by Gaisberg, Russell Hunting, is profiled by Peter Martland as an enlivening presence who was a key American and later European phonograph industry pioneer and who ‘made the transition from actor to self-taught recording engineer and performer.’209 Gaisberg also described him as ‘the star attraction of

207 Ibid.
208 ‘Departure of a Troopship’, cylinder and disc recordings by G&T, Sterling and Nicole Records, uploaded to YouTube with urls: A to B set out in bibliography.
the phonograph parlors,\textsuperscript{210} which on the basis of Martland’s research included the production of sound pornography. This resulted in a criminal prosecution in New York City in 1896 that had been agitated for by the campaigner against indecency, Anthony Comstock.\textsuperscript{211}

\textbf{Russell Hunting- Master of the ‘Swearing Machine’ and a founding voice of radio comedy}

Massachusetts born Russell Hunting (1864-1943) has an entry in the \textit{Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound} which describes him as ‘the most popular pre-1900 recording artist.’\textsuperscript{212} His profile in \textit{Popular American Recording Pioneers} indicates he began his performing career in the theatre tradition joining the Boston Theatre Company as an actor and in the early 1890s developing comedy skits for wax cylinders with the central character Michael Casey: ‘for which he frequently assumed multiple parts and supplied various parts.’\textsuperscript{213} Fred Gaisberg recalled first meeting him in a theatre neighbouring his recording laboratory:

\begin{quote}
About this time a lucky thing happened. The much-advertised burlesque show entitled \textit{Faust Up-to-Date} visited the Albaugh Theatre next door to our lab. The stage manager was Russell Hunting. He also played the part of Mephistopheles and, dressed in red tights, he was shot up from the bowl of the theatre into the midst of a bevy of dancers. I knew him as the originator of the ‘Michael Casey’ series of phonograph records. They consisted of rapid-fire cross-talk between two Irish characters, with Hunting taking both parts.

His fine voice had an infinite capacity for mimicry. In his spare time he made these cylinder records in his hotel room, and they had become famous among exhibitors.\textsuperscript{214}
\end{quote}

Hunting’s creation of the bumbling Irish-American character, Michael Jeremiah Casey, to give his full name, meant that his fame as the most popular phonograph performer of the 1890s was very well

\textsuperscript{210} Gaisberg, pp.14–15.
\textsuperscript{211} Martland p.13.
established. However, his tendency to advance further culturally disruptive forays into the field of sound pornography as opposed to phonography might have been lucrative, but also carried high risk. A voice can be recognized as much as a face. And the potentially offending artefacts of alleged obscenity were evidential voice-prints.

An Anthony Comstock agent, George Oram, tracked Russell Hunting down to his home in New York City 24th June 1896. Oram played the part of a potential customer so well, his target invited him into his laboratory where he created his sound cylinder recordings. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* took up the story:

He [Oram] told them [Hunting and his assistant Charles Carson] he wanted a certain cylinder containing a particularly obscene song. He claims in his affidavit, on which the warrant was issued, that Hunting sold this cylinder to him and then in his presence made him another equally objectionable record, and offered to provide still worse productions. The cylinders were sold for $1.50 each, and Hunting, it is declared, informed Oram that he had just sent fifty of them to Coney Island to be distributed among the saloons and other resorts there.215

Two examples of Russell Hunting’s pornographic audio-dramas are included in the curated audio resource *Actionable Offenses: Indecent Phonograph Recordings From The 1890s*. ‘Reilly as a Policeman’216 is a courtroom sketch with an American-Irish police officer called Dennis Reilly who has arrested two men for indiscretions in the bushes of a public park. Reilly is a problematical example, along with Michael Jeremiah Casey, of satirizing ethnic characters. After the judge chastises Reilly for calling one of the defendants a ‘sonofabitch’ the police officer rages:

Reilly: Damn it, I can’t hardly control me angry feelings towards this man. I was- I was beatin’ up and down, sir, and when I, when I noticed this man here committin’ a nuisance in the laurels, ‘What’re doin’ there?’ says I. ‘Shittin’, says he. ‘Shure you can’t do it there,’ says I. ‘Well I’ve

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216 Audio track 121.
done it fuckin’ well already,’ says he. ‘Come out o’ that,’ says I. ‘I’m not in it,’ says he. ‘I’ll not have it done,’ says I. ‘Well, you can eat it raw,’ says he. ‘It’s agin the law,’ says I. ‘You’re a liar, It’s agin the bushes,’ says he. Upon that, your honor, I struck him a blow, sir and I nicked him, when I struck him again, sir, and he let a fart, your worship, that would crack a plate, and as I stepped back for fear I’d be shot, he wiped his ass on the tail of me coat, and he says, ‘A friend in need is a friend indeed.’ God damn it.

Judge: Yes, thirty days.
Reilly: Thirty days for what, sir? A good thing, sir.
Judge: For you, Mister Reilly.
Reilly: For me? What for? What for me thirty days. What for me thirty days?
Judge: For indecent conduct in the court.
Reilly: Indecent shit and- oh, what the hell. That’s a nice thing to get, Reilly. God damn such luck as this, Jesus Christ!
Judge: Remove Mister Reilly, please.
Reilly: Oh, That’s all right, I’ll remove meself. 217

It should be appreciated that Hunting was playing the parts of Judge and Reilly and in the other audio example of porn cylinder that has been curated, ‘Sim Hadley on a Racket’, 218 Hunting was performing the role of the brothel Madam, prostitute Maud and client Hadley:

Madam: What kind of a lady would you like?
Hadley: Well- give me a little girl with big titties and a wide arse.
Madam: All right. Maud! Maud!
Maud: [in distance] What?
Madam: Gentleman in the parlor.
Maud: All right, I’ll be down in a minute.
Hadley: Shit, every old cunt’s named Maud. 219

It can certainly be argued that if this is audio-performance art, it is certainly disruptive. Hunting may have been pursued so vehemently to the extent of the criminal prosecution and jailing because the

217 Feaster & Giovannoni, p. 29.
218 Audio track 122.
219 Feaster & Giovannoni, p. 30.
indecent performances and talent of the performer/creative were so high. Hunting has the curious distinction of pushing the boundaries of taste, language and subject so far, the force of state law containment curtailed his culturally disrupting and swearing phonograph enterprise by penal incarceration. The kind of language used here and comedic scenario would never have been tolerated in the Savoy Hill studios of the BBC. However, the genre of multi-voice comedic characterization in the legend of Michael Jeremiah Casey could be said to have presented the model for the first BBC Radio Sitcom. Russell Hunting discovered that the sound only medium meant he could cast himself in many parts without the need for different costumes, and this was an opportunity that would not have been lost on Mabel Constanduros who brought her multi-voiced representation of the London cockney Buggins family to the BBC with live three to four minute sketches from 1925 to 1956.

Hunting’s understanding of how to create action around the recording horn, his skill in sound effects timing and exiting and entering by moving performance, indicates that the theatrical and Music Hall/Variety Act tradition served the early phonograph pioneers well. Comedic and Variety Act performance on the stage required an intensity of presentation and movement in three to four-minute acts. Stage theatre may well have been visual, but it was also fundamentally an oral performance art. Actors needed to know how to throw and modulate their voices and adapt to the acoustic architecture of their performance spaces. The Music Hall artists also had an appreciation of how limited time-frames, literally ‘the time they were on,’ had a linear frame in the three and half to four minute phonography form. Story-telling needed to be intense, sharply crafted and the plot outcome memorable. In addition, music hall, variety and theatre has always had powerfully creative interaction with the art of making sound effects that are representational, symbolic and even poetic. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries theatres were even experimenting with using gramophone sound in live productions.220

A consideration of ‘Michael Casey’ productions performed and recorded for the British record industry between 1904 and 1916 demonstrates that Russell Hunting had developed and advanced his

character’s encounters into situations of social and media sensorium irony. ‘Casey Listening to the Phonograph’ produced for Edison Bell in 1905 uproariously satirizes the very media form that is being created to entertain. There may be some resonance in the fact that Russell Hunting’s indecent phonograph productions of the 1890s had gained some popularity in coin-in-the-slot phonograph listening machines- early examples of what would become ‘Juke Boxes’ in the twentieth century. The Casey character, like thousands of other people at the time, acts out his first encounter with what he describes as 'one of these phonographical reproducer things' in a penny arcade. We hear his musings as the machine swallows his hard-earned penny: ‘Drop a penny in the slot and hear the latest song “Sweet Marie.” Who the devil’s “Sweet Marie”?’ The machine begins to playback the out of date song slightly too fast, and then conk out after running out of coil spring power before the song is finished. Casey reacts and dialogues with the lyrics: ‘Oh there’s a squeaking in his heart!’ The record playing is 'Sweet Marie sung by Mr Eric Farr.' As the modern technology is shown chaotically to fail, Casey observes and trails off ‘Oh! Ha! Ha! The poor man died a painful death that! [...] Ohhhhhaaaah! What a rabble!’

Talking technology is given another ironic shake-down by Michael Casey when he asks to use somebody’s telephone that he originally calls a thermometer. In ‘Casey’s Telephones’ produced for Regal in 1916, Hunting mocks the hissing nature of so much sound-based communication and entertainment technology: ‘I can hear nothing but frying egg!’ The versatility and range of Hunting’s Michael Casey act is given further consideration with the inclusion in the project’s curated audio-file folder of ‘Casey as a Judge’ (1915), ‘Casey as a Doctor’ (1915), and ‘Casey’s Description Of His Fight’(1916). Hunting would often perform more than two roles in these sketches. Something so successful in the sound genre did not enjoy transference to BBC Radio. Jennifer J. Purcell has researched the difficulties the BBC had in recruiting professional entertainers with Eric Maschwitz, a

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221 Audio track 123.
222 Audio track 115.
223 Audio track 93.
224 Audio track 94.
225 Audio track 114.
Director of Variety during the 1930s complaining: ‘it was largely shunned, even boycotted by the Profession, some people still regarding it as a dangerous rival, other dismissing it as an unprofessional toy.226

Into this vacuum stepped amateur acts that through their successful debut and development on BBC Radio began to be produced for the record industry. Purcell and Carolyn Scott Jeffs227 have extensively researched the successful career of Mabel Constanduros who first began performing in radio drama at the BBC from 1925. In creating The Buggins Family she would, like Russell Hunting in Michael Casey stories, perform all the characters. In one sketch she managed to vocalize seven different people across generations from grandparents to grandchildren. The evolution in production values for The Buggins Family audio-sitcom is well represented by the sound files of Buggins family records between 1927 and 1932: ‘Baby and the Silkworm’ (1927),228 ‘The Buggins Family, Slices of Life’ (1928),229 and ‘A Trip to Brighton’ (1932).230 The examples extend from the time Mabel Constanduros performed all the voices in front of a single microphone, to her collaboration with Michael Hogan who took over the male parts, and then the high quality of apparent location recording and performances with the Southern Railway in 1932. It may be these impressive railway station ambiences and effects were recorded separately and then mixed with studio performance by the actors. Purcell observed:

…but because of the construction of clear and memorable characteristics, she created continuity similar to serialization; audiences knew what to expect from the family member each time the

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228 Audio tracks 104 & 105.

229 Audio tracks 106 & 107.

230 Audio track 120.
family appeared on radio. Furthermore, the creation of a radio family in 1925 was an innovation not previously seen on British radio…\textsuperscript{231}

Neither Purcell nor Jeffs has made any references or links to the comedic audio drama art that predated radio in phonograph entertainment. Russell Hunting developed it with high sophistication in writing, performance and production values. Other performers also demonstrated that some of the music hall and variety artists had not only mastered the medium for its entertainment potential, but also covered socio-political themes such as the prejudice against trade unionism in ‘The Plumber’ (1908)\textsuperscript{232} and high profit and low quality house construction in ‘The Jerry Builder’ (1916).\textsuperscript{233} The baton of the satirical political bite would be replicated in record form when the BBC introduced comedy artists Charlie Clapham and Billy Dwyer. They would land a few punches at the very broadcasting organization that made them. Jokes about news and lies and sharp mocking of the broadcasting schedules in ‘A Day’s Broadcasting’ (1928)\textsuperscript{234} and Another Day’s Broadcasting (1932)\textsuperscript{235} were certainly in the Michael Casey tradition.

The cultural osmosis and media artistic symbiosis argued here is essentially modernistic. Comedic audio dramatic art in the phonograph field informs and inspires radio and vice-versa. Another engaging example of this concerns the introduction by BBC Radio of the comedienne Beryl Orde. She had only reached the then age of majority when she performed ‘Jazz Justice’ with Eddie Pola as the Judge live on the BBC’s National Programme at 9.15 p.m. 11\textsuperscript{th} December 1933. Mimicry, irony, impersonation; some of it with a frisson of political and cultural edge emerges in a modernist form of radio drama comedy. Beryl was described as ‘only twenty-one, comes from concert party work to impersonate on the air for the first time.’\textsuperscript{236} It could be argued that her depiction of the Buggins Family was far

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} Purcell, 2018, p. 427.
\item \textsuperscript{232} Audio track 125.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Audio track 110.
\item \textsuperscript{234} Audio track 116.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Audio track 117.
\item \textsuperscript{236} ‘Jazz Justice, Eddie Pola presents Beryl Orde in a sketch’, \textit{The Radio Times}, 11\textsuperscript{th} December 1933, p. 743.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
superior to the original. Her comedy classic would quickly transfer to the phonograph record with high sales and an accelerating launch of Beryl Orde’s broadcasting and entertainment career. The sketch was so popular and impactful it was filmed by British Pathé for newsreel cinema distribution.

The many facets of an arriving and departing Troopship

Hunting’s sound creation of troops being played aboard at embarkation with goodbyes and an emotionally resonant parting by fading steamship whistle exists in different versions. All follow a common script of sound design sequence. There is no extended dramatic dialogue or narration. They largely match the pattern and sequence of the 1905 ‘Homecoming of a Troopship’ evaluated for its modernist characteristics at the beginning of the chapter. What makes the sound text so effective is that the story’s exposition is plotted by human cries, musical tunes and sound effects in soundscape and montage form and cross-faded. The sense of realism is achieved by apparent improvisation. As mixing panels would not be invented until the late 1920s, the dynamism of movement would have been produced by musicians, actors and sound creators slowly moving towards and pulling away from the single horn recording funnel and its mechanical recording machinery.

A single-sided 7-inch phonograph disc release by Zonophone is listed in the company’s 1904 catalogue as ‘12791 Leaving of the Transport (introducing arrival and going on board of the Troops, with Bands Playing. Cheers of the Crowd. Blowing of Steamer Whistle, Pulling in of the Gang Plank, etc.).’ This record would have played back at 70 revolutions per minute and is included in the catalogue’s section for ‘The British Military Band, London’ which is described as the most experienced band in Europe in being recorded for ‘the talking Machine.’ The catalogue entry is two years after the end of the Boer War.

A disc titled ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ was released by Zonophone in single and double-sided 10-inch phonograph records, playing back at 78 rpm prior to and during the Great War. The single-

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240 Zonophone, 1904, p.3.
sided International Zonophone Company release catalogued as X-40063 and titled ‘Departure of a Troopship’ that was obtained for this research project has a very high quality of clarity in playback and is in excellent physical condition.\textsuperscript{241} It was played by ‘The London Regimental Band,’ designated as ‘Descriptive’ with Russell Hunting and had a recording date of 14\textsuperscript{th} February 1905 with sales to the public from May 1905.\textsuperscript{242} The disc acquired from a private collection in March 2020 was in such good condition, with hardly any evidence of playback, that it is possible to hear very clearly an opening scripted, or indeed improvisational dialogue over the first 10 seconds:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Come on, stand back please!
  \item Don’t push me!
  \item Stand back!
  \item How dare you push me?
  \item Get up on the pavement!
  \item I’ve been waiting here for ten minutes.
  \item Never mind, never mind. Get out of the way.
  \item Stand back, stand back!
  \item Alright!
  \item Here they are! Here they!
\end{itemize}

\textit{Face in bank play ‘Soldiers of the King (Queen)}

\textbf{Bravo!} \textsuperscript{243}

The quality and creative sound dynamic of the national anthem being faded at the end so as to evoke the leaving of the troopship from the quayside combined with segueing or crossfading with the distant blast of the ship’s horn is distinctive and highly sophisticated soundscape sound design. The dialogue is highly realistic with many of the dialogic lines naturalistically being played crossing over each other.

\textsuperscript{241} Audio track 126.
\textsuperscript{243} Audio track 126.
The London Gramophone Company’s general catalogue for its ‘His Master’s Voice’ label in 1911 also lists a record with the same name ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ - again a 10-inch 78 rpm with the catalogue reference ‘2-108’ under the category ‘Descriptive, etc.’ This remained in the company’s catalogues until deletion in 1930. When double-sided with a catalogue reference of Serial 564, the title appears in the Zonophone catalogue for 1913–1914 and is paired with a descriptive sketch titled ‘The Wreck of a Troopship’ that contains a plot and lines that have more in common with the narrative of the wreck of the HMS Birkenhead troopship off the coast of Africa in 1852.

It seems likely the Gaisberg and Hunting ‘Boer War period’ production of ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ could have been re-released to become an inspiration for the more sophisticated dramatized sound sketches that followed. The Zonophone and HMV versions sound identical and so could have been pressed from the same master. The versions created reproduce the sound of a busy quayside starting with a voice that can be heard saying ‘Stand back, stand back.’ Each is followed by the ‘London Regimental Band’ playing ‘Soldiers of the King (Queen)’ written and composed by Leslie Stuart. As soldiers are played up the gang-plank voices shout ‘Bravo!’ ‘There they are!’ and ‘Farewell!’ Another common line that can be heard is: ‘Come on, come on, don’t crowd. There’s a lady here.’ There’s a matching segue of cries of ‘Here they are, here they are!’ and the band then striking up a quick medley of military tunes with bugles predominating. Further lines of ‘Well goodbye old man’, ‘Don’t forget to write home,’ can be heard. This is followed by cries of ‘All ashore, people!’ almost exactly as Gaisberg reported in his book Music on Record.

In each case the montage of sounds is highly evocative: ship’s bell; whistle; cries of ‘goodbye’ ‘We’re off now’, ‘Don’t forget to write home every week’ and ‘Goodbye!’; cheers; and band music. The only departure from Gaisberg’s recollection is that the last sequence of music is the national anthem, certainly followed by what can be understood as ‘the far-away mournful hoot of the steamer whistle’

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246 Gaisberg, p.45.
(ibid). The coinciding, or what would be described in future radio production as cross-fading, of the same key and note of distancin band and ship’s horn certainly represents a remarkable achievement in sound creativity for its time. This tagging of different sounds by rhythm, melody and key would become a celebrated filmic sound device later present in the films of Alfred Hitchcock such as the 1936 *Thirty Nine Steps* and Anthony Minghella’s *The English Patient* sound designed by Walter Murch in 1996.247

It is possible that Gaisberg confused the singing of the National Anthem with *Home, Sweet Home*, a song made famous during the American Civil War (1861–1865), because Dame Nellie Melba had made the latter her ‘private property’ during her singing career.248 Lord Horatio Kitchener, famous for being in command of the British re-conquest of the Sudan (1896), and victory in the Boer War (1899–1902) asked her to sing it at Government House after dinner when visiting Australia in 1909. King George V requested she perform it on a visit to Norway in 1921 as it reminded him of his time as a midshipman on the battleship/cruiser in which he was travelling.249

Jeffrey Richards emphasizes that *God Save the Queen* (or King) achieves so much pre-eminence in the fusion of patriotism and imperialism during the Boer War that: ‘Lewis Winstock, having trawled through a host of diaries and memoirs, concluded: ‘there is no doubt that in 1899–1902 *God Save the Queen* had an appeal that has never been equaled; even in World War Two it would be difficult to find anyone writing of a concert that “the event of the evening was *The Queen.“’250 The sound text of ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ fuses the communication and reception of the ideological concepts of God, Queen/King, and country.

The language and sounds of Christianity, devotion and respect for monarchy and patriotism appear to be the political, social and emotional imperatives in many of the subsequent Great War descriptive sketches. The biographer of King George V, Kenneth Rose, discovered that repeated playing back of

249 Ibid.
250 Richards, p.94.
this disc was a feature of entertainment at Buckingham Palace: ‘Another well-worn record to be played after dinner was titled ‘The Departure of the Troopship’, a sentimental yet stirring piece. It ended with the National Anthem, at which everybody in the drawing room, including the King and Queen, rose to their feet. It was among their favorite tunes…’

Russell Hunting dramatized a separate version of ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ for the Sterling Record Company of which he was a director between 1904 and 1908. The cylinder record version is distinctive in having horse hoof/metal shoe effects at the beginning as the troops muster to go on board. Sterling owned the Odeon label until its bankruptcy when it was adopted by Carl Lindstrom Ltd. Odeon released a double-sided disc, featured in its 1912 catalogue with side A titled ‘The Departure of the Troopship’ and side B telling the story of ‘The Return of the Troopship’ (Odeon 1912). A further version of the departing troopship sound narrative was released by Nicole Records in 1904, a company that manufactured discs in the short-lived form of celluloid on card base. This version clearly has the sound of a woman performer taking part. She can be heard to cry ‘There they go our big (or very) strapping sons.’ This difficult to hear line from a sole woman performer distinguishes it from the Sterling, HMV and Zonophone productions.

‘The Wreck of a Troopship’ is clearly dramatizing the heroic decision by British soldiers to allow women and children first into the few lifeboats available to the passengers on the HMS Birkenhead after she had foundered on rocks near Cape Town. It was a provisioning ship carrying stores and soldiers in support of a British colonial war in Africa in 1852. This event is the source of the ‘Birkenhead drill’—a protocol of honour decreeing that the lives of women and children were to be saved first in life-threatening situations. It was also immortalized in Rudyard Kipling’s 1893 poem Soldier an’ Sailor Too. The Gramophone Company’s 1908 production for its label Zonophone competed with a 1907 Edison phonograph company release of a gold moulded cylinder record titled

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252 A YouTube, 2014.
253 Martland, pp.75–80.
254 C, D YouTube 2014.
‘The Foundering of a Troopship’ by the National Vaudeville Company and featuring the performance of Australian bass-baritone Peter Dawson. This had fewer Scottish accents, and Dawson as Colonel Seton issues the command ‘Sound the Assembly’ rather than ‘Sound the Fall In.’ There is also a clearer almost choral chant from the soldiers of ‘We will Colonel, we will!’ in reply to the order to stand fast. Both re-enactments of this event with the doomed soldiers singing *The Old Hundredth* and giving three cheers for ‘his majesty the King’ present a patriotically emotional performance.

‘The Wreck of a Troopship’- developing the descriptive sketch narrative

Odeon Record’s more optimistic pairing of the troopship’s departure with its return on double-sided discs was in contrast to Zonophone’s decision to place ‘The Wreck of a Troopship’ on their B side. This had been produced as a single sided 10-inch 78 phonograph disc between 1908 and 1911. To the sound of theatrical storm effects, bugles and music members of the 74th Highlanders are assembled on deck to face death:

Attention. Officers and men of the 74th Highlanders in a few minutes the ship will sink beneath the waves and we who are men and soldiers of the King will be no more. We have faced death together before on many a well fought field without shrinking. And as our enemy now is not man, but God’s elements, it beholds us to meet the death that now awaits us with the same indomitable courage as yore.

After the order to ‘present arms’ the band plays *Rule Britannia* and is drowned out by a crescendo of raging storm and sea sound effects.

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257 Ibid.

Overseas origins of the descriptive—down the river and on the farm

The wider context of pre-Great War phonograph disc and cylinder exploration of the ‘descriptive’ form suggests overseas interest in the drama of departing by boat or ship and enthusiasm for imaginative description through the evocation of sound montage alone. In 1898 the American Columbia company advertised in its catalogue eighty cylinders by the ‘Columbia Orchestra’ which under the category of ‘Descriptive Records’ included the title of ‘Down on the Suwance River’. This offered two minutes of ‘Pulling in the Gang Plank, Steamboat Bells, Whistle, and Dance on Board with Negro Shouts and Clogs’.\textsuperscript{259} In 1897 the US National Gramophone Company was advertising a phonograph disc under the genre of ‘Descriptive Records’ entitled ‘Morning on the Farm’. This claimed to represent a farmyard scene ‘so real and exact that it requires but a slight stretch of the imagination to place one’s self in that delightful position, the result of which is the drinking in of copious draughts of fresh air and numerous other pleasures attainable only on the farm.’\textsuperscript{260}

Spoken word phonographs in politics and journalism

By 1914, the phonograph had established itself as a form for political and propagandist communication. Gramophone Records, through its HMV label, had Prime Ministers such as Herbert Asquith, Chancellors of the Exchequer, such as Winston Churchill and Lloyd George, explorers such as Sir Ernest Shackleton, and suffragettes such as Christobel Pankhurst enunciating policies, creeds and experiences.\textsuperscript{261} The Suffragette recording lacks the verve and imagination of campaigning tactics by the Women’s Social and Political Union in other media. The campaigning Pankhurst daughter sounded hesitant and declaratory rather than talking and confident. This is in great contrast to the satirical Music Hall style duet between Florrie Forde and Stanley Kirkby singing as ‘Walter Miller’ produced and released by Zonophone in 1907.\textsuperscript{262} The longstanding campaign for not only women’s suffrage, but women’s rights are mocked with offensive predictions as to what would happen ‘If The


\textsuperscript{260} Gelatt, p.59.

\textsuperscript{261} Rust, 1975.

\textsuperscript{262} Audio track 119.
World Were Ruled by Girls.’ The very idea of women becoming police officers invites the idea that all men would murder and burgle in order to enjoy the pleasure of being arrested by women. Not even the potential foil of a woman character enabled a semblance of balance or dignity covering both the Suffragist and Suffragette position. ‘Imitation of a Woman’s Rights meeting’ (1904),\(^{263}\) performed by Burt Shepard under the name of ‘Arthur Lloyd’, with a cast of men demeaning the presence and attitude of women with an unpleasant glossoalalia of high-pitched howling was more acutely sexist and offensive to the women’s rights position. It was, of course, anything but ‘A Woman’s Rights Meeting.’ The production was sophisticated and certainly modernist in negatively representing women with a vocalizing of speech-like syllables that lacked any readily comprehended meaning. It was framed at the beginning and end with jaunty band music.

In April 1905, Adolf Beck, who had been the victim of a notorious miscarriage of justice through false identification in court, described his ‘Trial and Sentence; and ‘prison experiences’ in a three part series.\(^{264}\) In January 1905, Hamilton Hill recorded a message titled ‘Good Luck Japan’ for Rex Lambert cylinders. This production expressed British sympathy and support for Japan in its war with Russia between 1904 and 1905 in which the Tsar’s Baltic Fleet had been annihilated by Japanese naval power, modernized, equipped, and trained by the British. Ross observed that after Russian ships fired on some English fishing boats there was even more sympathy for Japan.\(^{265}\)

Dr. Wilfred Grenfell described his mission and use of gramophone in the Arctic and Canadian Labrador coast in 1908, followed by an account of being adrift ‘on an ice floe in the Arctic Ocean’ in 1911.\(^{266}\) Ernest Gray, the pseudonym of Robert Carr, dramatized a representation of the Titanic disaster for Winner Records in 1913 with ‘Be British/Stand to your posts’. This is described by Ross as ‘an audio-descriptive piece, recording disaster, heroism and patriotism, …helped by a good ballad,

\(^{263}\) Audio track 118.
\(^{264}\) Ross, p.1/3.
\(^{265}\) Ross, p.1/25.
\(^{266}\) Ross, p.1/23.
sung in a pleasing baritone, this lugubrious offering must have sold well.\textsuperscript{267} The phonograph record had thus established itself as a commercial and sought after form for spoken word. There was a clear demand met by the leading record companies for the testimony of witnesses and participants in the journalistic events of their day. When they were not available the events would be dramatized in short sketches. The phonograph was also used for education in the recitation of poetry and prose and early language courses such as French and Russian.\textsuperscript{268} 

The Great War phonograph context- 1914 onwards

The narrative and theory of Great War propaganda has a massive hinterland of scholarship. The discussion here now moves on to how the sound phonograph and spoken word were marshalled for the propaganda effort. Fred Gaisberg confirmed that his expertise in producing persuasive sound was used specifically on the Italian Front in 1918 for extending Lord Northcliffe’s ‘scheme of propaganda behind enemy lines.’\textsuperscript{269} He was deployed with Colonel Baker to Isonzo where Slavs, Jugoslavs, Croats and Serbs, Hungarians and Czechs were ‘manning the trenches on the Austrian side, sometimes a few hundred feet from the Italian lines.’\textsuperscript{270} Gaisberg recalls he was sent to Vicenza from where he was taken in an army lorry under military escort to various prison camps. He said: ‘Deserters of those nationalities would record their folk-songs, dances and spoken words, urging their listeners to desert without fear as friends would receive and care for them. These records were played back at points in the trenches opposite the places where those nationals were known to be posted and, according to Colonel Baker, resulted in a fine harvest of deserters.’\textsuperscript{271} Ross regrets that ‘the Imperial War Museum has no examples of this type of ephemera, and it seems unlikely, although not impossible, that any have survived.’\textsuperscript{272}

Historians have already established that the propaganda sought to serve different theatres of reception. This was certainly the case with sound. The British Empire designed a separate propaganda

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid and Audio track 98.
\textsuperscript{268} Rust, 1975.
\textsuperscript{269} Gaisberg, p75.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{271} Gaisberg, p.76.
\textsuperscript{272} Ross 1977, p.1/28
campaign directed at subjugated colonial peoples, US public opinion as well as that of other neutral countries in order to seduce and entice more countries to engage Germany and her allies, known as the Central Powers, in a global war. Regal would gesture a mark of respect for and rallying with the ‘White Dominions’ through its release in May 1915 of the descriptive sketch dramatizing ‘Departure of the Australian Troops for the Front’ and ‘Arrival of the Australian Troops in Egypt’. The British had to exploit the invasion of neutral Belgium and the outrage that could be stoked by the sinking of passenger vessels and neutral shipping. On Great Britain’s home front, the motivation for war had to be transformed from a battle of imperial military and economic powers to a war of civilization, an apocalyptic struggle for good against evil.

**Developing the naval theme with the Fleet in Action at Heligoland**

Herbert C Ridout’s ‘With the Fleet in Action- Off Heligoland’ was the first descriptive sketch of the Great War produced by Regal and distributed in October 1914 within two months of the event it sought to bring to life with sound performance. It is significant for being a maritime and naval narrative thus evolving from the war by sea narrative of ‘The Departure of The Troopship’. It reflects that the Royal Navy was the basis of Great Britain’s global military power and in being a dramatization of an actual event it thereby has journalistic resonance. ‘The First Battle of Heligoland Bight’ fought on 28th August 1914 was the first naval battle of the First World War, and a resounding British victory. The clash of naval arms was bloody. The Royal Navy sunk three German light cruisers and one destroyer, damaging three further light cruisers. 712 German sailors were killed, 530 injured and 336 taken prisoner. There were 35 British fatalities.

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274 Stuart, Campbell, *Secrets of Crewe house, the story of a famous campaign* (London, New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920) & Creel, George, *How we advertised America; the first telling of the amazing story of the Committee on Public Information that carried the gospel of Americanism to every corner of the globe* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers 1920)


276 Audio track 70.
The news was released by The Press Bureau to the newspapers at 9 p.m. on the same day and *The Times* reported in its following morning edition of 29th August ‘Victory For The Fleet, Daring Operations in North Sea, German Cruisers and Destroyers Sunk, British Casualties Not Heavy,’ a series of headlines that mirror almost exactly the kind of breaking news bullet points used by online newspaper publications in the present day. It was also the opportunity for the first rituals of private and public mourning with *The Times* and other newspapers publishing the British casualty list and funerals such as that of Lieutenant-Commander Nigel Barttelot of the destroyer Liberty and an expression of humanitarian chivalry with the funeral taking place in Edinburgh ‘with military honours of Petty Officer Mayhofer- one of the German prisoners of war belonging to the cruiser Mainz, which was sunk off Heligoland. The coffin was borne on a gun carriage and was covered with the German flag.’

**Analysis of ‘With the fleet in action off Heligoland’**

The production characterizes two main characters who sound like traditional ‘Jack Tar’ sailors and operate as narrative describers of the action combined with the engaged action of orders. A surrounding ensemble cast provides more voices for cheering, and commands. The performance lasts three minutes and three seconds and had to be orchestrated with a live band providing naval medleys and the triumphant sound of ‘Britannia Rules The Waves’ at the end. The sound effects of battle are simulated with theatrical percussive bangs and an enthusiastic rhythm of loud gongs that at some points drown out the action dialogue. There appear to be two actors playing two main characters in the developing dialogue, but their voices are similar and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish them, an issue that would be a professional preoccupation in casting for BBC radio drama productions from the 1920s. It also sounds like the two male actors are trying out different accents and voices to play the role of the ship’s commander and a multiple of sailor’s voices rather than just two sailors reporting to each other what they can see.

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**Phonograph transcript**

*Naval musical medley followed by ship’s bell.*

Seaman 1: Hallo there go eight bells. There ain’t nothing doing tonight then.

Seaman 2: Don’t be too sure. There’s a nasty bit of fog hanging about. It’s as much as I can do to see our flagship.

Seaman 1: Why they wouldn’t come out in a fog?

Seaman 2: Oh Well I don’t know. If they won’t come out in broad daylight, this is the sort of night they might have a shot at us.

Seaman 1: Not them. They’re afraid.

Seaman 2: Well I bet you have a go at them ourselves.

Seaman 1: Well I wish we could get on with it.

Seaman 2: Don’t go being so churlish. If Uncle Bill’s ships won’t come out, we’re going in to fetch them.

Seaman 1: Hello. I believe you’re right.

*Drawing away from the horn to simulate an order from distance.*

Seaman 1: All hands to general quarters!

Seaman 2: All hands to general quarters!

Seaman 1: Gunner! Lay for three thousand yards. Are you ready?

Seaman 2: Three thousand it is.

Seaman 1: Chaps! Then Load! Ready Chaps!

Seaman 1: Right gun ready. Stand by there. Fire.

*Sound effect of theatrical gunfire. Gradually ascending loudness and rapidity of loud gongs.*

Seaman 2: Hello that’s started it. There go the others.

Various unclear shouts. (Hello Jack! You’ve pинked them! That’s the first…)

Seaman 1: Keep it up. Keep it up!

Seaman 2: There’s one of their destroyers keeling over.

Seaman 1: By Jove she’s sinking.
Seaman 2: Look! She’s signaling to the flagship.
Seaman 1: Hello. There’s another. That’s Blucher!
Seaman 2: Look! She can’t fire and going down!
Seaman 1: (That’s…! Unclear) They haven’t hit any of our ships?
Seaman 2: No. Their shells are falling short. (…yet! Unclear)
Seaman 1: How’s that! Another hit.
Seaman 2: (You’ve gotta …time, Jack! Unclear) Let her rip. Going again Jack! She can’t last much longer!

*Whistles.*
Seaman 1: Cease firing there.
Seaman 2: Standby! Hello. She’s going down. They’re piping about crew away to pick up the men.
Seaman 1: She’s done for! Standby to lower that boat. Are you ready there? Remember my men. Save every life you can. They are our enemies but every man Jack of them is some mother’s son. Lower away there.
Seaman 2: Aye Aye Sir! That’s a good start. We’ve sank three of their boats and haven’t lost one of ours!
Seaman 2: First blood to us Jack? Singing: Rock in the cradle of the deep. We’ve fought the German Fleet at least.
Seaman 1: Laughter. Oh bloomin ray! Come on boys give’em a cheer! And let’s go down to breakfast.

*General Cheers and music of Britannia Rules the Waves.*

This is a complex production and performance to achieve in one take given the limited capability of 1914 mechanical sound recording technology. Acting, singing, sound effects from ship’s whistle to gongs have to be timed and coordinated with two performances from the King’s Military Band. It

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279 Audio track 70
would be rather difficult to achieve the contrast in positions and loudness heard through the use of only one horn recorder. It is certainly likely that more than one take was required.

The script succeeds in convening a complex reportage of the actual battle with references to the sinking of a German destroyer. The reference to the German battle cruiser SMS Blücher being involved in the battle and ‘going down’ must have been a mistake. She was part of a Baltic German naval squadron and would later be sunk at the Battle of Dogger Bank on 24th January 1915 having been involved in the notorious bombardment of the British North Sea-side towns of Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby on 15\textsuperscript{th} December 1914.

The chivalry and concern from the defeated enemy reflected in The Times Report is clearly stated in the line: ‘Remember my men. Save every life you can. They are our enemies but every man Jack of them is some mother’s son.’ This level of compassion would be somewhat tempered by the outbreak of U-boat unrestricted submarine warfare, the fate of the Lusitania in 1915, and development of ‘Q-ships’ which were heavily armed merchant ships with concealed weaponry, designed to lure submarines into making surface attacks.

**Articulating a happier ending for the Birkenhead spirit in 1917**

Submarine warfare would result in the sinking of the Lusitania by U-Boat 20 on 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1915 causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers and crew. As with other major events of the Great War, this event would also be dramatized by phonograph two months later by a descriptive VDP production that was hampered by a lack of separation and distance between performing voices and sound effects after the torpedo struck.\textsuperscript{280} In terms of the home and global reception theatres, most historians of propaganda judge the action to have been devastating to Germany’s reputation and a catalyst for growing anti-German opinion in the U.S.A given the number of US citizens who drowned off Ireland.

As Philip M. Taylor wrote: ‘…the real German mistake came a year later when a bronze medal was struck by the German artist Goetz to commemorate the sinking of the liner. The Foreign Office managed to obtain one of the limited editions, photographed it, and sent it to the United States, where

\textsuperscript{280} Audio track 68.
it was published in *The New York Tribune* on the anniversary of the sinking.\textsuperscript{281} A satirical twist was achieved when ‘300,000 more medals were later struck on the instruction of Captain Reginald Hall, Director of British Naval Intelligence, and made by Mr. Gordon Selfridge of department store fame. Leaflets with pictures of the medal were also distributed […] with captions like ‘Another triumph for our glorious Navy’ which were aimed at whipping up hatred of Germany.’\textsuperscript{282} Niall Ferguson concluded that the moral superiority of the Entente Powers over the Central Powers ‘was one of the few respects in which they truly were superior.’\textsuperscript{283}

When the German navy continued with unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, it could be argued that phonograph dramatization needed to temper the implications of ‘The Birkenhead Spirit’ as exemplified in the pre-war production ‘The Wreck of the Troopship’. A production by the Winner label in 1917 followed the wrecking plot in a similar way, but instead of floundering a Royal Naval vessel is torpedoed and rather than going to their deaths heroically, the crew find a way of saving themselves as well, having the fortune of being rescued by a destroyer. The message here is one of hope rather than maudlin sacrifice and is likely to have been playing to a Home Front in need of encouraging recruitment as well as supporting conscription. Like Regal, Winner was a popular and cheaper brand of record producer reaching a peak of 2.1 million sales in 1917 and achieving the figure of 2.6 million for 1919.\textsuperscript{284}

**Transcript and analysis of ‘The Birkenhead Spirit. An incident at sea.’**

*Foghorns and ship bells*

Joe: Well Dick we’re nearing our destination and I suppose before long we shall be exchanging greetings with the enemy.

Dick: That’s right old man. But we’re not safe yet. The captain’s not left the bridge for three days.

He’s been watching all the time for submarines.


\textsuperscript{282} Haste, p.102.


Joe: Well I don’t think there’s much risk now. We’re so near our patrols.

Dick: Oh isn’t there. Look. Over there. As sure as I am a living man that’s the wake of a torpedo.

Joe: Look. The captain’s seen it. My God. Will you (unclear)

*More shouts from other men. Theatrical bang.*

Captain: Bugler! Sound the fall in.

*Bugler blows the signal*

Seaman: Halt! Silence! Silence!

Captain: My lads. As you know the ship has been torpedoed and may sink before there is time to launch the boats. Remember the Birkenhead boys! And if die we must, let us go to our deaths with honour to our country. Let us stand to our posts like men and sing ‘Nearer my God to Thee’

*Band and men sing the hymn:*

‘Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

E’en though it be a cross that raiseth me,

still all my song shall be,

nearer, my God, to thee;

nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Hip, Hip,

Hooray.

Dick: Captain, Captain. Are all the boats smashed? And (unclear) there is too great a risk on the port side.

Captain: Steady Lads. Steady.

*All sing the song ‘Steady Boys, Steady’*

‘Heart of oak are our ships, jolly tars are our men,

We always are ready; Steady, boys, steady!

We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.’

Hip, Hip,

Hooray.
Joe: Ah boys. There’s a wireless going.

Dick: Now lads. The captain reports destroyers approaching, and he can keep her afloat until they arrive.

Hip, Hip,

Hooray.

*All sing National Anthem:*

‘God save our gracious king.

Long live our noble king.

God save our king.

Hip, Hip,

Hooray.* 285

This production demonstrates a greater clarity of articulation and the recording use of horns by the phonograph descriptive sketch performers in 1917. It is a realistic depiction of the submarine menace, preserves the heroic creed of the Birkenhead Drill, but in a year when Britain was running out of men for the Western Front and the mounting casualties and hardships of three years of global conflict were sapping Home morale, the play communicates Royal Naval prowess, survival and victory in the war of blockade that was being waged. The earnest signing of the Christian hymn confirms that God is on the side of the Allies and more particularly if they have to die they will continue to behave with Christian dignity: ‘…let us go to our deaths with honour to our country.’ 286

**Dramatising the War in the Air**

Regal’s first foray into representing the war in the air was a release in April 1916 of the descriptive sketch “‘A Zeppelin raid ‘somewhere in England’” devised by A.Lees. Zeppelins first struck at Suffolk coastal towns such as Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth and even dropped explosives on the inland market town of Woodbridge in 1915. By 1916 the Zeppelins were regarded as a regular and deadly

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285 Audio track 59.
286 Ibid.
menace over the heads of Londoners. The First World War blitz claimed 1,413 British lives on the Home Front. By 1917 Winner offered a representation of air raids by German Gotha bombers that took over the burden of dropping munitions after British aircraft had perfected a technique for destroying hydrogen filled airships with explosive bullets. The plot dramatizes an air raid on an English seaside town when an airplane engineer returns home from working in Argentina. He witnesses the British fighters bringing down a German bomber. The sketch ends with whistles sounding the all clear. Coastal towns and ports, particularly in Kent such as Dover, were subject to German airplane bombing from 1914 onwards.

Transcript and analysis of ‘An Air Raid Somewhere on the coast.’

*Sound of park band.*

Resident: Well fancy seeing you. What are you doing here? On a holiday?

Returning resident: Yes, I've just come back to the old country for a rest.

Resident: Ah yes. But we are not quite so restful as we were in the old days.

Returning resident: Why? What do you mean? The war?

Resident: No. Air raids.

Returning resident: Air raids! Ha. Ha. What in a little seaside town like this?

Resident: Yes, my man.

Returning resident: Well I admit that only just arriving from the Argentine I may not see things quite as usual. But I can't believe that the Germans willfully go out to find little seaside towns such as this is for instance.

Resident: My dear fellow. If it is only a little village, the enemy call it a fortified place.

Returning resident: Ah nonsense.

Resident: It's not nonsense. It's true.

*Sound of German bombers approaching.*

Resident: By god. Look over there!

Returning resident: All those aeroplanes. Why they're our men patrolling.

*Sound of anti-aircraft fire.*
Resident: I don't think so. There go the guns. Hundreds of them.

Women: Ahhhhhhh! What shall I do? What shall I do?

Resident: Get undercover at once madam. Undercover! (Dialogue unclear.)

*Sound of planes, anti-aircraft fire established.*

Returning Resident: This is terrible. To think this barbarity can be permitted in the 20th century.

Resident: Hello! There go our planes. Up after them.

Returning Resident: Yes. But they are not high enough.

Resident: No. But they soon will be. See how they're climbing.

Returning resident: That's it boys. After them?

Resident: (Unclear) gone round. Now you've got them.

*Unclear exchange of dialogue and excitement.*

Returning resident: Yes the other guns have ceased firing.

Resident: Look, look! They've got him. Yes. (Unclear) That's one on the left.

*Cheers from the crowd.*

Returning Resident: That's the idea and the rest are making off. Look!

Resident: Well what have you got to say now?

Returning Resident: Oh, I'm off to London.

Resident: Had quite enough of this little town eh?

Returning Resident: Yes. I'm an aeroplane engineer. I'm going to offer my services to the government if they'll accept them. And I won't rest until I have perfected a machine which will give the Germans ten times more hell than they've given us today.

*Whistles. Traffic horns.*

Policemen: All clear. All clear.

Resident: Yes it's alright. He's given the all clear signal.

Returning Resident: Any damage done?

Resident: Oh no. Only a few windows broken.
Band restart playing.

Resident: Oh we're all right now. The band's started playing again.

Adlib dialogue and band music trails off\textsuperscript{287}

‘An Air Raid’ represents a considerable advance in the sophistication of production with subtle plays of propagandist communication. The dramatic imperative is developed by the action and plot changing the attitudes of the returning resident. The raid by German bombers rouses him out of a combination of complacency and ignorance. In less than the two minutes and 56 seconds of sound created for the phonograph he becomes convinced through direct eye-witnessing of German barbarity and commits himself to what certainly amounts to an aspiration in an age of modernity; the desire to engage science to develop air warfare that will ‘give the Germans ten times more hell than they’ve given us today.’\textsuperscript{288} The play also recreates the reality of Great War air raids. Police officers did ride around on bicycles blowing their whistles to sound the all clear. The representation of women can certainly be criticized for reverting to the Victorian stereotype of feminine hysteria in the risible cries of ‘What shall I do? What shall I do?’ that is firmly met with the patriarchal order ‘Get undercover Madam.’\textsuperscript{289}

\textbf{Jingoistic rhetoric by phonograph- Bulldog Records}

The right wing newspaper proprietor of \textit{John Bull}, Horatio Bottomley, set up his own record label \textit{New Bull Dog Co. , Ltd} as a vehicle to publish in phonograph his oration of what was promoted as the war poem ‘Why is the red blood flowing?’ and ‘the peroration to Mr. Bottomley’s Great Speech at the Albert Hall, London.’\textsuperscript{290} This is shown by the advertisement published in \textit{The Talking Machine}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{287} Audio track 58.
\item \textsuperscript{288} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{290} Ross, p.11/4.
\end{itemize}
News of Bottomley’s Bull Dog Records campaigning to drive German or ‘hun’ music from sale either by sheet or phonograph.  

An advertisement in The Talking Machine News in 1916 would proclaim: ‘British- Like The Name. No German or Bought Matrices £500 reward for proof of contrary.’ The trade mark would be ‘A new record of entirely British Manufacture.’ Other record companies such as Gramophone/HMV would signpost their ‘Patriotic Record Lists.’ This is evidence that in the commercial marketing of music and talking phonograph records, the producing companies were defining the communication and reception of sound as their patriotic contribution to winning the war and defeating the Germans. In the very month of the declaration of war in August 1914, Regal’s first ‘War Supplement’ would promote military band music including the Belgian and Russian national anthems as well as ‘La Marseillaise’, ‘God Save The King’ and ‘Rule Britannia’. The labels would declare: ‘A Royalty on this Record is Paid to the Prince of Wales Fund.’

**The Recruiting Sketch- facing down ‘cowards’ and ‘ slackers’**

A country that distrusted military culture had to be persuaded that war, uniform and armed service represented honour, patriotism and the only decent aspiration in life. This led to the creation of the recruitment phonograph to mirror what was being done by sheet-music and music hall acts in the surrounding culture. In 1914 the discs would dramatize British troops arriving and passing through Boulogne, usually with references to journeying onto Berlin. Anyone aspiring to soldiery, or having already taken the King’s shilling could learn Morse Code from a signaling Sergeant-Instructor and also the words of command from a Drill Sergeant or officer. Gramophone/HMV would produce Miss Ruby Helder singing ‘Courage’ which was the ‘official Recruitment Song of the London Daily

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291 Ross, p.11/15.
292 Ibid.
293 Badrock & Andrews, p.51.
294 Audio track 19.
295 Audio tracks 41 and 42.
Telegraph’ that had enjoyed ‘big sales as sheet music; it has been, and is, a feature of many an important concert these war months.’

In December 1914 Regal Records released the dramatization of ‘Christmas in Camp with Kitchener’s Boys’ by Scott and Harrington that followed the earlier release of ‘Arrival of the British Troops in France’ by Brooks and Ridout. Many record companies would produce sketches about security on the Home Front, particularly the spy mania of the first year of the war, hence the popularity of Regal’s ‘Special Constable Smith’ and its kind. In January 1915 Regal would begin the distribution of Western Front re-enactments with Charles Penrose and Billy Whitlock staging ‘The Charge of the London-Scottish’ and ‘Nobby Clark, V.C.’ also mirrored by Winner’s release of ‘British Troops in Action.’ As previously referenced Regal had dramatized naval action off the coast of Heligoland in October 1914. The message to people avoiding their duty and staying out of uniform was clear in the descriptive release by Regal in April 1915 of ‘Jerry Jinks, Scallywag: The Unwilling Recruit.’

Regal’s January 1916 documentary account of the marching retreat from Mons and fighting in the trenches by 19-year-old Victorian Cross winning NCO Edward Dwyer can be regarded as somewhat paradoxical as a sound recruiting tool. Dwyer is not seeking in any way to find euphemisms about the reality of the Western Front campaign: ‘You people over there don’t realize what our boys went through in those days. That march from Mons was a nightmare.’ This is hardly an advertisement for selling candy floss at a holiday camp. He talked about ‘an agonizing time.’ On the second side of the disc, Dwyer self-deprecatingly says he will talk about what it is like for the boys in the trenches if ‘you

296 Rust, 1975.
297 Badrock & Andrews, p.53.
299 Audio track 13
300 Audio track 14
301 Audio tracks 1 & 2
302 Badrock & Andrews p. 57.
303 Audio tracks 66 & 67.
are not already fed up with what I’ve said. Anybody listening would hear that such service could involve 18-day spells in the trenches and shortages of food. No fires allowed during the day because of smoke and no fires allowed at night because of the glare. In addition, as for a water supply, anybody thinking of taking the King’s shilling could look forward to a cup of tea brewed from melted snow. At Christmas, Dwyer had nothing to say about swapping Christmas puddings and playing soccer with ‘Fritz’. Any seasonal cheer was abruptly halted with ‘two of our boys being picked off by snipers’ on Boxing Day.

Dwyer pretends he cannot remember the incident where he won his Victoria Cross, though he is more than happy to somewhat bloodthirstily explain his enthusiasm for throwing ‘bottle bombs’. Such expertise and prowess means he would be allowed an extra two hours of sleep. An intriguing aspect of this ‘recruiting phonograph’ is that the prospective soldier should be in no doubt about the reality, and that includes Dwyer’s rather threatening ‘last word’:

I’m only a youngster. Barely twenty. And I’m doing my bit. I tell you, you’re wanted. And wanted badly. If you people at home are anything worth fighting for, be a sport. Come up and show the Germans that we’re better men than they are any day. Don’t stay at home singing ‘Til the Boys Come Home’. Or when the boys do come home, nothing will be too good for them. And you slackers will have to go and hide your faces.

There is something of a fiery temperament present in Dwyer’s occasionally hesitant delivery. The Surrey Regiment Museum’s holding of newspaper cuttings on Dwyer reveals how on occasion he would not hide his contempt for those failing to do their duty: ‘Is there not a single MAN here?’ he

304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid.
declared at one meeting at which not a single recruit had come forward. ‘I shall be glad to get back to the Front. It makes me sick to see civilian clothes on the backs of men fit and able to do their share.’

Dwyer’s ‘brand value’ as a kind of super star model of gallantry would transfer from state marketing for volunteering to advertising for clothing manufacturing. An advertisement for ‘Dri-Ped, the super-leather for soles’, in The Cornishman 13 April 1916, carries an endorsement from ‘Lance-Corp’l Edward Dwyer, V.C:

> Wounds and nerves are only some of the troubles of the trenches, wet and swollen feet are the limit. The terrible banging of the guns you get used to. But if your feet are bad, life’s a misery. I got a straight tip from a pal before going into the trenches. My pal sold me some ‘Dri-Ped’ soles to fix to my boots. A lot of chaps are wearing them. I must say it was money well spent, they’re simply grand and keep your feet fine and dry, even in the wettest trenches.

On the Home Front, the propaganda had to deliver voluntary enlistment from 1914 on, and then the justification for conscription from 1916 on. It successfully negotiated the feminist struggle for equal franchise in a troublesome contract that would give women the vote in parliamentary elections in 1918 in return for figuratively ‘emasculating’ any male who had conscientious objections to participation in the war effort. Zonophone’s October 1914 release of ‘Recruiting’ warned that men who did not sign up would face the ignominy of women shouting ‘Say young fellah, you can cheer alright. Why don’t you go? Are you afraid?’ with fiancées breaking off engagements and a general mood of humiliation. A woman performer demands to be taken on as a soldier, saying ‘I’m 16 tomorrow,’ and any reluctant men loitering and hesitating heard the recruiting sergeants triumphantly declare:

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310 Audio track 43.
‘There’s a plucky one for you. Yes, we’ll make a general of you very likely! Sign your name.’

Dynamic suffragettes and suffragists diverted their campaigning energies to harass men out of uniform with the public and private shame of white feather branding. As a result, the legitimacy of male identity depended on a militaristic endorsement from the center of feminized power—mother, sister, girlfriend, fiancée or wife. Feminized power would also be exercised in doing the very jobs abandoned by the men who had gone to war.

**Mobilizing the sound of hatred**

The politics of hate were essential. Germans had to be portrayed as mutilators of children, rapists of women, and the epitome of savage barbarity. Accordingly, rumours and lies about the bayonetting of children, chopping off of children’s arms, corpse factories to process the fat of battle casualties, summary execution of non-combatants, defilement of nuns and nurses would be encouraged and amplified. In phonograph productions the Kaiser would be ridiculed and insulted and ‘the dirty Hun spy’ unmasked behind British lines would receive summary justice. In March 1915, Charles Penrose and Billy Whitlock would ridicule the Kaiser and his son through mockery and comedy in the sketches ‘The Kaiser in a Zeppelin’ and ‘The Clown Prince makes a report’. Regal’s release of Harry Champion singing ‘My old Iron Cross’ a month later would end with the adlibbed line ‘Kaiser made of old pig iron.’ The comedian Gus Harris would record sketches in June 1915 titled ‘Let’s all go out and find some Germans’ and ‘They all did the goose-step home.’ The general prejudice against anything German was amplified by Horatio Bottomley’s *John Bull* newspaper and ‘Bull Dog’ record

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311 Ibid.
312 Haste, p.57.
314 Lasswell, Harold Dwight, *Propaganda technique in the world war* (New York: P. Smith, 1938, 1927)
315 Audio tracks 5 & 6, and Badrock & Andrews, p.56.
316 Champion, Harry, comedian with orchestra, A little bit of cucumber, My old Iron Cross, London: Regal, catalogue no: G 6873 d.8/18, Regal War Supplement No. 6, April 1915.
label that turn-tabled patriotic war doggerel \(^{318}\) and used advertising hyperbole to urge the boycott of German records and phonograph equipment.\(^{319}\)

The Jumbo Records release from December 1914 about the capture of a spy in a British trench on the Western Front is particularly chilling despite its period language and stilted performances. Listeners can hear the prisoner being searched, the discovery of a packet of papers including signal codes and military telegrams. His denials and refusal to answer questions are met by being blindfolded and stood up against a wall to be shot. The German’s repeated and desperate cries of ‘Mercy! Mercy!’ fall on deaf ears.\(^{320}\) His crying and wailing continues as the Colonel is dramatized offering no due process of trial and coldly ordering his execution. The rather bloodthirsty attitude is continued in similar productions by other record companies such as Winner which in 1915 released ‘Drummed Out’ and ‘The German Spy’.\(^{321}\) In the words of the contemporary *Talking Machine News* these amounted to serious descriptive sketches about a foreigner who ‘has sneaked into the British Army and has also proved a coward. The drumming out, amid the execrations of his erstwhile comrades, is vividly told’ and ‘a seemingly simple countryman turns out to be a German spy, and meets his deserts.’\(^{322}\)

It has not been possible to find any trace of a surviving phonograph production that sought to offer any positive representation of the conscientious objector position and the political viewpoint of the Peace Movement. This is in stark contrast to the rich artistic sources identified by Grace Brockington in her monograph *Above The Battlefield: Modernism and the Peace Movement in Britain, 1900-1918.*\(^{323}\) The research offers a powerful expression of painting and performing pacifism. Unfortunately, it did not appear to extend to the emerging modernist art of phonograph dramas. There was certainly originating drama at

\(^{318}\) Ross, p.11/2.

\(^{319}\) Ross, p.1/15.


\(^{321}\) Audio tracks 7 & 8.

\(^{322}\) Ibid

the Margaret Morris Theatre in Chelsea, but it was of the experimental stage variety. Great Britain was the first country in the world to give parliamentary and legislative recognition to the rights of conscientious objectors, but political, media and public opposition was bitter and brutal. The Tribunal system run largely by local politicians in town halls was hostile to men claiming any kind of pacifist conscience. Records produced between 1914 and 1918 were hostile, demeaning and full of the spite and hatred. There was no equivalent at all of Vernon Lee’s *Ballet of the Nations: a present day morality tale.*

‘The Conscientious Objector’ (1915) sung by Alfred Lester, from ‘Round the Map’ Review enforces all of the ‘Conchie’ stereotype prejudices that any such man refusing to bear arms had to be effeminate, or in other words homosexual, cowardly, spineless and malingering and ending with the plaintive ‘For God Sake, don’t send me!’ The mocking song is in such contrast to the uplifting martial tones and patriotic exhortations of ‘I Love My Motherland’ (1917), ‘Take Me Back To Dear Old Blighty’ (1917), ‘Good-Bye-Ee’ (1918), ‘It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary’ (1914), ‘The Red, White and Blue’ (1914), Vesta Tilley’s ‘Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier’ and ‘The Army of Today’s All Right’ (1915).

Coliseum released two records in 1915 under the title ‘From The Front: Descriptive Sketches’ with mini-dramas performed under the titles ‘The Spy’, ‘The Last Post’, ‘The Coward’ and ‘The Deserter,’ and all reviewing references to them indicate ideological hostility to individuals with a counter-consensus attitude to global war. However, the armistice of 1918 and the end of the Great War

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325 Audio track 95.
326 Audio track 29.
327 Audio track 30.
328 Audio track 77.
329 Audio track 78.
330 Audio track 79.
331 Audio track 80.
332 Audio track 81.
333 Ross, 11/16.
inevitably generated a mood to make records that celebrated peace as an outcome. ‘Peace Day’\textsuperscript{334} welcomes the end of hostilities with intense musical pageantry and uses music and vocal chants to give thanks to allies, though the panegyrics are restricted to White Dominion troops and the vast contribution of the British Indian Army, African and other non-white colonial troops ignored and omitted.

**Great War phonograph development: from descriptive sketch to journalism and documentary**

The First World War historians Tonie and Valmai Holt wrote that songs and music hall drama sketches of the First World War amount to a ‘national melodic propaganda for the Home Front.’\textsuperscript{335} The audio drama recordings represent the harmonies and disharmonies of sound propaganda in the context of emotionalizing ideologies. The mini-plays already discussed embrace a wide range of dramatized story telling including a German bombing raid on a seaside town, embarkation by the troops to France and a mother’s tearful farewell, heroic Victoria Cross winning action in the trenches, a re-enactment of the Great War myth of the Angels of Mons—the ghosts of angels said to have saved British troops from the German advance, and the sinking of the Lusitania by U-boat off the coast of southern Ireland.\textsuperscript{336} These are also supplemented by clear evidence of early sound documentary, journalism and actuality recording.

The Regal production of ‘Angels of Mons’ released in November 1915 should be contextualized by the January 1916 production, already discussed in relation to recruitment, of ‘Sergeant E. Dwyer, V.C.’ This double-sided disc ‘With our boys at the front’ was divided into the two themes: ‘On the March’ and ‘In the Trenches’. The Regal catalogue states that the recording was arranged by Herbert Ridout. Dwyer provides an objective correlative to the fiction of the ‘Angels of Mons’ descriptive sketch because he experienced the retreat from Mons and provides a realistic account of it in his own voice. It has been credited as ‘the only recording to survive of a soldier serving in the trenches, made at the

\textsuperscript{334} Audio tracks 15 & 16.

\textsuperscript{335} Holt, Tonie and Valmai, The Great War: An evocation in music and drama through recordings made at the time, sleeve notes, England: Pavilion Records, 1989.

\textsuperscript{336} Audio track 68.
time.‘

Dwyer’s recording consists of uninterrupted narration, and at the end of the first side of the disc he breaks out into a one-man performance of the singing of ‘Here We Are, Here We Are Again.’

One of the earliest examples of a recorded interview is present in the Gramophone/HMV release of the account from a victim of submarine warfare. The British actor Kenneth Douglas survived his experience of the U-Boat sinking of the Arabic on August 18th 1915 and recorded his story a month later. In ‘Experiences of the Sinking of the Arabic’ Douglas responds to an interview format, although the style of questioning differs from the style we are used to hearing today: ‘How did you find it my dear fellow. I’d like to hear all about it?’ It also sounds scripted: ‘I boarded that ill-fated liner, the Arabic, to go to America where I was to fulfill a theatrical engagement in New York.’ But there are aspects of the sensational and journalistic which carry across the urgency and drama of eye-witnessing to this very day: ‘There came that terrifying and never-to-be-forgotten thud which shook the ship from bow to stern. The steward rushed in and cried out ‘Torpedo!’ What was your first thought at that moment? Ah! All I could think of was overcoat! Have you got many of them? Four big overcoats and a Burberry.’

In early 1916 Gramophone/HMV released another eye-witness account in the journalistic form titled ‘The Man Who Dined With The Kaiser’ featuring Antonio Cippico, who along with other reporters, had attended a royal luncheon ‘during a tour of occupied Serbia, prior to Italy’s entry into the war on the side of the Allies in May 1915.’ Dr. Antonio describes the Kaiser, his entourage, and the effects of war on the Germans as a result of getting an opportunity to take part in a press conference for journalists from neutral countries.

The most celebrated documentary recording to survive from the Great War is ‘Gas Shell Bombardment’ released by Gramophone/HMV at the end of 1918. This disc purports to be the ‘Actual

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338 Audio track 66.
339 Audio track 69.
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
343 Ibid.
recording of the Gas Shell Bombardment by The Royal Garrison Artillery (9 October 1918), preparatory to the British Troops entering Lille’ with profits derived from record sales being donated to the King’s Fund for the Disabled.\textsuperscript{344} Fred Gaisberg’s brother Will was responsible for the production from a nearby farmhouse and he was said to have been slightly gassed in the expedition. He died from pneumonia and influenza shortly afterwards. A debate has arisen about the integrity of the recording. Brian Rust asserted that it represented ‘the only authentic sounds of World War I...recorded and preserved forever.’\textsuperscript{345} Sleeve notes for a CD release in 2001 reported ‘One theory is that his attempt to capture genuine actuality recordings failed, and that this ‘bombardment’ by penny whistles and kettle drums was concocted as a form of memorial.’\textsuperscript{346} Another theory has it that the phonograph release was a combination of genuine field recording enhanced by over-dubbing in the studio. The CD sleeve notes for \textit{Oh! It’s A Lovely War Part 3} published in 2003 includes an account published in \textit{The Voice} where a veteran of the Royal Garrison Artillery, Major C. J. C. Street M.C. attests to the record taking him ‘back again among the guns themselves [...] So fine is the recording that when Number Three fires a round with a loose driving-band, one can detect the characteristic note that reveals the fact.’\textsuperscript{347}

Fred Gaisberg’s biographer Jerrold Northrop Moore published a detailed account by Will Gaisberg himself of his last recording assignment which contributes to an authenticating of the event:

Gradually we came within the sound of the guns, and eventually, when only a short distance from Lille, we pulled up at a row of ruined cottages, in which the heavy siege battery had made its quarters. In the wrecked kitchen we unpacked our recording machines and made our preparations before getting directly behind a battery of great 4.5’ guns and 6’ howitzers, camouflaged until they looked at close quarters like gigantic insects. Here the machine could well catch the finer sounds of the ‘singing’, the ‘whine’ and the ‘scream’ of the shells, as well as the terrific reports when they left

\textsuperscript{344} Rust 1975.
\textsuperscript{345} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid Volume 3.
the guns. Dusk fell, and we were obliged, very reluctantly, to pack up our recording instrument and return to Boulogne- and to England; but we brought with us a true representation of the bombardment, which will have a unique place in the history of the Great War.\textsuperscript{348}

This dramatic eye-witness testimony was published in The Gramophone Company’s own magazine\textit{ The Voice} in December 1918. But the resulting phonograph hardly lived up to Will Gaisberg’s enthusiastic description of what he had recorded, a feeling confirmed by criticism published four years after its release: ‘The late Mr. Gaisberg of the Gramophone Company was permitted by the military authorities to approach within the lines during the bombardment of Lille for the purpose of recording the din of war. The result, was rather disappointing.’\textsuperscript{349} The poor quality even to the listening perception at the time can be explained by the fact that horn microphones and mechanical recording technology work best in resonant studio spaces where human performers can speak, sing and generate sound in close proximity. The projection was also served by the ambience of reflection in a hard-walled interior. In the open air the sound waves of the gas shell bombardment would have been absorbed and an already low frequency range technology would have struggled to register sound waves being dispersed in open space.

\textbf{Great War Descriptive Sketch- Angels and the Divine Service for King and Country}

First World War propaganda harnessed the psychological and emotional resonance of religion. Any ‘war of civilization’ had to be a crusade that exercised the core of spirituality in the individual human. Religion and spiritual exhortations were central to exploiting the moral imagination of the propagandist target. ‘The Angels of Mons’ production indicates the expression of a rich vein of mythology and supernatural legend. However, the contextual evidence points to the script of the production being informed by Christianity and patriotism rather than the late 19th and early 20th century interest in secular spiritualism that has been the subject of so much academic investigation and writing. God, King and Country, and also Empire, are the concurrent themes of descriptive sketches


produced and released by British record companies before, during and after the release of ‘The Angels of Mons’. In April, May and June 1915 Gramophone/HMV would release in consecutive months the sound of ‘Divine Service’ on the battlefield, battleship and army camp; each conducted by the Reverend J. R. Parkyn.\(^{350}\) These were not actuality recordings but representations arranged by Vivian Bennetts with ‘prayer and exhortation’. Gramophone/HMV advertised ‘Divine Service on a Battlefield’ by highlighting the presence of the ‘effects of the whistling of ‘Jack Johnsons’ during the service, bringing home to the listener the ever-present dangers of every minute of life in the firing line and just behind. The prayers and exhortations are impressively given by the Rev. J.R. Parkyn and the singing of the hymns and playing of the band are splendid. As is usual, the band breaks into a lively air at the finish.’\(^{351}\) In February/March 1916 Regal Records produced a two-sided descriptive record (G 7245 d.8/31) titled ‘A Battalion Church Parade on Active Service’ and ‘The Last Post: a military funeral,’ symbolizing the connection between the Western Front and death.\(^{352}\)

**Major A.E Rees and ‘On Active Service Series’**

I have been unable to establish any formal military and propaganda arrangements behind the production of Regal’s ‘The Angels of Mons’. However, research has demonstrated that such links can be proved in relation to other descriptive and instructive phonograph productions. Captain, and later, Major A.E. Rees remained an active and serving army officer during the First World War when he authored and directed productions for Columbia, the American parent company of Regal. In 1915, he was responsible for the double-sided ‘Infantry squad drill without arms’\(^{353}\) and then the three-disc series with six separate sketches ‘On Active Service’ published in 1917.\(^{354}\) The identity of Major A.E. Rees correlates to a surviving War Office file in the National Archives. Alexander Ross speculates in

\(^{350}\) Ross, p.11/12.

\(^{351}\) Rust, 1975.

\(^{352}\) Badrock & Andrews, p.82 and Audio tracks 11 & 12.

\(^{353}\) Audio tracks 41 & 42.

\(^{354}\) Ross, p.11/30.
British Documentary Sound that the success of the Drill record of 1915 ‘probably hastened Capt. Rees’ promotion. On subsequent records he is shown as ‘Major Rees Arranger.’

Alfred Edward Rees, a territorial officer before the outbreak of war, had served in the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to Gallipoli in 1915 before returning to England after contracting dysentery to serve in ‘recruiting duties.’ These recruiting duties harnessed an ability to produce dramatic sound productions, perhaps somewhat incongruous in an officer who was a sanitary and building surveyor by profession. However, this involvement of the military in private media publications serving propaganda purposes coincides with the agreement and strategy disclosed in secret War Cabinet documents that the hand of government should be concealed. Chairman of the National War Aims Committee Frederick Guest argued in February 1918: ‘I do not see how a Government Department can undertake Home Propaganda without its activities being liable to misconception and frequent attack on the grounds that it is Government propaganda in disguise.

The Army Drill record arranged by Alfred Rees as an officer in the Second London Regiment of the Royal Fusiliers in 1915 would be described in the catalogues of Columbia Records ‘of unique interest’ because ‘by its aid squads of soldiers were actually drilled in public view in London in Trafalgar Square. The ‘On Active Service’ series is also self-fashioned by Columbia as a ‘unique series’ ‘being practically a 6-part serial of thrilling war scenes’ featuring ‘scenes and incidents in the life of a soldier under war conditions.’ The six parts are divided into three and a half minute dramatized sketches titled separately ‘Leaving for the Front’, ‘In the Trenches’, ‘The Night Attack,’ ‘The Big Push,’ ‘For Valor!’ and ‘Back Home in ‘Blighty.'

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355 Ibid.
359 Ibid.
360 Ibid.
The ‘On Active Service’ series, when judged by the tastes and values of the present, has a tendency to sound like the characterization and plotting of cartoon, comic or newspaper strip. However, the author/creator succeeds in establishing two brothers-in-arms characters Tippy and Ginger. ‘Leaving for the Front’ establishes that they are prone to mischief with hints of time in the guardroom. There are subtle layers of irony beneath the ‘old man’ and ‘Hello Boys’ and ‘Alright me lads!’ male bonhomie. Impatience and skepticism over speeches from the red tab Generals is hinted at. The pathos of leaving home is nearly bathos, but the sentiment vocalizes and extends the sentiment of ‘Departure of a Troopship’:

‘Whistle. Music stops.

Tippy: Come on Ginger. Jump in! Hello. Who’s this old lady Ginger eh?

Ginger: Mother! Fancy you coming all this way.

Mother: My boy! I thought I must come to see you safely off. Goodbye and God Bless you my boy.


Sound of stream train leaving station and the band striking up the tune of Auld Lang Syne.

Soldiers also shouting goodbye to people on the station platform.‘361

The next episode has Tippy and Ginger fighting in the trenches in a sophisticated audio drama without narration and developing action with foreground and background. Tippy rescues a wounded comrade in No Man’s Land despite shell-fire, machine-guns and the attentions of a sniper:

‘Ginger: Got him the dirty Hun! Come on Tippy my boy. That’s it. Let me give you a hand.

Tippy: Thanks Ginger. You pinched that sniper fine.’362

The series works as a serial in the sense that specific themes and plots, always involving action, are resolved at the end of each part. The tendency for superficial and cartoon style treatment is sometimes diluted with touches of realism; particularly in ‘The Big Push’ when the singing of soldiers of ‘Just

361 Audio tracks 35 & 36.
362 Ibid.
Before the Battle, Mother’ in the trenches is recreated without band accompaniment and with the men adding their own lyrics. The realism soon evaporates when the men cheer the captain’s announcement that they are about to go over the top. However, the script continues to link sentimental dialogue with an ever-present truth that the next sequence of action could be their last:

‘Tippy: We’ve been good pals together ain’t we Ginger? Do me a favour. If I’m out of it, give me things to my dear old mother.

Ginger: Course I will you old sport. And I know you’d do the same for me. Shake hands Tippy.

Tippy: Wait a minute. We’re going to be alright. Ah! Here’s the orders at last. [...] Fix bayonets and prepare to advance!’

**Descriptive Sketches sources and establishing age, provenance and authenticity**

The phonograph texts analysed for the purposes of this project, along with calibrated catalogues and documentation for identification are drawn from a variety of sources: Most of the 127 sound files have been acquired personally from private collections; productions transferred from original discs onto CD publication in a four part series *Oh It’s A Lovely War* published between 2001 and 2008 and previous CD publications from 1986 and 1989; holdings at the Imperial War Museum, London; holdings at the National Sound Archive, the British Library, London. Caution and qualification has had to be exercised in the dating of the source texts since phonographs manufactured for sale during the period covered did not have the dates of publication stamped on the product. Every effort has been made to authenticate by as many objective correlatives as I have been able to acquire. The record companies published catalogues and Rust’s volume *Gramophone Records of the First World War: An HMV Catalogue 1914-1918* is undoubtedly of great assistance along with the research and work of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society (CLPGS) and the 2006 edition of *Regal*

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363 Audio track 47.
365 Rust, Brian, introd., *Gramophone Records of the First World War: An HMV Catalogue 1914-18* (London; David & Charles, 1975. [This text has non-consecutively numbered extracts from catalogues; thereby preventing page number referencing])
Records 1914-1932. The British Library’s national sound archive is also uploading scanned files of original record company catalogues and these provide a further resource for investigating the provenance of phonograph recording and production.

The history of the technology and methodology of gramophone production was developed by The AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) and primary texts indicate a considerable junction in the quality of recording technology and reproduction between the mechanical and electrical method, a junction generally identified as circa 1926. This means there is a noticeable difference in sound quality between Great War sound discs and those produced in the later half of the 1920s. In technical terms the frequency response was raised to a new threshold of 10,000 hertz. The difficulty of authenticating the date of source texts can be illustrated by the case of The Trumpeter performed by baritone Raymond Newell and Ian Swinley as narrator. It was included in the collection of Keep the Home Fires Burning: The Songs and Music of the 1st World War from the Original Recordings and subsequently analysed by Brian Murdoch in Fighting Songs and Warring Words as ‘a wartime recording.’ Murdoch’s criticism is significant in recognizing the mixture of dramatized conversation and performance with a song ‘against war insofar as it presents a reality of death, and there is no indication of heroism in the piece.’

However, CHARM dates this recording as 14th October 1929 and the clarity and higher frequency response of the piece presented on the CD published in 1986, and the original phonograph disc produced by Columbia suggests a production arising out of electrical recording technique (CHARM search 2013). The Trumpeter was marketed by Gramophone Records from its release in 1929 as ‘a descriptive ballad’ and the baritone Raymond Newell was also described in 1935 as being

370 Ibid.
371 Audio tracks 73 & 74.
part of ‘The Dramatic Columbia Players’ (Perth Sunday Times 1935). An Australian newspaper review of Newell’s baritone singing in July 1930 describes The Trumpeter as a Columbia release with the catalogue number 06043. Research in this area, therefore, requires the exercise of caution as the source material lacks the comforting and supportive frame of an institutional archive centre such as the BBC Written Archives in conjunction with comprehensive holdings and cataloguing of this period by the National Sound Archive of the British Library.

A detailed description of mechanical recording techniques for the phonograph industry prior to 1926 is provided by Ogilvie Mitchell in Talking Machines (1922). Mitchell explains that there was no standard set up and the recording engineers for rival companies in London regarded their *modus operandi* as trade secrets. The production of a wax master was a delicate and complex process. Mitchell recalled recording a topical poem around 1910: ‘Presently the light flashed, and we spouted for all we were worth to an unseen audience. Half-way through we made a slip and immediately the light signaled. The young gentleman spoke from the other side of the wall. ‘It’s a pity,’ he remarked; ‘you were doing very well, but I’ve got another blank.’ Mitchell explained that this was followed by catastrophe a few days later when it was reported to him that the delicate wax master had been damaged and they had to repeat the whole operation.

Large numbers of musicians necessitated the deployment of ‘three or four recording horns [...] converging on a point in the partition for the purpose of collecting the sound waves and concentrating upon the diaphragm.’ It is not at all inconceivable that multiple recorder horns may have been used for the more complicated Great War sound dramas where music, action and narration with foreground and background provided a rather complex and intense exposition over three to three and a half minutes.

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374 Mitchell, p. 65.
Mitchell observed that the overcrowded studios with ‘band, orchestra, or full chorus’ could contribute to a somewhat stifling atmosphere. The inner chamber, out of view where the wax masters were cut, was artificially heated as ‘the temperature must be maintained at a certain height because the wax of the blanks has to be of the requisite consistency for the recording needle to run smoothly. These blanks are kept in warmed cupboards around the room, and when the operator is at work they must be in perfect condition.’ 375

Mitchell described several sound boxes being used to connect to each recording horn: ‘In making a record it is absolutely incumbent upon the recording machine being completely stable, for the slightest vibration of the stylus other than that imparted by the diaphragm will render the reproduction worthless.’ 376 By the early 1920s the ‘motive power’ could be electric, but Mitchell observes a preference for a ‘weight-driven mechanism like those of the old-fashioned grandfather’s clocks, but heavier. […] They claim that the movement is steadier, though even, delicately balanced governors are adjusted to ensure invariability.’ 377

Mitchell explained that the recording diaphragm was ‘almost always of glass, as it is the substance most amenable to the action of the sound waves. A lever attachment fits it to the cutting point, which is in nearly every case a jewel that has been most carefully treated for the purpose of performing its work with the utmost exactitude.’ 378

The Angels of Mons: the audio play- textual and contextual analysis

The historian David Clarke is the leading scholar on the cultural significance in terms of propaganda of The Angels of Mons. His research output has involved academic journal publication ‘Rumors of Angels: A Legend of the First World War’ (2002) and the monograph The Angel of Mons: Phantom Soldiers and Ghostly Guardians (2004). His extensive study of the phenomenon extends from newspaper, book, music phonograph, pamphlet, music hall and film. It does not include the

375 Mitchell, p. 67.
376 Ibid.
377 Mitchell, p. 68.
378 Ibid.
phonograph audio drama produced and released by Regal. Clarke concludes ‘the Angel of Mons can be interpreted only within the context of what Paul Fussell describes as ‘a world of reinvigorated myth’ that appeared in the midst of a war characterized by industrialism and materialism. Clarke identified three factors from his analysis: ‘The obvious presence of literary invention; the power of propaganda and lies; the influence of tradition and folklore.’

Both of his texts explain how the legend had its root in the 70,000 strong British Expeditionary Force (BEF), known as ‘old contemptibles’ arriving in France 14th August 1914 as the Belgian army was retreating and while the French were being pushed back on the southern end of the front. He explained that the BEF, under the command of Sir John French, were professional soldiers, many of whom had fought in the South African wars. After almost four days of continual marching, 36,000 men from this small but resourceful army were immediately thrown into a clash with a vastly superior German force.

It was against the background of the German forces slowly overwhelming the British force with some regiments in danger of being surrounded that the myth gestated. Although the military position had been precarious—1600 men lost as casualties—the situation was rescued by an exhausting, frightening though orderly retreat to the French frontier. The rumours of angelic intervention related to the retreat from Mons between 23 and 26 August in a newspaper frenzy of sensational and exaggerated newspaper dispatches.

*The Angels of Mons* sound play dramatizes the retreat of the British Expeditionary Force from Mons and focuses on the fortunes of two characters Tommy and his comrade Jim who is tiring and needs carrying. It seems they are about to be overwhelmed by charging Germans but the Angels intercede and drive the attackers back and they are rescued. The composition is attributed to somebody called Wilvir who is also responsible for the ‘Descriptive Sketch’ on the other side titled ‘The Soldier’s Wedding’ which dramatizes a wedding at the Home Front. ‘Wilvir’ is a mysterious phenomenon. It is

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380 Ibid.
not clear if the name is pseudonymous to one or more people in the entertainment industry. The name appears only in one more Regal publication released in December 1915 which was another descriptive ‘war sketch’ titled ‘Her Dream part 1 and 2’ for each respective side of the phonograph disc.\(^{382}\) Wilvir may appear to have its equivalent in Afrikaans as part of the verb sentence construction ‘Ek wil vir jou’ meaning ‘I want you’. Research in media databases covering 125 years up until the time of writing fails to bring in any further references to the name.

Clarke states the primary source text claiming to fake and originate the legend of the Angels of Mons was produced by Arthur Machen, a leader writer on the London Evening News. Machen authored the short story ‘The Bowmen’ that he said was the single source for the Angels legend. It describes the ghosts of Agincourt’s bowmen coming to the rescue of the BEF and killing thousands of Germans.\(^{383}\) They were summoned by the desperate soldiers invoking the Latin cry: ‘Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius’ (St George help the English). Soon after publication the editor of The Occult Review and the spiritualist magazine Light contacted Machen seeking to reprint a story they had interpreted as fact and not fiction.\(^{384}\) Machen was so concerned how his short story was being transformed into fact that he had published The Angels of Mons: The Bowmen and other Legends of the War in 1915, and explained in his introduction: ‘This affair of ‘The Bowmen’ has been such an odd one from first to last, so many queer complications have entered into it, there have been so many and so diverse currents and cross-currents of rumour and speculation concerning it that I honestly do not know where to begin.’\(^{385}\)

In the same year, Harold Begbie published On The Side Of The Angels: The Story of the Angels At Mons- An Answer to ‘The Bowmen’, arguing that ‘Angels’ did intervene and supporting the views of

\(^{382}\) Badrock & Andrews, p.78.


\(^{384}\) Ibid.

those who believed in ‘divine intervention.’ Begbie believed Machen had consciously, or unconsciously, translated a vision experienced by soldiers into fiction. He was also a patriot who realized the story was an inspiration to the British war effort and felt it should be defended. Telepathy rather than coincidence explained the source of Machen’s inspiration: ‘Mr Machen, on that Sunday morning, when he read with supreme sympathy that “awful account” in his newspaper may have received from the brain of a wounded or a dying British soldier in France some powerful impression of the battle held at Mons.’

Clarke’s monograph and journal article chart the exponential and varied media manifestation of the legend during the Great War. This was driven by the public entertainment of the time centered in the theatre and music hall, which intersected with the huge market in sheet music. ‘Angels of Mons’ (Rêve Mystique) by Sydney C. Baldock was released by Gould and Bolttler, Oxford Street in 1915 and ‘Angels of Mons Waltz’ by Paul Paree was released by the Lawrence Wright Music Company in 1916 and Clarke observes: ‘The splendid colour cover was inspired by the stories collected by Phyllis Campbell. It featured a winged angel-knight, mounted upon a white charger emerging from a white cloud above the trenches. Beneath the warrior angel was a panorama of shell-bursts above a landscape of trenches and advancing soldiers.’ The new medium of film produced a celluloid representation of the legend: ‘In September 1915 the director Fred Paul released a film, The Angels of Mons, that was one of a large number of productions featuring his comedy character, Pimple. The film was described in the British Film Catalogue as ‘A War Drama based on popular topical myth’ but unfortunately, all surviving copies have been lost.’

387 Begbie, p.21.
Clarke’s thesis rightly investigates the question of whether the Angels were ‘carefully used to encourage an army of new recruits to fight on in dreadful conditions, safe in the knowledge that God was on their side and victory was therefore certain?’ 390

He also intersects his inquiry with a consideration of how rumours and myths ‘spread like wildfire from the trenches to the Home Front and back again’ 391 and Fussell’s seminal text The Great War in Modern Memory encourages the belief that ‘such a myth-ridden world could take shape in the midst of a war representing a triumph of modern industrialism, materialism, and mechanism is an anomaly worth considering.’ 392

It is likely The Angels of Mons sound drama released by Regal and created by ‘Wilvir’ would have been recorded in a one horn microphone studio, probably at the record company’s factory in Bordon Valley, Garratt Lane, Earlsfield in South West London, rebuilt after a fire in 1913. As the transcript below suggests, the script and production reproduce the myth through characterization, drama, sound effects and music with some skill. There is clear understanding of the need for focus in direct recording and the ‘blocking’ of foreground and background sound and action. Without the benefit of editing technology the performance and production through acting, sound effects and singing had to be achieved live and in one take in the same studio environment.

The technological limitations of the time have already been explained. The mechanical acoustic method depended on sound waves being registered via vibrations and impressions of a needle on a wax master and it would be another ten years before electrical recording could increase the quality of reproduction with a much higher range of sound frequency response. 393

390 Clarke, 2004, p. 5.
393 Beardsley and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music’ http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/history/p20_4_1.html [accessed 4th April 2013.]
Transcript of original phonograph disc of ‘The Angels of Mons’

Every effort has been made to transcribe the dialogue accurately but one or two phrases and expressions are difficult to determine with certainty.


Tommy: Come on Jim old man. Buck up a bit. We’ll soon catch up with the rest of the boys.

Jim: It’s no good old man. I can’t do it. I can’t even stand. You leave me here and look after yourself. I can’t.

Tommy: Oh no, old boy. Here get hold of my neck. See if I can carry you.


Tommy: Don’t matter whether I’m married or not. My old woman would never forgive me if I left you here. Besides I ain’t going to do it. Down old man. Here’s another shell.

*Sound of theatrical artillery.*

Tommy: Lord. It’s a bit hot. I can’t make out where we are. It’s so dark.

Jim: It’s no use Tommy boy. I can’t walk.

Tommy: Rot. Here. Hop on my back lad. Hold on to the old gun. If you’ve got to go to the Angels, I’m coming too.

*Bugle sounding. Gunfire.*

Tommy: Now then. Hold on tight and keep your head down. Here they come.

*Shouting of attacking men. Gunfire.*

Jim: Heavens. What a pity. They’ll have us.

Tommy: Sorry old man. I’m afraid it’s all up. I can’t go any further.

Jim: Well. Leave me old chap. And save yourself.

Tommy: That’d be blown for a sail. Here. Just sit here under this old cottage. You be the gun. I’ll have one or two before they have us.
Sound of shouting and approaching men.

Tommy: There’s one or two left anyway. Now old man Goodbye.

Jim: Look down. Look there. In that light.

Sound of hymn ‘Abide with me’ in the background.

Jim: Listen to that singing. There. Look. There’s some people all in white singing over there. Look.

They look like Angels.

Tommy: Poor old Jim. I’m afraid it’s all up with you.

Jim: No. No. They’re waving the beggars back.

Tommy: Good Heavens Jim! I see them. They look like the Angels we used to see in the plays of home old boy. Thank God we’re saved. Here! They are Angels.

Soldier/officer approaching: There are two more.

Another soldier reinforcing: You hurt boys?

Tommy: No sir! Only Jim here. Be careful. Thank Heaven I got him here safely. And the Angels were real ones after all.

Fade out the sound of battle. 394

Textual Analysis of ‘The Angels of Mons’ phonograph as audio-drama

The descriptive sketch has an intensity of action, dialogue, characterization, sound design and sound performance that uses the limited characteristics of mechanical recording technology very well. Jim and Tommy will have been placed as close to the main horn device as possible and in the early phonograph company studios it was unusual to use more than one.

The script focuses on the fortunes of the two main characters being chased by the grey hordes of the Kaiser’s infantry and also being bombarded by German artillery. The story dramatizes the exhaustion and desperation of the retreat from Mons. This is what Edward Dwyer in real documentary for Regal described as a nightmare with the proviso: ‘unless you’ve been through it you can’t imagine what an

394 Audio track 53.
agonizing time it was. We used to do from 20 to 25 miles a day.’ The difference in language between the fiction and the documentary is that Dwyer speaks like a 19-year-old greengrocer’s assistant from Fulham who joined the army about eighteen months before the outbreak of the Great War. The dramatization of Jim and Tommy appears to be how middle-class producers or officers would imagine the other ranks speaking to each other. Grammar is fouled but the representation is respectable and sentimental: ‘Don’t matter whether I’m married or not. My old woman would never forgive me if I left you here.’ And it is ‘old man’ and ‘old chap’, and ‘poor old’. It may be significant that it is the other ranks who are characterized as seeing and hearing the Angels and believing that they ‘were real ones after all.’ Perhaps it was not seemly to invest the officer class with any hint of vulnerability or susceptibility to hallucination, supernatural suspicion, or need for religious vision.

As explained previously, it would be another eleven years before anyone attempted to write a book on how to script sound dramas. Radio Drama And How To Write It by Gordon Lea was a response to the new world of radio broadcasting by the BBC that had been experimenting with storytelling for the microphone from 1922. Lea’s views as a practitioner of radio drama production coincided with analysis and debate in various editions of The Radio Times during the 1920s. He advocated a direct and intimate method and the creation of a total mental vision so that the listener operates as somebody who overhears drama.

‘The Angels of Mons’ could be said to follow his preferred method. The 1915 phonograph drama dramatizes character through action in Lea’s preferred ‘Self-Contained Method’ of technique

395 Audio tracks 66 and 67.
396 Lea, Gordon, Radio Drama And How To Write It (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1926)
398 Lea, p.43.
399 Lea, pp. 37-8.
400 Lea, p. 53.
understands the importance, role and value of music, 401 is written and performed ‘not to make its appeal to a crowd but to an individual.’ 402 The word picture is developed gradually with exposition of the story through dialogue even in a duration of less than three minutes. The action develops in dialogue combined with sound effects ‘to produce an illusion of naturalness.’ 403 In this way ‘The Angels of Mons’ connects with what Lea defined in his chapter ‘The Listener’s Part.’ 404 In the mini-drama recorded by Regal, the actors are intensely performing an emotional crisis for a new dramatic medium in which ‘The listener is in direct touch with the player—there is no intervening convention- no barrier. Soul speaks to soul.’ 405

The sound effects are undoubtedly cartoonish and theatrical to 21st century ears. However, radio drama had a long way to go during the 1920s before a settled method and art of representing reality through sound symbolism could be developed. There was a celebrated occasion when the BBC’s first director of drama productions let off a shotgun in the open staircase of the BBC’s Savoy Hill headquarters in his quest for better gunfire sounds in radio plays.406 ‘The Angels of Mons’ production would have required the singing of ‘Abide With Me’, the simulation of artillery and guns and the shouting of approaching Germans to be performed five to ten feet from the actors playing Jim and Tommy. As Martland writes, the Australian singer and performer Peter Dawson became aware that a special technique was required in order to maximize the potential of the early horn recording mechanism: ‘In those days one of the most important secrets of making a good evenly balanced record was the weaving in and out from the mouth of the funnel. You had to think ahead of your tone emission to know when to move forward and when to move away.’ 407

401 Lea, p. 21.
402 Lea, p. 43.
403 Lea, p. 56.
404 Lea, p. 67.
405 Lea, p. 69.
407 Martland, p.182.
However, the dramatic imperative of ‘The Angels of Mons’ record succeeds in communicating what was raw and real in Edward Dwyer’s recollection of retreating in a march with little to eat or rest: ‘We filled our haversacks with biscuits and ate them as we marched along. [...] Although I’m only a youngster I’ve seen about as much fighting as is good for any man.’ 408 In the sound drama the character Jim is certainly experiencing what Dwyer called a ‘nightmare’: ‘I can’t do it. I can’t even stand. You leave me here and look after yourself. I can’t.’ 409 Dwyer’s service papers reveal he was treated for a septic heel in the autumn of 1914, probably the result of the forty-mile march from the Aisne to the Marne. 410 Is it any wonder that in the exhaustion of that campaign soldiers may have dreamed or hallucinated about Angels giving assistance? ‘The Angels of Mons’ drama does not state categorically that supernatural forces intervened to save the BEF. The play presents the idea that the two fictional characters Jim and Tommy thought they had seen the Angels and that they were real to them. There is no reference whatsoever to Arthur Machen’s bowmen of Agincourt. There is therefore absolutely no reference to ghosts. The soldiers’ imaginations are manifesting a vision of Christian iconography and faith; drawn from the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.

The B Side ‘A Soldier’s Wedding.’

The other side of Regal’s ‘The Angels of Mons’ dramatizes the homecoming of a soldier during a wedding. The plot and production is somewhat unconvincing in places. An unnamed woman actress is performing the role of a very small child, but needing to perform with an adult voice and thereby sounding like a mature and grown woman.

Granddaughter: Yes sir. William Dalton V.C. He used to be in the Squire’s Regiment.

Father: William Dalton V.C.? Thirtieth of the line?

Grandfather: Eh? What’s that he says? William Dalton can’t see twenty in the line?

Granddaughter: No. Thirtieth of the line.

408 Audio tracks 66 & 67.
409 Audio track 53.
Grandfather: Oh that’s alright.

Father: That’s my name! And I’m also William Dalton V.C. Thirtieth of the line.

Grandad’s my father and you’re my little daughter. And I’ve come home to see my captain married and I’ve found you here.

*Wild cheering. Sound of Wedding sounds.*

Grandfather: I’ve known it! I’ve known it! (unclear) I’ve seen him! God Bless him my William!

Why William come home!

*Wedding march music and church bells fade out.*

The mythology here is that she and her grandfather have been separated from respective father and son so long they are unable to recognize him when he returns in uniform for his Captain’s wedding after service overseas. It could be argued that the imaginative vista here is somewhat pessimistic given the fact that in 1915 the war is only one year in passing. However, given the optimism widely expressed of the war being over by the Christmas of 1914, the development of a subsequent static trench front from the Channel to Switzerland could have understandably suggested that the country had to come to terms with a long struggle.

**The cultural and social context of phonograph listening**

Martland asserts that by the beginning of the Great War cheap gramophones and records ‘were an essential part of domestic leisure activity, especially in the homes of the skilled and semi-skilled working classes.’ Phonograph and gramophone consumption was therefore no longer the preserve of the elite and affluent middle classes. He sees the industry as having become an ‘established feature in the growing leisure, cultural and communications revolution.’ The beginning of the First World War saw a consumer panic and sudden drop in the sales of luxury goods, but the British record companies responded with war record supplements and the marketing of patriotic records. This was

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411 Audio track 53.
412 Martland, p.117.
413 Ibid.
certainly an initiative of Louis Sterling, the European manager of the Columbia Phonograph Company. This initiative was widely imitated by the other competing companies. 414 Sales rapidly recovered after 1914 and the expansion of consumption through the conflict was substantial for most of the British companies. For example, Winner Records peaked with sales of 2,100,000 in 1917 compared with less than a million in 1914. 415

_Talking Machine News_ speculated that the demand for domestic leisure entertainment was driven by a social trend for people to retreat into their own homes rather than visit music halls and cinemas. It is also true that the standard of living for the working-class population was rising. In addition, as Martland observes: ‘the largest single market for records and gramophones were the British armies fighting in France, Flanders and elsewhere.’ 416 The BBC and Radio Normandie broadcaster Christopher Stone recalled the significance of the Decca portable gramophone machine at the Front Line: ‘The Decca arrived with half-a-dozen records while the battalion was in reserve billets at Bouzincourt, near Albert, in January 1917, and from that moment life in the headquarters mess was altered.’ 417

Further evidence that gramophone listening was a source of entertainment on the Western Front and other global theatres was provided in the memoirs of war correspondent Sir Philip Gibbs. He recollected discovering an officer listening to opera in the ruins of a city in Northern France and compared it to hearing a lark’s song at dawn in Pompeii when the lava had cooled: ‘Suddenly there was the sound of a voice singing loud and clear with birdlike trills, as triumphant as a lark’s song to the dawn. It was a woman’s voice singing behind the shutters of a shelled city! Some English officer was there with his gramophone.’ 418

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414 Martland, p. 207.
416 Martland, p.222.
417 Martland, p. 224.
Fred Gaisberg of the London Gramophone Company reflected in 1946 that during the war ‘the cheap, portable machine became all the rage and proved a boon to the soldiers, as it broke the monotony of their routine existence in the dug-out. Popular patriotic songs were recorded and distributed in thousands; the gramophone was encouraged by the military authorities of both sides, who looked upon it as a vital necessity.’ Gaisberg said soldiers returned home with the vast quantities of these cheap machines and so ‘paved the way for a wonderful post-war boom.’

Academics in cultural and media studies have theorized about the significance of phonograph listening and culture, and their studies do include some textual and contextual analysis of the scripts and sounds produced. Examples of the genre include Jonathan Sterne’s The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction and Kate Lacey’s Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age published in 2005 and 2013 respectively.

Sterne briefly engages with a few early accounts of recording for the phonograph and entries on descriptive records such as from a 1904 Columbia catalogue offering ‘Capture of the Forts at Port Arthur (a scene from one of the Russian forts, with cannonading, and shriek of shells. The Russian Band is heard playing the National Anthem. The Japanese approach, headed by their band playing their National Air, and take possession of the forts, amid loud cries of ‘Banzai.’)’ He recognizes that ‘descriptive specialities were the predecessor of more enduring audio arts, such as Foley effects in film and the use of sound effects in radio drama.’ This certainly touches on what had been achieved in the pre-radio age. His study theorizes the present media world through an investigation of the past: ‘Sound leaves its traces, and our interest in those traces is a fact of modern life. The call to turn our

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419 Gaisberg, p. 76.
420 Gaisberg, p. 77.
422 Sterne, p.244.
423 Sterne, p.245.
attention to a continuously constructed audible past is part of the present.’ 424 He argues that ‘The Audible Past is a story about how that power came to be.’ 425

Lacey is similarly strong on theorizing the present by drawing on secondary sources concerning phonograph listening. When investigating what phonograph listening meant to its contemporary audience, she argues: ‘not only do the recordings sound dim and “imperfect” to contemporary listeners, the localized and partisan decisions about what and who to record are also more plainly evident in hindsight, belonging to a particular moment in gender, race, and other social relations, bound up with particular concerns about status, authority and propriety, and expressions of particular modes of address and entertainment that disturb modern sensibilities and expectations.’ 426 Again, this is a good example of the present judging the past.

Such writing appears to be analyzing an imagined world of constructed memory in order to comment on, or seek to explain the present media world. This may account for the fashion of engaging with Jacques Derrida’s idea of hauntology set out his 1993 text Specters of Marx. 427 He discusses a tendency for present day society to rely and exist only in relation to the ghosts of the past: ‘…this element itself is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes […] an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets…’ 428 In some respects the 1996 Guardian feature article on the phonograph recording of the real witness of the retreat from Mons, Edward Dwyer, hauntologizes him when it speaks of his leaving ‘a rare memorial’, and concludes ‘And there it all lies: the story of just one of the 750,000 British men of the first world war who never came home. Alone among them though, this one left a recording of his voice and so a little bit of him still lives.’ 429 The feature writer, Stephen Bates, had been particularly impressed, or should I say ‘haunted’ by Dwyer’s singing of

424 Sterne, p.351.
425 Ibid.
426 Lacey, p. 91.
‘Hello, Hello, Here We Are Again’: ‘Then, with a final whoop, the voice died away, the final hellos hanging mournfully in the air as if calling out from the grave.’ It would seem Bates found the truth about Edward Dwyer’s fate ‘almost unbearably poignant’, because he would learn that the young soldier would return to the front after collecting his V.C. and undertaking his recruiting duties, only to be shot dead in action during the Battle of the Somme on September 3rd 1916.

**The relevance of Spiritualism**

Sound and spiritualism were cultural and intellectual preoccupations during this period and had scientific legitimacy. However, to what extent did the expression of spiritualism in sound serve a propagandist objective? When John Durham Peters in *Speaking Into The Air* referred to Sir Oliver Lodge’s 1916 publication *Raymond, or Life and Death, with Examples of the Evidence of Survival of Memory and Affection after Death,* this is evidence of how the war claimed the lives of nearly one million people and the catastrophic rippling out of family grief in British society would place much greater imaginative and emotional significance in the present voices of past beings declared dead. Public interest and reflection on myth, sound, ghosts and spiritualism can be appreciated with the popularity and impact of a phonograph reproduction of the poet Robert Browning’s voice in May 1915, some 26 years after he had recorded it in the year of his death.

Lacey places great store on a *Times* newspaper advertisement for the Gramophone company release in 1910 of ‘Tolstoy’s Last Message.’ This was a gramophone genre of celebrity voices that would continue to be marketed as the public interest preservation of famous people who had died. The *Times* would later report in August 1925 a collaboration between the BBC and the London Gramophone Company to produce a programme of ‘speeches, vocal and instrumental music, and recitations by distinguished persons now dead to be broadcast from old gramophone records. [...]’

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430 Ibid.
431 Ibid.
434 Lacey, p. 58.
in the series will be made from a gramophone record made by Tennyson.’  

A spiritualist reading of the idea that the replaying of a dead person’s voice is in some way ghostly is a cultural backdrop to a time of immense social grieving. It is not in itself a tool of propaganda.

The issue of sound recording, playback, ghosts and spiritualism is therefore very much in the background to ‘The Angels of Mons’ phenomenon. It is categorically stated in the public debate that Arthur Machen had about it. His fabrication through fiction of the ghosts of the historical Bowmen of Agincourt has informed the imaginative myth of divine Christian Angels saving British soldiers in the role of ghostly munitions of either the mind or materialized battlefield weaponry.  

Christian spiritualism in symbolizing the idea that God is on the side of Great Britain and her allies is therefore deployed for propagandist purposes. It is useful to investigate the direct or indirect links between spiritualism and this specific sound media production and in doing so it would be right to acknowledge at the very least an indirect link.

It would also be useful to respect the considerable body of literature exploring the background of spiritualism and psychical research in England through the late part of the 19th century and leading up to the Great War. Janet Oppenheim in The Other World proved that there was public fascination with spiritualism as a surrogate religion or science of the future. Alex Owen in The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England (2003) and The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern (2007) has effectively investigated the paradox of metaphysical quests and occult experimentation during the dawn of modernism. Marlene Tromp has also investigated the rise of spiritualism and how it undermined traditional female roles and the rhetoric of imperialism in Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism.

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Jeffrey Sconce in *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* has successfully argued that at this time there was a publicly imagined second world. This existed in the spaces between the sender and the receiver of new media communication. The phonograph was new media. The ability of sound recording technology to preserve the sound of the voices of the dead was indeed a novelty. Sconce defines those spaces that transport and harbour electricity, impulses, waves and data as ‘sovereign worlds’ A considerable amount of scholarship has been generated that investigates the connections between late Victorian fiction, the representation of ghosts, disembodied voices, hearing, and sound reproductive technology. This includes John M. Picker’s *Victorian Soundscapes* that would be quoted in Melissa Kendall McLeod’s dissertation on ‘Sound of Terror: Hearing Ghosts in Victorian Fiction’ (2007). She quotes Picker’s observation that the phonograph became ‘the repository for voices from all time’ and links this with Charles Babbage’s assertion that ‘the essence of these voices survives their material aurality.’

I think there is a valid argument that the manifestation of the symbols of the Christian miracle in ‘The Angels of Mons’ was a sovereign world separate from the reality that Sergeant Edward Dwyer was talking about. Between the middle of the 19th century and through to the end of the First World War, the private and public imagination was coming to terms with a preservation of an imitation of an individual being after death. This involved photography, phonography, and filmography. Of course, there is a difference between experiencing a Christian religious vision, perhaps through hallucinatory exhaustion, and seeing and believing in the ghosts of Henry the Fifth’s archers at Agincourt being retrieved from the medieval battlefield of 1415 to sort out the modern industrial charnel house of artillery and machine-gun in 1914.

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440 Sconce, p.9.  
442 McLeod, p.79.  
Some historians, such as Jay Winter, appear to counsel caution in too readily assigning media texts a cultural significance in being the expression of socio-psychological enthusiasm for spiritualism. Winter states that the purpose of *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history* was ‘to go beyond the so-called modernist/traditionalist divide to a more sophisticated appreciation of the way Europeans imagined the war and its terrible consequences. I do so by concentrating primarily on aspects of one particular theme in the cultural history of the war: the theme of mourning and its private and public expression.’ 444 Winter devotes an entire chapter to the subject of ‘Spiritualism and the ‘Lost Generation’’, and a section of analysis ‘Legends divine and demonic’ discusses ‘the most celebrated of these tales […] the appearance of angelic figures over British soldiers at Mons.’ 445 He observes that the ‘emotional mood of the first months of the war created the perfect atmosphere for such eschatological images, which were incorporated into sermons and religious publications in 1915.’ 446 Winter concludes that ‘the appeal of spiritualism, alongside many other traditional motifs, was related directly to the universality of bereavement in the Europe of the Great War and its aftermath.’ 447

Winter also discusses the dramatic use of ghosts in Abel Gance’s *J’Accuse*, filmed in the last years of the Great War (1917–1919):

…sequence of the dead rising from their graves is one of the great scenes of the early cinema. Its force is made even more poignant when we realize that most of the men we see on the screen were actual French soldiers lent to Gance by the French army to play in this film. […] Gance himself noted that some of those playing the dead in his film soon became the dead. Representation and reality had become one. 448

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445 Winter, p.67.
446 Winter, p. 68.
447 Winter, p. 77.
448 Winter, p. 15.
Gance’s first edit in 1919 had the ghosts of fallen soldiers haunting the lives of their communities to remind them of the sacrifice they had made and a later edit of 1937 appears to transform their purpose into an anti-war theme: ‘In effect, Diaz rises from the dead to be their spokesman, their emissary to those who don’t know what war is.’

*J’Accuse* has attracted considerable critical attention and a recent DVD booklet contains an essay by Leslie K. Hankins ‘Abel Gance’s J’Accuse and Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway: Re-reading a Modernist Novel by the Light of the Silver Screen.’ In this article Hankins articulates modernist links between Woolf’s seminal novel and the creative communication of the Great War ghosts and supernatural phenomena in Gance’s media text. Hankins acknowledges that it is impossible to be certain that Virginia Woolf saw *J’Accuse* when it reached London in 1920. However, it is possible to speculate that Woolf had been exposed or had access to the discussion about the film along with the publication of Abel Gance’s book *J’Accuse: Après le Film* in 1922. As Hankins observes: ‘Abel Gance and Virginia Woolf were both experimental artists; Gance worked with the new medium of cinema, using visual poetry, superimposition, cross-cutting and other innovations in film, as Woolf invented narrative designs and lyrical language to map consciousness in new ways in writing.’

It is, therefore, perfectly valid to explore whether the use of the supernatural presence of Angels in the phonograph version of ‘The Angels of Mons’ links spiritualism with modernism. There is an argument to be made that it does. The ghosts in the 1915 audio-drama represent supernatural representations of deist intervention in a shocking and growing scale of military conflict and casualty. This inevitably accelerated and widened the private and public experience of mourning at a time when social communication was being accentuated and experienced by modern mechanical media. The supernatural intervention of Christian Angels does not occur in any previously produced phonograph ‘Descriptive Sketch’, that dramatizes an actual battle of the contemporary age. Of course, the

\[449\] Winter, p. 17.
\[451\] Ibid.
phonograph does not cross-cut narrative and reinvent consciousness as an expression in dramatic writing. However, it does experiment with the new medium of sound recording and push the boundaries of what can be achieved in foreground and background performance in front of a mechanically powered horn recording device. In addition, a modern medium of sonic reproduction attempts to blend a representation of a real event with a performance of the Christian supernatural.

Modernism is now a more widely drawn academic doctrine that does not confine itself to an elitist and avant-garde sensibility that lays waste to all the traditions, cultural beliefs and values of ‘pre-modernism’. A London County Council quantity surveyor invalided from the front line through dysentery such as Major Alfred Edward Rees, and phonograph recording pioneer from New York City with a dodgy penchant for peddling sonic pornography such as Russell Hunting are entitled to be identified as contributing to modernist expression in sound communication. This is also the case with Wilvir and the unknown performers in Regal’s 1915 recording of ‘The Angels of Mons’. It should be acceptable to argue that modernist and traditional motifs are mixed and paralleled in a negotiation of past, present and future techniques of storytelling.

The relevance of Modernism

The presence of ghosts and myths of the past in juxtaposition with the reality of the present is the modernist literary style present in T.S. Eliot’s poem The Waste Land and Virginia Woolf’s novel Mrs. Dalloway. Sound production in ‘The Angels of Mons’ and other descriptive sketches of the Great War is reproducing the modern industrialized sonic environment of mechanized war. This is part of a propagandist operation that is greater in scale and magnitude than any military conflict of the past. The process of persuasion in phonographs mixed fiction and non-fiction and used a new medium of audio drama to conjure a variety of illusions. This includes the myth of the Angels of Mons.

Tanya Dalziell in her article “‘Why then grieve?’: Virginia Woolf’s Mournful Music” argues that in addition to sound and noise forming part of the tapestry of her modernist prose, there is also ‘a

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453 Woolf, Virginia, Mrs Dalloway, (New York: Knopf, 1992)
preoccupation with loss, death, and grieving," and this is often expressed through the references to mournful music. Christine Froula in ‘Mrs Dalloway’s Postwar Elegy: Women, War and the Art of Mourning’ has also drawn a modernist significance in the elegiac style of Virginia Woolf’s writing after all the traumas of the Great War and huge loss of life through Spanish Influenza illness. Tammy Clewell in ‘Consolation Refused: Virginia Woolf, The Great War, and Modernist Mourning’ concludes:

> In her fiction on war and mourning, Woolf dramatizes the endurance of grief to demonstrate that emotional bonds to the lost other have not been severed, that wounds have not healed. In similar fashion, her texts refuse to fully digest and be done with the past. Only by preserving the intractable otherness of the lost other and of the past, only by adapting art to an articulation of ‘invisible presences,’ can the possibility for an anticonsolatory practice of mourning be fully realized.

This impressive modernist scholarship places the mythologizing of the Angels of Mons as ghosts or supernatural ideas in the overall context of a growing mood of mourning. The phonographs fictionalize stories, ideas and emotional sounds that are consoling and are sometimes composed and orchestrated in terms of music. Those descriptive records produced that recreated church services and funerals at the front can be seen as a process of elegiac sound consolation rather than entertainment. ‘Have You News Of My Boy, Jack?’ released in 1917 combines a lament by the poet Rudyard Kipling with elegiac music that has the effect of memorializing him. Consequently, it can be argued that phonograph dramas during the Great War began to take on the modernist turn of providing an aural tapestry of remembrance and grieving.

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457 Audio track 37.
The First World War of 1914–1918 was the first mass media war. As the Great War became industrialized and ‘modernist’, the media propaganda dimension or ‘battle by communication’ harnessed the cutting-edge technology of sound play between four to eight years before the BBC began broadcasting radio plays. The scale of destruction seen in No Man’s Land in the trenches of France was matched by the modern and technological power of media. I argue that the bands of performers/artists responsible, who are likely to have included soldiers with experience of active service, pioneered audio drama techniques of performance and sound design in an attempt to boost morale and support Lord Kitchener’s command: ‘Your Country Needs You’.

However, the use of the critical concepts modernism and modernity is an intellectually contested debate substantially engaged in by the disciplines of English literature studies and media arts. Modernism in literature, particularly critical observations about the audiogenic, or radiophonic in poetry prose, and ‘the auditory imagination,’ have been heavily referenced to T.S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (1922), James Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), and Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway (1925). There has been some analysis on the significance and influence of modernists and futurists in relation to sound and noise utterance. However, the literary phonetics of Filippo Marinetti’s poem ‘Zang Tumb Tumb Tumb Tuuumb Tuuuum Tuuuum Tuuuum’ (1914) to which should be added Luigi Russolo’s 1913 The Art of Noises and the subsequent Futurist Radio Manifesto by Marinetti and Pino Masnata in 1933, T.S. Eliot’s play Sweeney Agonistes: Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama (1926) and Ezra Pound’s radio operas broadcast by the BBC between 1931 and 1933 (2002) are not present in the surviving texts identified in this research. As with spiritualism they are background and peripheral.

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459 Joyce, James, Ulysses (New York: Modern Library, 1922, 1992)
460 Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, Zang tumb tuuuum: Adrianopoli ottobre 1912: parole in libertà (Milano: Ed. futuriste di Poesia, 1914)
463 Eliot, Thomas, Stearns, Sweeney Agonistes: fragments of an Aristophanic melodrama (London: Faber & Faber, 1932)
John M. Picker devotes a chapter of his monograph *Victorian Soundscapes* to the connection between the recorded voice as a Victorian aura to the modernist echo in literature: ‘…the critical focus on the widespread modernist response to voice-recording machines and other communications technologies has often obscured the fact that the phonograph was first and significantly a Victorian invention.’ He recognizes that references to phonograph paraphernalia are present in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, and ‘most memorably perhaps in Virginia Woolf’s *Between The Acts* (1941) where the machine presents the disembodied nameless voice that speaks to and for the war-shattered generations of Woolf’s characters.’ Picker argues there is a ‘familiar modernist trope’ at work.

‘The Angels of Mons’ and other audio drama texts imagined and represented the war and this was a development of modern media for its time. The phonograph mini-dramas were not being produced outside a modernist context. They were the foundation stones for what was to follow with audio and radio drama. An iconoclastic attack against prevalent aesthetic traditions would happen on the radio during the 1920s, when modernism was more clearly and self-consciously stated and could be experimented within the BBC—a media institution that had cultural status, power and hierarchy.

The cultural links between BBC radio, sound drama and modernism can be tangibly explored through textual and contextual analysis and have already led to considerable academic attention from what might be considered the first sociological study of radio by Hilda Matheson in *Broadcasting* (1933), herself an associate of ‘the Bloomsbury set,’ to more recent attention in Cardiff and Scannell’s *A Social History of Broadcasting: 1922–1939—Serving the Nation v. 1*, (1991), Avery’s *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics, and the BBC, 1922–1938*, (2006), Cohen, Coyle and Lewty’s *Broadcasting Modernism*, (2009) and journal articles such as Frattarola’s ‘The Modernist “Microphone Play”: Listening in the dark to the BBC.’ (2009) and Hendy’s ‘Painting with sound: The Kaleidoscopic World of Lance Sieveking, a British Radio Modernist.’ (2012). The development of early BBC radio

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466 Ibid.
467 Ibid.
drama during the 1920s, in the context of modernism, has also received authoritative academic analysis in the research of Alan Beck (2000) and Christina S.L. Pepler (1988) and Roger Wood (2008). These texts and how they contextualise the radio and modernism debate have already been discussed in Chapter One.

The focus of aesthetic production in sound during the Great War was as much orientated to the mechanical recording horn as it was to the electrical microphone at the BBC during the 1920s and 30s. Frattarola can assert on the basis of her study of the plays of Tyrone Guthrie, Val Gielgud, Lawrence du Garde Peach, D.G. Bridson and Louis MacNeice that ‘...the technology of the radio presented a model for modernist writers, showing them how noises, voices, and music could be juxtaposed in new ways and exposing them to new forms, while modernist writers influenced how radio programs were shaped and what aesthetic possibilities were available to the writer of radio drama.’ 468 Hendy can declare on the basis of studying Lance Sieveking’s The Stuff of Radio (published in 1934), his papers at the Lilly Library, Indiana University Bloomington, a wide portfolio of published prose, poetry and illustration, and a focus on a 90-minute auteured montage feature broadcast by the BBC in 1928: ‘The ‘synthesis’ of forms and sounds that lay at the heart of The Kaleidoscope, drawing as it did on both his own life and the very latest ideas in art and cinema, was symbolic of Sieveking’s larger achievement. It was vivid proof that his chosen medium, radio, and his chosen institution, the BBC, were far from being the closed and insular worlds that some assumed. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, largely through Sieveking’s efforts, both were woven a little more closely into the rich fabric of British modernist culture.’ 469

Margaret Fisher’s study of Ezra Pound’s BBC experiments between 1931–1933 would lead to the realization that ‘...between the first experiments and the early years of institutional broadcasting, the collective imagination was exposed to a surrealist world of noise fragments, a chansonnier of angels singing and reading on the air. Pound’s radio dramas would resuscitate some of the flavor of the thirteenth-

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and fourteenth-century chansonnier, a compilation of poems, with biographies and anecdotes related to the poets.’

‘The Angels of Mons’ 1915 phonograph represented reality and myth in a modern medium on the subject of modern war, in a cultural context of ‘modernism’ being discussed and debated. Its intrinsic qualities bear up well to the critical values defined as qualitative through published radio drama criticism of the 1920s and 1930s. There is more to modernism than poets, artists, and writers who were educated at Oxford and Cambridge and hung out with the Bloomsbury group. ‘The Angels of Mons’ is dramatic storytelling engaging with present realism and past mythology. In this case, it is dramatizing the retreat of the BEF from Mons, and this was a reality present in the minds of 1915 British society as a catastrophic event with heavy casualties that had occurred less than a year before the release of the record. There is also the presence of the Christian myth or miracle of angels imagined by two soldiers at least intervening in the materialist present by literary juxtaposition, and performed dramatically in the new modernist medium of recording and distributed sound technology- the phonograph. There is, therefore, a valid argument that this production is at least proto-modernist and could be defined as modernist expression. It was pioneering and an originating form of what would later become known as the broadcast ‘microphone play’.

**Are the sound drama phonographs examples of ‘modernist’ propaganda’?**

The sound phonograph clearly had a role as a new medium of propagandist sound entertainment and communication. As illustrated propaganda travelled beyond traditional photographs to ‘Lantern slides, picture postcards, cigarette cards […] posters […] maps and diagrams, pictures, cartoons and drawings,’ so sound messaging was no longer confined to an orchestral score or concert hall.

The scale of the Great War was accompanied by a similar scale of media publication. The media was as intense as the military conflict itself: ‘ashtrays in the shape of British tanks, gramophone recordings of political speeches and popular songs such as ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’, and a wide range of

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470 Fisher, p.42.
ephemera.’ The 78 rpm discs would be spun on turntables at the front and combined with live rhetoric in siren calls ‘relayed across No Man’s Land with musical interludes.’ The imaginative absurdity of such stunts in some ways seems like a burlesque disc-jockeying of hate hypnotism that would not be effectively represented until the surreal theatricality of Richard Attenborough’s film of ‘Oh What A Lovely War’ in 1969. This film was derived from a Theatre Workshop musical inspired by Charles Chilton’s dramatized 1961 BBC radio feature ‘The Long Long Trail’. This was itself derived and inspired by the creative tension between phonograph popular musical culture of the Great War and the soldiers’ morphing of the lyrics to construct their own ironic messages.

Great War propaganda established a political strategy in creatively disconnecting language and communication from truth, reality and rational meaning. Lying is surely the ultimate form of counter-realism and false-consciousness. What sound and propaganda have in common is the treatment and exploitation of human emotion. Montage is a more emotional form of communication and can deploy creative, disruptive and sometimes irrational manipulation of the narrative of pre-existing media forms. It is a modernist form of propaganda. Yet there is no evidence in sound phonographs published before 1918 of such modernist style collages of sound being made for propagandist purposes. ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ is in fact sound montage and modernist in style. It expresses an emotional soundscape. It generates an atmosphere of sentimental patriotism. The emotion of the goodbyes at the quayside followed by the crossfading of steamship whistle and the play of the national anthem is certainly propagandist in so far as it evokes patriotism.

The more explicit word-based descriptive sketches certainly set out to combine the emotional medium of sound with texts that demonized the Hun as spies and brutes on the war front, and the coward and slacker in civilian clothes on the Home Front. Heroism, gallantry and valour by ‘our boys’

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472 Sanders and Taylor, p.131.
473 Sanders and Taylor, p.135.
is also the essential message of the vast majority of the sound dramas; horror, gore, and the demonic nightmare of actual fighting minimized, trivialized or kept silent. Even the 1918 recording by Will Gaisberg of ‘Gas Shells Bombardment’ sounds like an assemblage of polite commands from soldiers at a village military tattoo using pop guns and fireworks rather than real artillery and poison gas.

**Distinguishing between modernist and non-modernist phonograph dramas**

This academic project is framed with the object of identifying modernist audio drama. There is however, no identifiable manifesto setting out the necessary criteria for a confirmation of modernism in an audio or radio text. But a range of values has been established as a result of the discussion so far. It can be argued that a sound play needs to express a high degree of creative aesthetic within its own medium and it needs to be communicating something new. There has to be an advanced practice, thinking, or reaction from the audience. It could be transformative; in other words, it changes the norm. It may be the case that the sound text is part of a wider frame of communication in new technology, but its role in that would need some additional modernist factors. The authors, producers and performers could be established and recognized modernist artists or practitioners in another field. Any evidence of self-identification or association with the contemporary perception and participation in modernist activity could be a factor. A significant pattern of disruption and changing normative feelings and values as a result of the creation and publishing of the sound text can be taken into account.

The sound text should also have characteristics that are identifiable as progressive, high quality, innovative and artistically successful according to any near contemporary book or manifesto on the production and creation of sound drama such as Gordon Lea’s *The Way To Write Radio Drama* (1926) and Lance Sieveking’s *The Stuff of Radio* (1934). Artistic initiative, enterprise and origination whether in constructed categories of high, popular or even low ‘vernacular’ culture should be recognized. To some extent consideration of the socio-anthropological concept of the ‘liminal’ would be relevant. There is merit in the analytical approach being flexible, but at the same time if it is too open-ended the application of the terms modernist and modernism risk becoming vague to the point of meaninglessness.
In the foregoing audio drama texts from ‘The Wreck of the Troopship’ (1908) to the other First World War descriptive sketches made between 1914 and 1917, the question being asked in the circumstances of the cultural and socio-economic context of the time is which of these recordings stands out as a potential contributor to modernism in audio drama? It is argued that ‘The Wreck of a Troopship’ (1908) and the two ‘On Active Service’ episodes ‘Leaving For the Front’ and ‘In The Trenches’ are the strongest candidates for the modernist description and definition. The others are not unique stories, have been replicated by other record companies and do not say anything unusual and hugely thought-provoking. They do not have the capacity to significantly change feeling and opinion. They are not unusual for their time and genre. They are not hugely sophisticated in using the aesthetics and creative potential of their medium. ‘The Wreck of a Troopship’ has an emotional intensity in performance and is aesthetically successful given the age of production. The story is a legend in maritime morality and to some extent mythological in British and Scottish culture. There is an imaginatively evocative creation of sound story telling deploying action in a self-contained format recommended by Gordon Lea for BBC radio drama production in 1926. The playful medley of sound registers with Lance Sieveking’s recognition of what makes the stuff of radio so unique in 1934. The ‘On Active Service’ episodes are the first two episodes of what appears to be the earliest surviving sound drama series produced by Columbia Records in 1917. There is a continuing characterization across all six parts with self-contained plots for each side of the phonograph discs. The production and performance values are high for their time and context.

“The Wreck of a Troopship” 476

One sided 78 rpm disc published by Zonophone Records.

English. Descriptive.

X 41027. Supplied by Campbell and Co, 116 Trongate, 42 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

3 minutes 14 seconds.

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476 Audio track 72.
A narrative of a Scottish Regiment troopship being sunk. This is a mixture of drama, narrative and singing with sound effects. Reference is made to “Officers and men of the 74th Highlanders.”

Transcript.

FX Crashes, sirens. Sound effects (theatrical) throughout.

Distant Voice: Bugler! Sound the Fall In!

Closer: Bugler! Sound the Fall in!

_Bugler sounding with bugle._

Voice (Scottish accent): Attention. Officers and men of the 74th Highlanders in a few minutes the ship will sink beneath the waves and we who are men and soldiers of the King will be no more. We have faced death together before on many a well fought field without shrinking. And as our enemy now is not man, but God’s elements, it beholds us to meet the death that now awaits us with the same indomitable courage as yore.

Crowd of soldiers: Shouting approval.

Voice: Spoken like gallant soldiers and Scottish gentlemen. Sergeant? You sobbing?

Sergeant: It’s no for mysell I am thinking but for me fair wife and wee bairns I’ve left behind. May God protect them pray (unclear) and one.

Voice: We all say Amen to that prayer Sergeant MacDonald. Let us now sing a verse of the old hundred!

Together: ‘All people that on earth do dwell,

sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;

come ye before him and rejoice’

(Text: Attributed to William Kethe, 1561.

Music: Attributed to Louis Bourgeois, 1551.)

Voice: Now my brave comrades. In a few more seconds we will be standing before the great judgement seat. But we will go there in marching order. Officers and men of the 74th I call for three cheers for his greatest majesty the King! Hip, Hip

All: Hooray!

Voice: Hip, hip, hip!

All: Hooray!

Voice: Hip, hip, hip!
All: Hooray!


*FX: Crack*

Voice: Shoulders Arms!

*FX Crack*

Voice: Present Arms!

*Band strikes up “Rule Britannia” with continuing theatrical storm sound effects. After music ends crescendo of storm effects. Then fade out.*

“On Active Service” 477

**Part 1 “Leaving for the Front” 3 minutes 36 seconds.**

Two sided 78 rpm flat published by Columbia Records, 1917.

(Major A. E. Rees) Descriptive War Sketch

(69038) 2796 Made in England.

Part 2 “In the Trenches” 3 minutes 28 seconds.

Columbia Gramophone Company Ltd.

Part 1 dramatises a drill and parade, establishes the characterization of Tippy and Ginger who listen to a speech by a general and then say goodbye to mother at the embarkation station.

Part 2 dramatises battle on the Western Front and an heroic rescue under fire.

Transcript:

Part 1. “Leaving for the Front”

*Bugler and sound of soldiers mustering*

Tippy: (singing) For me and my mother dear for right to be queen of the maids!

Soldiers: Laughing.

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477 Audio tracks 35 & 36.
Ginger: Silly Tippy! Making that row on parade. You’ll get us shoved in the guardroom. Well. We’re off today to do our bit.

Tippy: Just (unclear reply). Say Ginger! Let’s stick together you and me!

Ginger: That’s a bargain. Tippy old man. You know- something doing.

Sergeant Major: Attention! And other orders.

One, two, three. Officers fall in! Fix bayonets! Slope Arms!

Tippy: See there, Ginger. Look. There’s a general.

Sergeant Major: General salute! Present arms!

Marching music and more drill orders.

Sergeant Major: Stand at ease!

Ginger: The general’s a good old sort. Went with the boys all through Mons and Wipers (Ypres) He’s going to make a speech.

General: Officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the second battalion. Your turn has come. You are going out now to take your places shoulder to shoulder with the finest breed of men the old country has produced. There. I am not going to make a long speech.

Tippy: Hooray!

Ginger: Shut up, you fool! Do you want to get put back?

Sergeant Major: Silence there!

Another voice: Silence!

General: Alright me lads. I understand. Just let me say this. You are going out with the full knowledge that victory, grand glorious victory, is within our reach. Goodbye and good luck me lads. And remember, it’s straight ahead to victory.

Sergeant Major: Three cheers for the general. Hip, hip,

All soldiers: Hooray!

Sergeant Major: Hip, Hip,

All soldiers: Hooray! Hooray!

Tippy: That’s the stuff to give’em!

Sergeant Major: Battalion. Attention!

Fix bayonets! More drill orders.

Number one. March to the right in fours.
More drill orders

Quick March!

Number one platoon. Left reel. Quick March!

*Marching Music and drill*

Sergeant Major: Left in time!

Tippy: Ere! Look at old Ginger playing (unclear) to the girls! What did your (unclear) say eh!

Ginger: What my Alice? Oh she’s alright. I can trust her.

Tippy: But it don’t mean she can trust you.

General laughter from other soldiers.

Sergeant Major: Hello boys. Here’s the station.

Battalion halt!

Right turn!

*Whistle. Music stops.*

Tippy: Come on Ginger. Jump in! Hello. Who’s this old lady Ginger eh?

Ginger: Mother! Fancy you coming all this way.

Mother: My boy! I thought I must come to see you safely off. Goodbye and God Bless you my boy.


*Sound of stream train leaving station and the band striking up the tune of ‘Auld Lang Syne.’ Soldiers also shouting goodbye to people on the station platform.*

**Part 2. ‘In the Trenches.’**

*Sound of battle. Artillery. Machine guns, mortar, rifle fire.*

Tippy: That’s the stuff to give’em. You can’t think what day it is with that bleedin’ row going on. Ere Ginger?

Ginger: Oh Allo, Allo, Allo. What’s up Tippy?

Tippy: What day is it today?

Ginger: Here that boys? Tippy’s forgotten what day it is. Why Wednesday of course.
Sergeant Major (Scots): No it’s not. It’s Tuesday. Yesterday was called Meat. And today’s a meatless day. Is it no boys?

General laughter from all soldiers.

Tippy: Now then. Shut yer head yer fathead. Here comes a whiz bang along. The blinking boshes have woke up.

Ginger: I’ll bet yer two bob to one it’s a dud.

General laughter.

Tippy: Righto. Now then.

_Long whiz bang sound._

Tippy: You’ve won Ginger. It’s worth the money. You might not have wanted the two bob if it hadn’t had been a dud!

General laughter.

Ginger: What’s that you’re reading Tippy? Let’s have a look. Hallo boys! Tippy’s learning French. Give us a few choice bits of native Tippy!

Tippy: Oui, Oui!

That’s yes, yes.

Bon jour Madmoiselly. That’s good morning miss!

Ginger: Here’s old Tippy learning to say yes and good morning to the French girls. Bad lad, Tippy!

Tippy: Non Compreney. That’s I don’t understand.

Ginger: Not half you don’t.

Tippy: Na..Napoo to you!

General laughter.

Ginger: Hello. What’s that? Here sergeant. Have a look through this periscope. There’s something lying out there in no man’s land.

Sergeant Major: Yes. It’s one of our boys wounded. Where are you off to Tippy? Come back you fool. Hold on! He’s over the top. Hey come back yer fool.

Ginger: Bravo Tippy, my boy! I’m covering yer! Go in laddie. Gently does it! They’ve spotted yer. That’s it, lie still a bit. Ah. The perishers have turned a machine gun on him.

_Sound of machine gun opening up._
Ginger: Oh, he’s down. They’ve done him in. No, no. He’s slipping forward again. Good boy. Good boy.

Sounds of encouragement from other soldiers.


*Shot fired.*

Ginger: And that.

*Shot fired.*

Ginger: Got him the dirty Hun! Come on Tippy my boy. That’s it. Let me give you a hand.

Tippy: Thanks Ginger. You pinched that sniper fine. Lumme cause I’m all of a tremble. The rotten cowardly (unclear) ain’t it?

Sergeant Major: Attention!

General: Alright. Carry on lads. I don’t want to bother you just now. I only came along to compliment this man on his fine pluck. What’s your name me lad?

Tippy: Tippy. I mean Reginald Winters sir.

General: Shake hands. I congratulate you Winters. I’ll see that your conduct is reported to the right quarter. Your gallantry deserves to be rewarded.

Ginger: Oooooh. Bloomin rain! Thanks Tippy! You’ll soon be a Mister Blinking Tippy V.C. D.C.M! I don’t know how you do it. Put me down I don’t know.

Cheers from other soldiers.

Ginger: Come on boys. For he’s a jolly good fellow, for he’s a jolly good fellow!

All the soldiers sing the song.

‘For he’s a jolly good fellow. And so say all of us!’

‘Arrival of the British Troops in France’ 478

Two-sided 78 rpm flat phonograph disc.

Regal Made in England

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478 Audio tracks 89 & 90.

Descriptive. 29160/ G684

Part 2. 3 minutes 28 seconds.

Narrative.

Side 1 provides the sounds of music, singing and banter from soldiers on the transport ship across the Channel to France.

Side 2 provides further singing, banter from soldiers and the cries of welcoming French people as the soldiers march to the waiting trains to take them to the Front.

Transcript.

Part 1.

_Foghorn. Sound of whistles, a military band and men singing until it is clear that soldiers are singing ‘Auld Lang Syne’._

How do you feel now Bill?

Oh not so bad now we are getting in the harbour.

Laughter in the background.

Shouting of ‘Viv Les Anglais, Viv Les Anglais, Hooray!’

Here we are! Now we (unclear) Make way for the early dawn!

Early dawn is nine pence. Laughter.

Men break out to sing ‘It’s a long way to Tipperary. Three cheers for the red, white and blue. Three cheers for the red, white and blue. Three cheers for the red, white and blue etc.

Are we downhearted?

No!

Shall we win?

Yes!

Break out into animated conversation.

_Loud whistle._
Aye. Shut up you chaps. Here’s the Colonel going to speak.

Right lads. (Music in the background) Before we set foot in the land of France I want to say we are now going to show the world what we are made of. We may have a tough time.

Loud cheer.

But you know as well as I do that we shall come out on top!

Loud cheer.

We will fight fair and square and never look behind. Well lads the most painful move for every one of you is a bullet in the back.

Loud laughter.

Lord Kitchener has told you what he expects of you. You are British soldiers and may be trusted like British soldiers. Now good luck to you and remember my words. Do your best.

Three cheers for the Colonel!

Hip, Hip,

Hooray!

Hip, Hip,

Hooray!

Hip, Hip,

Hooray!

Then the soldiers break out in the song ‘For he’s a Jolly Good Fellow’.

They break out in loud ‘Hoorays’. Then the bugler calls them into line.

Fall in!

Part 2.


Standby lads. Steady. Steady. All clear.

Aye, aye Captain. Lower the gangway.

Heave!

Drumbeat.

Heave!
Drumbeat.

Heave!

Drumbeat.

Make (unclear)

Men break out in the song ‘Here we are, Here we are again.

Here we are, here we are again. Hallo, Hallo, Hallo, Hallo, Hallo. Here we are, here we are again. Here we are, here we are again. Halloooooaaah, Helloooaaa, Helloooah! Laughter.

Loud whistle.

Bugle.

Battalion. Attention!

(unclear) by the right, Quick march!

Marching military music.

(unclear) Do you think they know they’re the grenadiers?

No, but if they don’t the Germans will soon find it out.

Loud laughter.

Viv les Anglais. Viv les Anglais. Hooray!, Hooray!

Look that French girl gave me this bunch of flowers. Merci Madmoisellly!

Laughter.

(unclear) Old Harry’s (unclear)

Bugler.

Bagpipes.

Here comes the bagpipes. Various Shouting.

Good old Gordon Highlanders. It won’t take us long to get to Berlin now boys!

Now what about it Harry?

I’m ready for anything old boy. I bet you anything I’ll hit the target first pop. (unclear) Five shoves a penny. Two packets of woodbines (unclear) Uncle Bill!

Laughter.

Halt!
Bugler sound.

Marching music begins.

Here’s the Irish boys!

(unclear) for old Ireland. Cheering.

Old Harry getting his side in.

(unclear) Hooligans is want of a better word to call them.

I’ll give them death and glory!

Laughter.

Hello. There’s the Gordons getting aboard the train.

Well they’ve got the same kind as we’ve got.

French voices. Whistle.

Eh! Any more passengers for Berlin?

Whistles. Band music. Steam train starting off. And the soldiers breaking out in the National Anthem and cheering.

‘Christmas in Camp with Kitchener’s Boys. 479

Two-sided 78 rpm flat phonograph disc.


Part 1 (J. P. Harrington and M. Scott.) Descriptive 29172 G 6819. 2 minutes 54 seconds.

Part 2. 2 minutes 55 seconds.

‘A royalty on this record is paid to the Prince of Wales’s Fund.’

Narrative.

Part 1 and Part 2 consists of banter, dialogue, singing by soldiers in France celebrating Christmas and appreciating their families at home. Jokes centre on the cooking of the Christmas turkey and plum duck.

479 Audio tracks 56 and 57.
Transcript.

Part 1

*Bugler*

Hi. Make way for that Turkey and lovely duck.

Lord love a duck. (unclear) mind the turkey. There’s rich.

I bet he was one of the survivors in (unclear)

Laughter.

Say. Who’s going to carve?

I think you’d better let Bill Adams.

He’s the strongest man in the Regiment. Besides he’s been a builder.

A builder? Why what’s a builder got to do with it?

Why the lad will pull the scaffolding down.

Laughter.

My conscience I say Cooky. Hello.

What’s the matter now?

Why the plum duck. Where’s the plum?

Why inside it of course.

Ah I see trying to hide them from us there I suppose.

Strikes me Cooky. You’ve been on a long distance range.

(unclear) the plums (unclear) the duck. I you’re missing it!

Laughter.

*Bugler.*

I say boys. Letters! Letters from the dear ones at home.

Cheering.

See they haven’t forgotten us on Christmas Day.

General conversation.

I say Harry old boy! I see you’ve had a letter. Oh a photograph too. Sly dog.
Yes. I’ve had a loving letter and a photograph too. All the way from dear old England.

Aye. But who’s sent them. Your lassie or your sweetheart I’ll be bound.

Yes (unclear) You’re right. From my sweetheart. The dearest, fondest, truest sweetheart that a boy ever had. My mother god bless her.

I’m into that Harry. I agree with you. We all agree don’t we boys?

General agreement.

A boy’s best friend is his mother.

Right you are again!

Yes. Your mother, Your mother! God bless them all.

General agreement.

Dear mothers of England. Your soldier sons send their fond love to you. And English boys, we all unite and sing:

*Band starts up music:*

Ah the camp fire burns, every soldier yearns,

For the dear ones faraway. God bless mother,

Fathers, sisters, brothers, at home on Christmas Day.

Hip, hip,

Hooray.

Hip, hip,

Hooray.

Hip, hip,

Hooray.

Part 2.

*Sound of church bells.*

*Band strikes up music.*

Well boys. Once more it’s Christmas Day.

Aye. Who would have (unclear)
Now I suppose we’ll be making the best of it as usual.

Hey Charlie!

Hello!

Tell us a funny story will you?

Right you are mate. Have you ever heard that story about the wooden whistle?

The wooden whistle?

The wooden whistle.

No what about it?

Why it wouldn’t whistle!

Laughter and cheers.

Ere. I’ve got another one here!

What’s that?

Ever heard the little story about the man who swallowed a pound and what’s the matter with him?

No.

Why he can’t stir?

Laughter.

Hey Jackie, Jackie. Sing us a song.

Righto!

Band starts up music

(unclear) round the campfire (unclear) on Christmas Day,

A band of British soldiers in a land so faraway.

A-longing for their loved ones in the dear old land,

To wish them Merry Christmas and take them by the hand.

All together

And the campfire burns, the soldier yearns,

For the dear ones far away,
God bless mother, fathers, sisters, brothers,
At home on Christmas Day.

General cheers.

I say Cooky. Is there a no time for the rooky yet?
I’ve got a (unclear) for a cleaning ma sporan.

Won’t be long Matey. I give you my word, it’s worth waiting for. Roast turkey and plum duck.
Oh. Lord luvy. What a mixture! Do we eat them both together?

No yer fool. Separate of course.

Here. Not so much of your fool old doughnut, or I shall give you a smack in the oven.
Hey come over Charlie. And yer can kill the cook and we’ll no eat Christmas dinner.
Oh alright then. I’ll spare his life and we’ll stuff the turkey.

And I say. Can’t somebody do something?
I’ll tell you what Charlie. You down to the cellar (unclear)
Righto. (unclear) Anything for a quiet life said the man who tipped his mother in law overboard.

General laughter.

Let her go!

Music starts up.

Men start shouting.

Charlie’s a rare dancer eh?
Aye not half. I say Sandy what do you say to having a bit of dinner now eh?
Oh aye. Alright man. Come along then. We’ll all have some.

General cheering.

The essential weakness of ‘Arrival of the British Troops in France’ and ‘Christmas in camp with Kitchener’s Boys’ is that the plots and dialogue are static, pedestrian and lacking in audiogenic action. There is hardly any effective characterization. The sound design is unambitious. The dialogue appears to be a stitching together of Music Hall sketches and jokes that have been unimaginatively transferred
into the phonograph recording studio. The original sound recording is also poor notwithstanding the age of the disc and the understandable degradation of quality through playback. The production has not been very well directed as the performers have not been placed close enough to the horns to ensure a decent threshold of clarity in the recording. Key phrases and lines are lost and very difficult to transcribe. The music is predictable and in failing to generate sympathy with dramatic characterization struggles to engage emotionally with the listener.

**Great War Phonograph dramas as part of the propagandist silo**

The Great War had been a creative propagandist silo for journalism and the arts. At least 12 national newspaper editors received knighthoods for marshalling their communication skills for mass media munitions of the mind. As Sanders and Taylor observed, Charles Masterman convened academic conferences within days of war being declared in 1914 and the first was ‘attended by a galaxy of literary figures and critics including J. M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, G.K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, John Masefield, Gilbert Murray, G.M. Trevelyan and H.G. Wells.’ The more identifiably modernist author and poet Ford Maddox Ford was in attendance and penned two pamphlets before going on to serve in the trenches in France. Masterman’s conference of writers was followed by a manifesto of fifty-two ‘well-known men of letters’ published in the correspondence column of the *Times* on 18th September 1914.

*The Times* announced on 22nd September that a further 21 named authors ‘who have interested themselves more especially in the history and progress of democratic ideas’ had sent letters and desired to ‘associate themselves with the declaration’ previously headlined ‘Britain’s Destiny and Duty […] A Righteous War.’  

The seminal author and celebrant of propaganda as public relations, Edward Bernays, would quote H.G. Wells in 1928: ‘Ideas and phrases can now be given an effectiveness greater than the

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480 Ferguson, p.214.
481 Sanders & Taylor, 39.
effectiveness of any personality and stronger than any sectional interest.’ 484 The War Propaganda Bureau at Wellington House employed the novelist Anthony Hope Hawkins as literary advisor to Masterman and A.S. Watt as literary agent.485 Ferguson observed: ‘Galsworthy and Wells both bashed out their Wellington House articles for nothing, to the alarm of their literary agent.’ 486 The dons of Oxford University’s History faculty mobilized their intellect and their overwhelming presence at Wellington House meant that the propagandist media war was also a media dons’ war. 487

Wellington House managed the authorization and accreditation of ‘war artists’ beginning with Muirhead Bone followed by his brother-in-law, the portraitist Francis Dodd and by the end of the war a cadre of nearly 90 including establishment figures such as Sir John Lavery, Sir William Orpen, C.R.W. Nevinson, Eric Kennington, and the more modernist and avant-garde Paul Nash and Wyndham Lewis.488 David Hendy has explored the creative, aesthetic and psychological convivencia resonating from Paul Nash’s friendship and collaboration with the British radio modernist Lance Sieveking. 489

The novelist John Buchan was appointed director of the Department of Information in 1917 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He had been an active propagandist previously at Wellington House and through the deployment of his publishing house, Nelson. This was symptomatic of what Niall Ferguson describes as autonomy of private media institutional leadership: ‘not produced by governmental agencies at all, but by autonomous organizations or private individuals.’ 490 Government bodies simply coordinated and this would appear to have been the structure and method of sound propaganda production by the 78 rpm recording companies such as HMV, Columbia and Regal. This was how the

485 Sanders & Taylor, pp.40-1.
486 Ferguson, p. 229.
487 Ferguson, p. 228.
488 Sanders & Taylor, 122–123.
490 Ferguson, p.226.
Dutch artist and cartoonist Louis Raemaekers had his critical depiction of German stereotypes distributed across the United States in some 2,255 newspapers by November 1917. 491

There is a consensus of First World War historians that the modern nature of propagandist mobilization in the context of a modernized war was a significant event in military, social and cultural history. Richard S. Lambert in the discussion book series on Propaganda in 1938 wrote: ‘In Britain, above all, propaganda was necessary for the stimulation of recruiting- a motive which rapidly impaired standards of truth and impartiality.’ 492 There has been considerable theoretical discussion of propaganda’s performance in the context of ‘the first total war’ 493 in modern history, since it was waged on all fronts against civilian populations as much as in the military and economic dimensions. The fashioning of modern memory in terms of the ritual of mourning has been strongly discussed in terms of literature and media. 494 The social and cultural dimensions of propaganda development in scale and content have been rigorously and comprehensively analyzed, 495 but the role and extent of media content and institutional analysis of electronic and recorded sound communication in terms of dramatic and documentary speech have not been emphasized.

Haste stresses that First World War propaganda can be distinguished as ‘rationalized and modernized’, and was mobilized at the home front by a patriotic coalition of government, press and private media organizations, to which the leading record/phonograph production companies can be included. 496 This partnership of private corporate press barons, cultural industries and government operated in a communications structure of distortion and exaggeration. It was also combined with subtle censorship in terms of patriotic consensus and self-restraint and a suspension of a level of freedom of information that was tolerated by the British democratic tradition.

491 Sanders & Taylor, p.177.
493 Haste, p.2.
495 Robb, George, British Culture And The First World War (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
496 Haste, p.40.
First World War propaganda did not necessarily wholly cover up or conceal from the Home Front the horrors of the conflict. Edward Dwyer in his phonograph performance was explicit about the nightmare of the retreat from Mons and the deprivations of soldiering. ‘The Angels of Mons’ play depicted in dramatization the desperation of two soldiers who needed the help of God’s angels to survive. It can be argued that the allied propaganda strategy was successful not because there was repeated lying on a grand scale but because its effectiveness was based on truth. The sound plays represented dimensions of the reality. German soldiers did massacre civilians in Belgium. A German U-Boat did sink a civilian liner, the Lusitania in 1915, killing 1198 non-combatants and ‘no ships were sunk without warning and no citizens of neutral countries were deliberately killed by the Royal Navy.’

When these events were dramatized by sound phonograph, this was a representation of reality.

**Are the descriptive sketch sound dramas culpable for ‘atrocities propaganda’?**

It has been argued that the Allied success in winning the propaganda war between 1914–1918 subsequently attracted the admiration of Adolf Hitler and Dr. Josef Goebbels. The Nazis appreciated that propaganda should tell big lies that were simple, empowered by repetition and would also match the techniques of mass media advertising narrative and texture. During the war the Allied directors of government propaganda policy were anxious to conceal the extent of state manipulation. However, afterwards, some of the authors wanted to take credit for their patriotic contribution to the war that was intended to end all wars. Two publications in 1920, *The Secrets of Crewe House* and *How We Advertised America* unfurled the sophistication and deliberation of British Imperial and American propaganda operations. These were challenged by an ethical backlash, perhaps best represented by Liberal MP Arthur Ponsonby’s 1928 exposé *Falsehood in War-time*. He purported to outline an

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497 Ferguson p.247.
498 Read, p 104.
500 Creel, George, *How we advertised America: the first telling of the amazing story of the Committee on Public Information that carried the gospel of Americanism to every corner of the globe* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers 1920)
501 Ponsonby, Arthur, *Falsehood in war-time, containing an assortment of lies circulated throughout the nations during the great war* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. 1928)
assortment of lies circulated throughout the nations during the Great War. The ethical revisionism included academic scholarship and Harold Lasswell’s text *Propaganda Technique In The World War*.502 can be regarded as a foundation text for propaganda studies at American and British universities. The propagandist content of the First World War mini-dramas can be analyzed not only as a textual method of persuasion, but for their culpability in disseminating deliberate untruths or dimensions of false consciousness. The dramatized descriptive sketches yield no evidence of communicating examples of what Ponsonby and Lasswell complained about as ‘atrocity propaganda’. The short sound plays primarily celebrate patriotism, courage, heroism, and highlight comradeship. Apart from the ruthless summary execution of German spies operating behind British lines, they exclude any preoccupation with the horrors of war in all its demonic pity as later expressed by the anti-war novelists and poets such as Sassoon, Graves and Owen. To that extent the Great War sound dramas are culpable only for the propagation of false-consciousness.

Historians have long argued that Great War propaganda engaged the structured distortion and exaggeration of information through new and old media, exponentially operating as mass media in a developing large-scale democracy invested by widening education and literacy.503 This was also combined with direct state censorship and indirect privatized self-censorship. Media communications became subject to the Official Secret Acts (1911), the Defence of the Realm Act, known by its acronym DORA (1914) and the establishment of bodies not gestated or circumscribed by statutory power, but voluntarily negotiated by the Executive and media industries. They were the D-Notice Committee (1912) and British Board of Film Censors, also known by its acronym BBFC (1912) which was established by

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the British film industry following the passing of the Cinematograph Act 1909 that required cinemas to obtain licenses for the showing of films from local authorities.\footnote{Wilkinson, Nicholas, \textit{Secrecy and the Media - the Official History of the D Notice System} (London: Routledge, 2009).}

It is difficult to locate surviving media institutional archives for the private record companies producing the phonograph mini-dramas that can throw any light on how the productions operated within this nexus of censorship and ideological control. All the texts located and analyzed appear to comply with prevailing state body and delegated organizational policy.

There is no evidence during the Great War that phonograph producers of descriptive sketches succeeded in performing ‘agitational contemporaneity’, as defined by the Canadian television drama producer Sydney Newman. Newman pursued a policy of provocative and socially challenging commissioning during the late 1950s and early 1960s on British television. There is no evidence that the Great War sound dramas met the forces of ‘institutional containment’ a counter-phrase conceptualized by the academic Madeleine Macmurrough-Kavanagh\footnote{Macmurrough-Kavanagh, M.K., ‘The BBC and the birth of “The Wednesday Play”, 1962-66: institutional containment versus “agitational contemporaneity”’, \textit{Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television}, vol. 17, no. 3, (August 1997), 367-81 & Aldgate, Tony ‘British drama: the single play’ pp 3-29 in \textit{Television Genres- A310 Book 5 Film and Television History} (Milton Keynes, England: The Open University, 2003)} who analyzed the cultural impact of Sydney Newman’s work. Equally there are archives or texts in other media identifying issues and events of dramatic censorship as investigated by Tony Aldgate and James Crighton Robertson.\footnote{Aldgate, Anthony, & Richards, Jeffrey, \textit{Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema In The Second World War, Second Edition}, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) It can only be assumed that the producers and record companies were fully aware of Press Bureau/Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee directives.}

\section*{Conclusions}

The Great War audio dramas represent a continuation of the genre of descriptive sketches that originated in the early phonograph industry at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. They represent a period of experimentation in writing and performing in front of early horn funneled mechanical recording technology. It would seem that the Boer War and other pre-1914 conflicts inspired the early audio-dramas and sound montages. In the First World War the production of phonographs and...
listening to them increased substantially. The descriptive sketch answered a demand for the representation of realities, events, and mythologies from the home and war fronts.

Sound dramas played a large role in the propaganda of the Great War despite the fact that in their marketing in catalogues and lists as ‘patriotic records’ they were a minority strand of entertainment generally dominated by music. The commercial record companies did not produce them unless they were viable sellers and there was a demand for them. This was propaganda for the spoken word and the presence of Major A E Rees’ three record set ‘On Active Service’ in the Columbia Record catalogue for 1922 suggests the demand continued after the Armistice. The records could convey the sound of rhetoric, prejudice and a sanitized bonhomie of dramatized soldiering in France. They could perform significant events and blend that with mythology and legend as is the case with ‘The Angels of Mons’. This could also be combined with the small shoots of documentary journalism and actuality interview where eye-witnesses such as Sergeant Edward Dwyer and the actor Kenneth Douglas could talk about the nightmare of marching in retreat, battle in the trenches, and the U-boat sinking of passenger liners on the high seas.

‘The Angels of Mons’ in 1915 succeeds in dramatizing a supernatural legend arising from the first year of the conflict. Christian Angels intervene to help two members of the BEF retreating from the Kaiser’s invasion of Belgium. All the evidence suggests this is a manifestation of Christian religiosity. There was a social and cultural background of spiritualism that was popular during the Great War because of the unprecedented scale of death and mourning. However, the mini-play does not use the legend of the Angels in a script and production that is identifiably modernist in style and genre. Nor does it represent the phantoms of human beings recently killed or long dead. The record is only modern in terms of its use of technology and the newness of dramatizing a war event in this way. However, it is important not to invest the play and others like them with an imagined meaning that belongs more to the present than the past. As Jay Winter has argued the traditions and motifs of the past were not scorch-earthed and supplanted by modernity. The scale of grief and loss in the Great War was unprecedented and the social and cultural experience of mourning would manifest expression informed by the past and present. However, the sound dramas of the Great War were not purely media
artifacts expressing anxiety and mourning. They were intended to entertain, mobilize opinion and attitudes and catalyze social action.

‘The Angels of Mons’ sound drama is certainly not as sophisticated and modernist as French filmmaker Abel Gance’s ‘J’Accuse.’ The sound play does not question or criticize the war and people involved in it. It does not summon the ghosts of previous mortal beings to challenge, condemn, or criticize. It patriotically symbolizes the idea that a Christian God and his angels are there to protect and comfort ‘our boys over there.’ The hero in Gance’s film witnesses dead soldiers rising from their graves not to comfort or save, but to pass judgement on the living by marching through villages, towns and cities. The soldiers depicted in the film were described by Gance as ‘The Dead on Leave’.

The Angels in the Regal sound drama are agents of God in action aimed at representing war as more survivable and bearable than it was.

‘The Angels of Mons’ sound dramatization, along with the other jaunty and vaudeville depictions of the war such as Major Alfred Rees ‘On Active Service’ serial, were part of a technique of communicative deception industrialized and modernized in the Great War. It could be argued that propagandist deceit became an aesthetic conceit of modernism. However, there is little evidence of sound propaganda produced in Britain replicating the atrocity propaganda stories condemned as the media of hate and fabrication in the post war backlash of critical propaganda theorists and politicians such as Harold Lasswell and Arthur Ponsonby. The nearest we get to any atrocity is the summary killing of German spies who have infiltrated British trenches on the Western Front.

The argument linking propaganda with modernism is dependent on recognizing that the scale and complexity of media production is equal to that of the munitions in a mega-industrial killing war. To say that dislocating truth in media communication is an aesthetic technique of modernism is an interesting argument. Does the deception make the modernism, or the modernist texture and style of media production make the deception? Is it propagandist or counter-propagandist? Modernism cannot make a claim to using media expression for the purposes of persuasion even when it involves the communication of deliberate untruths. However, perhaps the modernist claim gains legitimacy when
there is a dimension of irony, or a juxtaposition of realism with mythology; an interpolation of fact and fiction or even fantasy.

The ironic meaning in Gance forming up the soldiers to spell out the words ‘J’Accuse’ did not have any irony when he first directed the stunt in front of the commanding officers from the French Army. At the time they understood he was accusing people on the Home Front of not appreciating the sacrifice. The scene was homage to the sacrifice of the French Army; not resistance to the idea that poor leadership was leading lambs to the slaughter or to use a counter-cultural expression in Britain during the 1960s ‘lions led by donkeys.’ The context here was patriotic in 1918. But Gance would fashion an edit in the late 1920s that would conjure the irony that he was tricking the French Army generals into thinking he was making a patriotic film. The construction of meaning a decade later would synthesize an irony not present originally. It can be argued that Gance’s decade later deployment through editing of a narrative device to manipulate, conjure and delude in terms of a double irony might be a modernist contribution to a film seen as being more expressionist than palpably modernist.

‘The Angels of Mons’ was one of a portfolio of mini-dramas that imagined the sound of U-Boat attacks, German air raids on British cities and seaside towns, soldiers travelling by boat to France, drills and marches, speeches by generals, heroic battles in the trenches, and authentic songs sung by the soldiers of the Great War. They still emotionally resonate with a sense of nostalgic poignancy more than one hundred years after they were made. The language in part represents the detail and knowledge of the experiences of the ordinary soldier in battle, but primarily they are cheerful and fictional fantasies and they perform their role in sound, believed to be the more emotional medium of communication.

Fred Gaisberg and Russell Hunting’s ‘The Departure of a Troopship’ from the Boer War period seems to be a consecutive narrative sequence of sound effects, crowd improvisation and music. Russell Hunting set an exceptional standard in understanding the possibilities of using sound to produce self-contained stories that could connect with the emotional heartbeat of Imperial British society. He was an expert in using words sparingly and creating a modernist soundscape that had spatial depth and
imaginative engagement with the gramophone listener, particularly in his production of ‘The Battle of the Marne’ in 1914 in which he orchestrated sound, dialogue and music realistically and symbolically. In audio-cinematic terms there was an equivalent sonic long-shot, medium shot and close-shot and an exciting sense of movement and action throughout.

The Great War production of descriptive sketches would progress the methodology of blending talking narrative, dramatic action, synthesized sound choreography and interplay with music. There must also have been more developed scripting. The performers succeed in making their words sound natural and ‘lifted off the page’. The productions had to be produced as live. Editing was not possible. Timing and direction through rehearsal, attending to the dynamics and characteristics of the sound studio and the acoustic pick-up of the early horn sound capture technology required the mastering and accomplishment of new techniques of production.

Record company catalogues continued to list the Great War descriptive sketches well into the 1920s including Columbia’s ‘On Active Service’ three disc and six-part serial. The fact that they were created for a recording rather than broadcasting industry means that we have been able to appreciate their work and achievements on surviving 78 rpm records. They offered melodic propaganda to soldiers on the Western Front as well as their families on the Home Front. While the home fires were kept burning to the tune of 78 rpm playback, music was also a source of comfort or sensory anaesthetic for the soldiers in the Armageddon of howitzer shattered villages, towns and cities.

The performers’ voices warble, hiss, and crackle the sounds of a bygone age. The records provide audio textual evidence of a culture mobilized and emotionalized for total war. In addition, they also represent the foundations of broadcast radio drama and sound design for the talking film. Judged against the critical standards set out in Gordon Lea’s 1926 text on how to write radio drama for the BBC, the early sound drama pioneers for the Great War phonographs were creative, innovative, and skillfully performing their art to supply a commercial demand for sound drama entertainment.

Sound drama during the Great War developed a wide portfolio of propagandist function that was instructive and persuasive. Audio performance was used to train and educate in the communicative rituals of war. This resulted in the production of records to teach military drill, Morse code and the
languages of the allies such as French and Russian. Messages designed to persuade the home population to both mock and hate the Kaiser and the Germans were dramatized through mini play entertainments. The ‘descriptive sketch’ was developed so as to inform, motivate, comfort and amuse. It became a sonic agency for recruitment, mourning, patriotism, religious observance, cultural anxiety as well as outrage. Outside the commercial marketplace of Great Britain’s thriving wartime phonograph industry, the sound play also had a function in front-line psychological warfare. Gaisberg’s recordings of POWs calling on their compatriots to surrender through song and invective at the Italian Front transformed 78 rpm discs into battlefield munitions albeit for the mind.

Sound drama in the phonograph age has a significance in terms of modernist communication. The demand to produce sound stories about the Great War accelerated developments in quality and form; not least the first audio drama serial. It took on the form of a widely produced, distributed and received medium of entertainment, education, and propaganda. The Great War phonographs have fixed an aural record of the social, cultural, political and military imagination. This has been expressed through a new dramatic art for its time, which is now recognized and appreciated as the well-established medium of radio drama with its dimensions in spoken word and digital online platforms.
Chapter Three. **Reginald Berkeley- Pioneering modernist playwright and political radio drama as agitational contemporaneity.**

Reginald Berkeley (1890-1935) was a polymath of the early 20th century: a lawyer, decorated army officer, politician, novelist, stage playwright, propagandist, radio playwright, and screenplay writer. It can be argued that he was also the most significant and original pioneering modernist radio playwright of this period. His anti-censorship controversies derived from writing informed by his personal experiences of the Great War and his political role in the League of Nations. His writing for radio represents a much greater degree of intrinsic modernism than previously realised. The use of sound as propaganda continued in his writing because he originated several of his new plays of the 1920s in the radio drama medium. His unique status as a modernist pioneer of the sound dramatic medium is that unlike the BBC insider producer Lance Sieveking, he combined modernism with politics. The mix had a cultural toxicity that could not be tolerated and managed by a BBC that had survived all of the political pressures of the Great Strike of 1926. Modernism and politics were dangerous qualities in combination and led directly to the censoring of his work. It is also the case that the political message of his radio playwriting had a clarity of meaning and understanding intrinsic to the expression of style and aesthetic he was developing for the microphone play.

There has been some academic analysis of the conflicts and contestations associated with *The White Chateau* (1925)- the BBC’s first published full-length original microphone play and to *Machines* (1927) entirely censored and withheld from BBC production. *Machines* was later performed on the stage at the Arts Theatre Club in 1930 after it would appear that the longstanding institution of stage censorship by the Lord Chamberlain had rejected the play for public theatre presentation.\(^{507}\) It was also controversially published in book form and the preface included his angry correspondence with the BBC and Director of Drama Publications.\(^{508}\)

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\(^{507}\) "MACHINES": Mr. Reginald Berkeley's Play’, *(The Manchester Guardian, Nov 7, 1930)* pg. 8

The original research on Berkeley for this project involves a more complete and exhaustive investigation of his life and writing career; for example, his first writing in theatre in Grand-Guignol ‘Eight O’clock’ to Hollywood screenplay career ‘Cavalcade,’ and satire in Decorations and Absurdities & Unparliamentary Papers with the modernist caricaturist Bohun Lynch. The research identifies the detail of his First World War experiences as a decorated infantry officer and how this informed The White Chateau. The play is also discussed as a significant modernist text in Berkeley’s specific writing of sound in conjunction with an originally composed musical score. The chapter explores the influence and role of his politics and career as a propagandist in the post Great War settlement of The League of Nations, and as a Liberal Party politician. The re-investigation of the development of his audio drama writing for the BBC discovers new insights and dimensions to the scholarly narrative previously covered by Alan Beck in his Kent University and online study of BBC Radio Drama between 1922 and 1928, The Invisible Play- History of Radio Drama in the UK; Radio Drama 1922-8, Christina S.L. Pepler’s PhD thesis for Bristol University in 1988, Discovering The Art Of Wireless; A Critical History Of Radio Drama At The BBC 1922-1928, and Roger Wood’s PhD thesis for Leicester’s De Montfort University in 2008, Radio Drama at the Crossroads: The History and contemporary context of radio drama at the BBC.

The new contribution of knowledge establishes Berkeley’s dramatic literary modernism in the sound medium and a greater scale of understanding of his struggle over the censorship of his work. Between The White Chateau and Machines, Berkeley was engaged in a public censorship row over his 1926 radio play The Quest of Elizabeth, which hitherto has been undiscovered by previous researchers. The BBC cut the final scene without Berkeley’s permission thinking it was too horrible for their listeners. He instructed his agent to withdraw the BBC’s rights to an outside broadcast of one of his stage plays, and he publicly rebuked Reith himself when the script was published in May 1926. The tension here was not political, but a matter of story aesthetic and a fear on the part of the media institution that the emotion of the story telling dramatizing the interiority of a dead girl wiped out in a motor accident was
too great a burden for the contemporary listener. It is also apparent that the experimentation in writing attempted here by Berkeley took full advantage of the radio medium’s ability to imagine a ghostly being engaging with present day reality. In radio drama writing development *The Quest of Elizabeth* was a play especially created for the listeners in the sound medium that advanced the modernist potential for story telling in radio broadcasting. It has had no previous scholarly attention investigating Reginald Berkeley’s contribution to the history of radio drama development. This is hardly surprising given the fact that any examination of Berkeley’s files at the BBC Written Archives would yield no documentation relating to the commissioning of the play, its production and the angry and heated public row associated with it much of which was aggressively amplified by *The Daily Mail*. As Berkeley was such an accomplished intermedia writer it was inevitable that the script would be published and explored in another form. When it was included in a book compendium of four of his plays in 1926, Berkeley directed a taunting insult in the direction of the Managing Director of the BBC J.C.W. Reith that cannot have gone unnoticed and could well have contributed to the awkward and problematical reception given to his next submitted script *Machines*.

A further significant and original contribution to knowledge in this investigation of Berkeley’s writing for the radio medium is the first discovery and analysis of the reception of these three radio plays by Lord Chamberlain theatre censorship. *The White Chateau* and *The Quest of Elizabeth* were critiqued with approval and in some detail compared to the BBC where for various reasons they were problematized. *Machines* was rejected for public theatre licensing and the manuscript returned to Berkeley. It is frustrating that the report underpinning the rejection and any correspondence file with Berkeley concerning *Machines* has not as yet been located at the British Library in the relevant archives. At the time of writing it appears to be missing.

**Technical and cultural context- phonograph innovation and electrical recording**

The 1920s was a decade when the tradition of modernist sound play and feature in phonograph overlapped with the development of the art of radio drama through BBC Broadcasting. It is enormously frustrating for the academic researcher of this period that there is such a paucity of sound archive of what BBC programming actually sounded like during this decade. Phonographs have
survived because the technology of production and playback fixed the recording in time. The shellac discs have survived to take us back to an exciting revolution in the transformation of frequency response and fidelity in sound recording and transmission. Ironically BBC broadcasting advanced a high quality of sound reproduction in live broadcasting because of the development of electro-magnet microphones.

Listeners to early BBC radio transmission had the benefit of amplification of sound through the Round-Sykes or Marconi-Sykes microphone usually mounted on a cumbersome wooden trolley. Keith Geddes explained:

This was a moving-coil instrument in which the sound impinged directly upon a flat coil of aluminium wire, which was mounted within the field of a strong electromagnet by being struck on to pads of cotton wool with ‘Vaseline’. A disadvantage of the design was the tendency for the coil to drop off during transmission. 509

The Round-Sykes device was prone to exaggerate reverberation, and this explained the use of very heavy drapes in BBC studios at this time. In 1926 the BBC introduced the Marconi-Reisz microphone which was smaller and higher quality. But as Pepler explained there was no recording facility available at the BBC throughout most of the 1920s: ‘A German engineer called Dr Stille developed a machine which BBC engineers went to inspect in Berlin in 1925; but they were not satisfied with the quality of the recording.’510 The celebrated repeat transmission of King George the Fifth’s speech opening the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 was made possible by a commercial record company. As a result, much of what happened at the BBC and was listened to by millions can only be imagined when reading archived and published scripts. The BBC CD series EyeWitness: A History of the Twentieth Century in Sound has a volume for the period 1920-1929 and nineteen tracks- most of which involve archive of people talking about and remembering key events in that decade. Mark Jones

510 Pepler, p.41.
identified the 1930s as the decade when BBC live broadcasting began to be recorded for posterity. In 1932:

…two things altered the pattern of radio broadcasting. The first was the adoption of rather cumbersome recording equipment, first using steel tape and then 78 rpm discs. The technical experimentation was given a boost by the inauguration of the Empire Service of the BBC. This required the transmission and re-use of domestic programmes on different time zones, and inevitably led to a more systematic storage of these discs into what became a recorded programmes library by 1936. Most programmes were broadcast live and recorded for transmission. 511

The absence of recording machinery in the BBC production culture wedded to live transmission practices meant that directors and producers at Savoy Hill, and other BBC centres, could only monitor ‘as live.’ Producers for recording companies could listen to the result of their performances with a replaying facility. During the 1920s the radio drama experience was ephemeral and of the moment for the creators of the plays and their listeners. Having the ability to archive sound drama means the phonograph industry has preserved the revolution in sound quality and production brought about by the inauguration of the electrical recording process at the turn of 1925 and 1926. It is possible to fully appreciate the great contrast in quality between the acoustic and electric ages of recording. The excitement and significance of this transformation was recalled by Fred Gaisberg in his diary:

One day in the autumn of 1924, I received a telephone call. It was from Russell Hunting, who had just arrived at the Hotel Imperial, Russell Square. He said:

‘Fred, we’re all out of jobs. Come down here and I’ll show you something that will stagger you.’ When I reached his rooms, he swore me to secrecy before playing the records. They were unauthorized copies of the Western Electric experiments and, as Hunting predicted, I saw that from now on any talking machine company which did not have this electric recording system would be unable to compete with it.

When the Western Electric achieved electrical recording as a side-line to their research in telephone communication, a mine was sprung in my world. My colleagues, versed only in the simple acoustic methods of recording, had to begin all over again by studying electrical engineering.  

Radio drama at the BBC during the 1920s was not innovating and pioneering a new dramatic form in a sound medium vacuum. As has been extensively related so far there was a thriving, active, creative with modernist manifestations audio drama and feature production field hosted by the British gramophone industry. There are examples of sound features that use performance, music, representation of social and political events to communicate ideas, emotions and entertainment. In 1906 and 1912 two record companies produced a short feature on the Fire Brigade. The first, ‘Fire Alarm’ made by Edison Bell for a wax cylinder release concentrates descriptive narrative, action, music and emotion in less than 2 minutes 34 seconds. A fire alarm on night duty alerts the Brigade to a house blaze at King’s Cross Point in London. A little child is trapped and her mother distraught. ‘My child, my child! Do save her!’ A rescue takes place and the importance of the service of firefighters communicated in story, music, and in the Gordon Lea stricture of effective sound drama, fully deploys the self-contained method. The performance style, of course, is very steeped in the Victorian melodramatic tradition. We hear what is happening much less than we are told. This was undoubtedly a new form of entertainment which anticipated the radio play and what became known as the BBC Radio Feature. The same theme and storyline were reprised at a slightly longer length by Winner Records in 1912. Both productions enable the listener to see in the mind’s eye the telephone ringing in the Fire Station office and the Brigade mobilizing into action.

The listening imagination is stimulated into following a short audio-movie projecting in human consciousness the horror and the alarm. The idea is that the imaginative spectacle of the mind’s eye sees the horses being harnessed to the steam fire-engine and galloping as fast as they can to the scene

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512 Moore, p.174.
513 Audio track 124.
514 Audio track 83.
of the drama, where a little girl trapped on the upper floor of a burning house, is rescued by a heroic fireman. This is a legend of rescue which ends triumphantly with a rollicking song celebrating the fire service.

From the acoustic age of gramophone feature making it is possible to identify many other examples of recording performances using actors that dramatise a kind of sound pageant of important events. One such example from the First World War has nothing to do with concerns about the Western Front, the battle on the seas, or the war in the air. The 1915 Descriptive phonograph released by Regal called ‘Derby Day’ 515 takes the listener into a raucous world of gambling and high jinks at the racecourse. Comedic exchanges and songs have all the hallmarks of Music Hall entertainment. The soundscape is rich with cheering, music, bookmaker’s calls, and an atmosphere of people at play.

Electrical recording enabled the gramophone companies to extend their ambition. There was still a shaping by performance and representation, but the advance towards recording full actuality was being made. His Master’s Voice, The Gramophone Company, recorded and released the speech of the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII) at the Daily Express sponsored Remembrance Day festival held at the Royal Albert Hall on Armistice night 1927. 516 The intensity of the atmosphere is powerfully conveyed when thousands of First World War veterans sing ‘For He’s A Jolly Good Fellow’ before a sombre and respectful Prince recalls how only eight years earlier they had all experienced the relief of the end of war and the long period of strain and struggle. The message is paradoxical. They were remembering glory and sorrow ‘the like of which we pray God we may never endure again.’ This is followed by an emphatic exclamation of ‘hear, hear!’ There was a recognition that the collective feeling of rejoicing had been changed to remembrance. The significance of this historical recording is that it can be linked to Reginald Berkeley’s play The White Chateau broadcast on Armistice night 1925. The speech by the Prince of Wales heard in this recording in 1927 described a change in political and social mood about what the Great War now meant to the people who lived through it. The

515 Audio tracks 102 & 103.
516 Audio track 60
recording may well have captured the spirit of feeling present in Berkeley’s drama. This is particularly so when the Prince said:

If we are to save ourselves and those that come after us, a renewal in an even more frightful form of all that we suffered in the Great War, we must in our everyday action, in our everyday conversation, and even in our very thoughts seek peace and ensure it. We can remember too, that if we have a duty to our dead, we have also a duty to the living. 517

Columbia Record productions of The Trooping Of The Colour,518 The Trumpeter,519 and The Death of Nelson520 from 1929-30 demonstrate an acceleration of the sophistication in feature production and performance and they can be cited as significant representations of the modernist potential in the new technology. The Trumpeter reprised some of the conventions of the First World War descriptive drama, but also conveyed through poetic ballad and music the political undercurrent that the human loss in the Great War was something to mourn and regret. The role of the trumpeter operated as a symbolic character musically responding to philosophical questions about the purpose of war. The sound design was contrapuntal in variously mixing the music, the soundscape of soldiers and battle, the narration of Ion Swinley, and the ballad singing of Raymond Newell. A poignant roll call of the dead gives way to the narrative voice asking ‘And shall it be said that these have died in vain? We who live on must never fail them. It is our duty to make war for all time impossible.’ There is no doubt that on the ethics of conflict ‘The Trumpeter’ also chimes strongly with the message in Reginald Berkeley’s anti-war play The White Chateau.

These phonograph features reveal highly sophisticated and modernist production of sound ballads where performance, music, and voice combine to express cultural pageantry and indeed a political representation of not only patriotic allegiance to King, country and Empire, but in the case of ‘The Trumpeter’ a clear pacifist message that articulated and supported the purpose of the League of

517 Ibid.
518 Audio tracks 45 & 46.
519 Audio tracks 73 & 74.
520 Audio tracks 75 & 76.
Nations. The famous crime and thriller writer Edgar Wallace told his stories first on record. ‘In The Ditch’ recorded for Columbia Records in 1928 has all the qualities of the contemporary talking book. This would be three years before he was first heard to speak on BBC Radio in April 1931 making an appeal on behalf of King’s College Hospital.

In 1930 Columbia also released the production of a one act play by H O G Stevens titled ‘To Meet The King’ with an overture and incidental music by Normal O’Neil and acting cast of Jack Hobbs, Jane Comfort and starring Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson who in real life were husband and wife. They were very much the big names of BBC radio drama from the 1920s. The play is a curious blend of rhetorical and melodramatic theatre style, and features a dream sequence where a young Prince, Ronnie, having flown in and won an air-race, meets his frail mother, the Queen, when she is in her sick-bed and has fallen asleep. They talk of their father the King coming to meet them and sharing in the celebration having travelled there in the City of Carthage. When the supernatural consciousness scene of Queen and Prince ends, the play reveals the reality of the Queen having passed away not knowing her son died when his plane crashed on take-off, and to reflect the refrain of the overture, they are indeed ‘To Meet The King.’ This is because the King had in fact died previously in the shipwreck of a liner called the City of Carthage, which went down in the Channel about a year before. The theatrical mood and tone of the production was most probably influenced by the fact it was recorded in the Savoy Theatre in Central London. The significance of this phonograph record is that it represents a qualitative and long sequence recording of serious audio drama produced outside the BBC. The use of the music and dream scene sets an imaginative audio-drama genre. It also features artists who worked for the BBC at the time and so may also be representative of the BBC’s radio drama production culture.

There is also evidence that the record industry maintained a parallel development of qualitative feature production to match that of the BBC through the 1930s. ‘The Sinking of the S.S. Kensington

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521 Audio tracks 100 & 101.
522 Audio tracks 112 & 113.
Court by a German Submarine and subsequent rescue by R.A.F. Flying Boats’ in 1939, 523 recreates with remarkable realism a dramatic event taking place during the first month of the Second World War. Captain Schofield, members of his crew, and rescuers from two flying boats that came to their rescue, all rather convincingly play themselves in a sound feature that has all the qualities of a high budget film with multi-track sound design. This is a propagandist sound feature for the Second World War and offers a fascinating comparison to its predecessors from the First. It can be distinguished from the Great War genre of descriptive sketches in that the real people involved in the events being dramatized are actually performing central roles in the production of re-enactment. There is also the opportunity to use more ‘found sound’- recordings of the real sounds of machinery, weapons, and the natural sounds of nature. There is also the technical ability to edit prior to the completion of a production master.

Reginald Berkeley - background and influences

Reginald Cheyne Berkeley was born in London and educated at university in New Zealand where he qualified as a barrister and was a reservist army officer. On the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 he immediately volunteered although in 1913 he had been dismissed from the New Zealand army for being absent without leave. He had traumatic war experiences. He served in the Rifle Brigade and earned a Military Cross in 1916 for bravery. Field hospital returns show that he was later wounded in action 11th February 1917 receiving treatment for a gunshot wound to the left elbow. He had the rank of Brigade Major in the action around Amiens in 1918 and was in a British Army occupation force that marched to the Rhine in Germany after the Armistice. His citation for the Military Cross states:

523 Audio track 112.
For conspicuous gallantry in action. When his company commander was wounded, he led the company with great dash to its final objective, and later displayed great determination in consolidating the captured line.\textsuperscript{524}

Berkeley would be demobilized in 1919 when he joined the League of Nations as editor of pamphlets and director of propaganda. He continued working in the Information Section until joining the League Secretariat which was the equivalent of a senior civil servant. He resigned to stand for election in the 1922 General Election where he gained the Nottingham Central seat for the Liberal Party. He was a highly successful writer of plays, novels and satirical books. They included the thriller \textit{The Oilskin Packet: A Tale of the Southern Seas}, (1917) co-written with James Dixon, and a later sole-authored novel \textit{Cassandra} (1931). His first success in the theatre was \textit{French Leave: A Light Comedy in Three Acts} (1920) followed by \textit{The Lady With The Lamp}. He was the screenplay author of \textit{Dawn- a controversial film about Edith Cavell} (1928) which the German government wanted censored so as to avoid re-igniting anti-German prejudice. Pepler said that by the time he began writing for the BBC he ‘already had four careers and at least two (stage) plays behind him, though he was only thirty-five years old.’\textsuperscript{525}

It is also the case that as with Lance Sieveking, and other Great War veterans who were so centrally involved in making BBC programmes during the 1920s, the haunting memories continued to weigh with him psychologically. He took the great responsibility of researching and writing Volume One of \textit{The History of the Rifle Brigade In The War of 1914-1918}. Berkeley had been wounded while on active service. In his account of the Battle of Guillemont that he took part in on 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1916 he gave his role as a second lieutenant winning the Military Cross merely a footnote:

\begin{quote}
It was now the turn of the remaining companies of the two Rifle Brigade battalions and one company of the 10\textsuperscript{th} Bn. 60\textsuperscript{th} to take the lead again. In the act of leaving the sunken road Captain
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{524} Berkeley, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. Reginald Cheyne, Rifle Brigade, Special Reserve, \textit{Supplement to the London Gazette}, (London: HMSO, 14 November 1916) p.11046

\textsuperscript{525} Pepler, p.105.
Cope, who had lined up his men with the strictness of a ceremonial, was severely wounded by the enemy barrage which had just begun to fall in the old German front line. But the companies swept on through the Oxfordshire and Bucks Light Infantry and poured into the objective beyond. By now the enemy’s resistance was flagging. Fifty-two were killed in the Wedge Wood switch; but the Germans began to surrender freely. The Riflemen were armed with phosphorous bombs for clearing dug-outs, of which there were a number. The choice for the occupants was to come out with a good face or be smoked out like a wasps’ nest. At one dug-out, however, there was a show of resistance; and resistance of an unpleasant kind. Two men emerged and surrendered, and then instead of a third man a bomb came through the entrance. It happened that the explosion further disabled an already wounded man. There was a cry of ‘Bombing our wounded!’ Half a dozen Riflemen rushed forward and, before the smoke had cleared away, a shower of hand grenades into the dug-out had turned it into a charnel house of dead and dying. Forty-two bodies were taken from it afterwards for burial.

Footnote marked from Captain Cope being severely wounded: ‘2nd Lieut. R.C. Berkeley then took over ‘D’ Company, leading it to the final objective, where he was wounded but remained at duty. He was awarded the M.C.526

The detail of the horror in this account of the battle, all of which it is likely he personally witnessed, can explain the vehemence of his attitude to war and the political and literary campaigning for peace that he pursued in its aftermath. The courage he showed while a frontline infantry officer was certainly confirmed by the reference to ‘conspicuous gallantry in action’ included in his Military Cross citation.527

Another biographical feature that Berkeley had in common with Sieveking is that he collaborated with a visual modernist to combine verse and prose with imagery. Sieveking published two volumes of light verse, Dressing Gowns & Glue (1919) illustrated by the surrealist artist Paul Nash and his brother John, and Bats In The Belfry (1926) illustrated by John Nash. Berkeley’s partnership was with the illustrator Bohun Lynch and they specialized in political and cultural satire in Decoration & Absurdities (1923) and Parliamentary Papers (1924).528 The concept of modernism in the light of

527 Supplement to the London Gazette p.11046
528 Berkeley, Reginald, Unparliamentary Papers and Other Diversions, (London: Cecil Palmer, 1924)
recent conferences and scholarship could be charged with a tendency to be more nebulous than precise in terms of its academic remit, and it might be cautious to suggest that these publications may have by the way modernist connections. It is a fact that Berkeley was a socially and politically disruptive writer. He confronts the world of politics with drama, poetry, prose and witticisms and combines these with the avowed flourish of illustrations by a modernist artist. The word ‘modernist’ does also get an outing on at least one page of the two volumes:

Now what are these articles? The first institutes a comparison between the Prime Minister and Judas Iscariot. The second appears to portray a conversation between a party of ill-bred lunatics, but the plaintiff tells us he meant it for a society dialogue. The third, although it raises in my mind some doubt as to the sanity of the man, has a certain ring of nonsense about it, but we have agreed that nonsense, by reason of the proviso, is no criterion. The fourth is flatly libellous upon the Parliamentary system of this country, but in the right mood I could imagine myself smiling at its perusal. The fifth and sixth are no doubt modernist in their execution, and seem to consist principally in the constant repetition of certain more or less barbarous consonantal and vowel sounds, which convey nothing to me whatever. The seventh is a florid and rather vulgar parody.\footnote{Berkeley, Reginald & Lynch, Bohun, \textit{Decorations & Absurdities}, (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., 1923), p. 13.}

Berkeley’s first foray into radio drama writing was in the context of a published experiment by BBC Radio. Accompanying its transmission in April 1925 the \textit{Radio Times} announced that \textit{The Dweller in the Darkness: A Play of the Unknown}, and another half hour play by Vernon Bartlett, \textit{Entertaining Mr Waddington} were being considered important developments in the art of the broadcast play:

…it should be remarked that this departure represents a further state in the development of the new Radio Drama. The B.B.C desires to use fresh material in this way rather than stage plays which, however good, do not always lend themselves to wireless transmission. In pursuance of this policy, the Company has commissioned several well-known authors to write plays having particular regard both to the conditions imposed by the microphone and those experienced by
listeners. It is hoped to present plays which will give a clear picture of the story and situations as the producers desire to convey them to the listener.530

Pepler said the play was ‘sufficiently radiogenic’ and acknowledged that Berkeley had used ‘the aesthetic nature of radio more genuinely and fundamentally than perhaps he realized himself. An example of this comes at the climax, where Mortimer, the cynic has apparently been killed in the dark by the ghost, with a knuckleduster.’531 It might be argued that he wrote the darkness scenario play in response to notes provided by the then Director of Drama Productions R.E. Jeffrey where it was suggested that ‘a whole short black-out play is quite effective’532 in the medium. Pepler concludes: ‘In his choice of story Berkeley showed moreover an awareness of the mind’s vulnerability to suggestion: the darkness of a haunted house, the terror of the unknown, would act powerfully on the stage of the mind, in spite of the crudeness of the script…’533 It can also be argued that Dweller In The Darkness is grand guignol for the radio listener. Berkeley was a published and produced grand guignol dramatist and his expertise and penchant for the genre would attract a charge from a national newspaper critic when a future radio play written by him was judged to be horror on the airwaves and an inappropriate imposition of emotional terror on the imagination of listeners. The evidence of how Berkeley’s writing was capable of landing a slaughtering punch to his audience in dramatic climax can be fully appreciated in the play’s final page. Up until now the radio audience has become accustomed to emotionally enjoining the characters in the play dwelling in darkness and, therefore, unable to recognize or fully perceive any stranger or invading presence:

Mortimer: (savagely): Then get out of the way, you, whoever you are. You in front of me. (A note of restrained terror coming into his voice.) Get out of the way! (Shouting.)

Get out of the way ! I’ll lay you out if you play the fool … It’s your own doing. Take it then !

530 ‘New radio drama’, Radio Times, 10th April 1924, p.100.
531 Pepler, p.106.
532 Pepler, p. 107.
533 Ibid.
(The sound of a hurried rush forward; a sudden terrible gasp. A fearful blow; a dreadful crashing fall; and a horrible groan.)

Every one: What’s the matter? What’s the matter?

(A pounding noise is still audible.)

Urquhart: … Can’t someone strike a match? (A horrible laugh.) Who’s that laughing?

Vyner: (panting): I’ll have this in a minute. Henry, there are matches in my coat.

Henry (striking them): Won’t strike. (The laugh again.) Isn’t there a light on the landing? I’ll open the door. (The door thrown open and a gleam of light from without.) Now you can see a bit—(Horrified) What’s that crouching over Mortimer?

Urquhart: Don’t be hysterical, man. There’s nothing there. (The click of the switch. The light goes on.)

Vyner: Got it.

Henry: My God, look at Mortimer.

(MORTIMER is lying in a crumpled heap over the sofa. They rush to him.)

Urquhart: Turn him over quick.

Vyner: … Horrible!… Horrible!

Phillis (screaming with terror): He hasn’t got a face—He hasn’t got a face—

THE END OF THE PLAY 534

In London’s Grand Guignol and the Theatre of Horror, by Richard J. Hand and Michael Wilson all of Berkeley’s unadorned grand guignol credentials are revealed with the inclusion of his play Eight O’Clock: A Sordid Play in One Act 535 which was performed in December 1920. In the Times Berkeley’s London grand guignol terror shocker was ‘regarded as realistically creepy: it is praised for avoiding “any dramatic exaggeration” making the spectators feel that they had “been there” and were sick and sorry’ that they had.’536 However, Hand & Wilson reveal that it is their view that the play ‘is a work of social criticism focusing as it does on a condemned man on death row. The play is in the tradition of Victor Hugo’s prose study The Last Day of a Condemned Man (1875) and Krzysztof

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536 Hand & Wilson, p.28.
Kieslowski’s *A Short Film About Killing* (1988). It can be argued here that Berkeley’s creative ability to enjoin artistic traditions in drama and invest these in a new medium of expression and production, coupled with a social conscious and political imperative, represents participation in modernism. He is effectively accomplishing something T.S. Eliot achieved in poetry.

**The Modernism in The White Chateau**

Berkeley’s anti-war play achieved multiple firsts in the history of British broadcasting and radio drama. In endeavouring to recognize them all the academic attention has had a tendency to not see the play’s significance in terms of radio modernism. Berkeley was a quintessential modernist and political dramatist *par excellence.* It was the first full length original play to be commissioned and broadcast. It was the first such play commissioned by the BBC to be published in book form. It was the first play originally written for radio to transfer to professional theatre. As explained later, it was one of the first original radio plays to transfer to the new television medium in 1938 only three years after Berkeley’s tragic early death from pneumonia after a serious operation in Hollywood. Pepler recognized its political message based on the author’s experience as a propagandist with the League of Nations and his war experience. But she also confirmed its aesthetic achievement:

Berkeley went beyond technique and coping to purpose and exploitation, used radio confidently to do things only it could do, and wrote a play that was more than intelligible and entertaining; that was popular in its appeal, political or at least ideological in its intention, and - for its day-adventurous and accomplished in terms of technique.\(^{538}\)

Jean Chothia decided that Berkeley had contributed to a fashion in the theatre at that time for ‘Chronicle plays’, but she failed to recognize that Berkeley was a modernist playwright writing a modernist play:

...he alternated sequences of choric verse spoken by a Chronicler with acted scenes in colloquial prose, to chart the process of European war through the changing fortunes and shifting

\(^{537}\) Hand & Wilson, p.91.  
\(^{538}\) Pepler, p.116.
occupations of a chateau in Flanders. While retaining the musical overture and division of scenes of contemporary theatre and the verse currently in vogue for chronicle plays, Berkeley offers an episodic rather than a continuous action. War overwhelms the chateau, the family is driven away and different armies take possession, loot, use it as a hospital or barracks, abandon it in retreat before, finally, in scene 6, Diane, the daughter of the family who has reappeared in scene 5 as a nurse, returns to the ruined chateau resolved to rebuild it.539

Chothia in 1995 determined that there was a difference to be drawn between Modernity, ‘concerned with ideas and attitudes’540 and modernism which recognizes and delights in artifice. She had the firm view that ‘There is no real equivalent of literary modernism in English drama of the period, except perhaps, in Shaw’s plays, and these disguised their delight in artifice behind a façade of fourth-wall realism.’541

Yet in her close analysis of *The White Chateau*, Chothia actually recognizes the essential traits of modernist radio drama. She identifies ‘a montage of song, voices and non-verbal sound’ in Scene Three without acknowledging it as modernist writing.

Chronicler:
An army in prolonged retreat
Trudge, trudge of tired feet,
Trudge, trudge, through rain and sludge,
Trudge- trudge-trudge-trudge…
Heavy heart and drooping head,
Scanty rations, scantier bed.
Failing strength and dizzy brain,
Trudge, trudge…on again.542

540 Chothia, p. 241
541 Ibid.
Chothia said: ‘The voices, intercutting, stoical, wryly humourous, excited, create a powerful effect of individuals within the mass, momentarily heard, then lost. It is a sequence remarkably attuned to the possibilities of radio.’

Roger Wood recognizes the advance in aesthetic technique, but again without making any reference to its modernist achievement:

For Berkeley, Flanders becomes an allegorical land and, difficult to define, yet historically resonant. The No Man's Land on which the chateau stands is the same land fought over by the Romans and the Germans, the English and the French, the Catholics and the Protestants. The White Chateau is thus more than an anti-war play; it is a pro-peace play, an argument for the League of Nations. By not seeing the death and destruction, we are able to engage with the theme on an intellectual level. Far from being limited by radio, Berkeley recognises its potential as drama for the brain.

Alan Beck engaged full consideration of the play’s significance in the context of what was being recognized as radio drama art:

My second point is about 'orchestrating' effects and opening out deep focus in the fictional soundscape of 'Chateau', and how sound is 'scored' or 'orchestrated' with dialogue in new ways. Bombs provide a very busy and continuous sound texture as a bedding to the dialogue. This also opens out a wider perspective in the sound picture. It involves what I term the outer frame of acousmatic sound [...] the sound events which we are required to hear but do not 'see' as listeners to the radio fiction. They are beyond what we 'see' in the first frame of action. (An acousmatic sound is one we hear without seeing its cause) We are also offered a deep focus. The bombing is out there. Dialogue is given an atmos (meaning atmosphere) so it inhabits a three-dimensional space.

Beck argued that The White Chateau was the ‘first radiogenic (wireless) creation of sound perspective. No longer are we confined to the 'Stage Model' [...] In the 'Stage Model', the main frame

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543 Chothia, p.252
544 Wood, p.51
545 Beck, 5.5.27.
of the sound picture equals the box set and the acousmatic sound events of the outer frame are
confined to the conventions of stage's sound effects and voices 'off'.

Beck was impressed with how Berkeley’s dramatization of Trench warfare gave ‘a vivid depth of
field, and a sharp delineation of three-fold perspective (near, middle-ground, far off - and indeed,
above in the air with the bombs).’ In the third scene the shooting of Badger when caught peering
over the edge of the trench brought home the reality of the war’s cruelty that perhaps only a veteran
could understand and write about. Beck closely identified the professional ‘blocking’ and positioning
of the writing of the characters and their movements in relation to the microphone: ‘Captain
Braithwaite is near him, in 'close-up' and at the sound centre up to when he calls to Sergeant Andrews,
and Artillery Officer Williams soon moves a bit further off, to 'mid-field', calling into the
telephone.’ Beck describes the following as an exciting ‘sound canvas.’

FX: (HE [BADGER] CLAMBERS ON THE FIRE-STEP.)
BRAINTWAITE: Don't be a goat, Badger. There's nothing to see.
BADGER: (obstinately) Yes, there is. I believe there's a second gun in the angle of the low wall
at the back.
FX: (TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT)
BADGER: (triumphantly) Yes, there is. I can spot the flash. Williams, there's a -
FX: (CRACK. THE SOUND OF A SHAMBLING FALL.)
BRAINTWAITE: (shouting) Stretcher-bearer! ... (groaning) Oh, Badger - why did you? ...
(incoherently) Turn him over - field dressing. My God, in the head ... it's that wretched sniper.
FX: (THE TELEPHONE BUZZ BUZZ)
WILLIAMS: (NOTE: SPEAKING INTO THE PHONE) Hello! - yes? ...
STRETCHER-BEARER: He's done in, sir.
BRAINTWAITE: (softly) Poor old Badger and his twins ... Oh, damn this filthy war!

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546 Beck, 5.5.29.
547 Beck, 5.5.30
548 Ibid.
549 Beck, 5.5.38
WILLIAMS: Bad luck, Braithwaite. Well - we'll send up a few of the other side to keep him company. We're just going to begin shooting. Hullo! ... Are you there? Ready. Yes. We're looking out.

FX: (FAR-AWAY BOOM ... A NOISE LIKE A RUNAWAY TRAIN ... CRRANG, AND THE THUD OF FALLING DEBRIS.)

BRAITHWAITE: (excitedly) Sergeant Andrews, get your Lewis gun on those fellows running out of the Chateau. Quick, man, quick!

FX: (TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT)

WILLIAMS: (delighted) Direct hit first shot, by Jove! Who says the heavies can't shoot? (into the telephone) Hullo! - Reynolds! - By Gad, old man, you got a direct hit. Plumb in the bull ... And listen, the machine-gun's crew ran out of the Chateau and the infantry've bagged the lot with a Lewis gun ... Yes, I'll report on each shell.

FX: (BOOM ... RooooooooOOG-oooooooo ... CRRANG, THE FALLING OF MASONRY.)

WILLIAMS: Marvellous. The whole west wall's caved in ... Go on. There won't be a stone standing to-night ... Are the nine-twos going to shoot as well? Yes, I'll observe for them too. Carry on ....

FX: (BOOM ..... BOOM .... BOOM .....)

(FADE OUT: PAUSE)\(^{550}\)

Berkeley’s *The White Chateau* was the first significant anti-war play to reach a large audience in Great Britain and it transferred to two theatre runs several years before R.C. Sherriff’s *Journey’s End*, which would have its first BBC radio broadcast on Armistice night 1929. Beck thought Berkeley’s writing was ‘more sensational and eventful than Sherriff, and he sees the big picture. The play understands the vast killing machine, and sees beyond, because of Berkeley's own public life, as an M.P. and in the League of Nations. 'Journey's End' is mere reportage in such a comparison, only about pity and waste…’\(^{551}\)

The more recent study of First World War plays by Kosok has given *The White Chateau* greater prominence and critical recognition as stage and theatrical literature:

\(^{550}\) Berkeley, 1925, pp.44-45.

\(^{551}\) Beck, 5.5.38.
Among the 1925-6 plays, *The White Château* stands out as the most ambitious project to present a building that is equally real and unmistakably symbolic. The château in Flanders is shown from a variety of angles: in Scenes i and ii from the inside, with its dining room being described in realistic detail; in Scene iii from the outside, as seen from the trench-line; in Scene iv as a shadowy ruin; and in Scene vi during the process of rebuilding. Its varying ‘social’ functions are also portrayed realistically: in Scene i it is the setting for a comfortable upper-class household; in Scene ii the headquarters of the invading army; in Scene iii the target of a barrage by heavy guns, reported in teichoskopia by the liaison officer: ‘Marvellous! The whole west wall’s caved in! Go on. There won’t be a stone standing to-night’; in Scene iv the object of an infantry attack; in Scene v, set in a hospital, the subject of discussion, with Diane insisting, ‘I am going to build up my poor Château again’; and in the final scene the object of the plans for rebuilding. It is in this final scene, too, that the author’s purpose is revealed with unnecessary explicitness in the speeches of the highly unrealistic Workman who regards himself as the spokesperson of mankind, and in a long speech in which he explains that ‘this house of yours embodies the whole history of Europe’, he summarises the château’s history as a symbol of the development of civilization.552

Kosok’s analysis of the deployment of a workman as spokesperson of mankind in the stage version represents the only difference with the final scene of the radio version of the play. Both versions retain the characterization of the Château, as an inanimate building ontologizing with voice and philosophy. This can certainly be recognized as modernist symbolizing that is aesthetically intrinsic to the sound/radio drama medium. In the stage production the presence of a disembodied voice emanating from the set must also have been impactful. In both versions while Diane and Philip are reflecting on the rebuilding of the Château, the voice of the building interjects with ‘No, it will never be the same again’553 after she had voiced the same sentiment. Diane later says:

DIANE: You seem to be strangely familiar with the history of my Château. I suppose you’re a student from the University… I can’t see you at all in this darkness.

VOICE: I know it because it is my own history. The White Château. I am the White Château.

DIANE: (*puzzled*) You mean the builder—the contractor.

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552 Kosok, p.117.
553 Berkeley, 1925, p.73.
VOICE: I mean what dwells among the stones and gives the building its own individual character.

DIANE: You mean—a spirit?

VOICE: If you prefer—a spirit.\(^{554}\)

There is an impressive intertextual skill being deployed here where the voice that cannot be seen ‘in this darkness’ is evocative and imaginatively stimulating in both realms of stage theatre and radio drama.

Berkeley would later explain in an interview with *The Observer* ‘A House As A Hero’\(^{555}\) how the characterizing of the building into the ideological voice of his play, the effective spirit of global pacifism, became the core dramatic force and idea of his work:

I suppose I got my first idea of the play when I was out in Flanders, and passed ruin after ruin which had been, a short time ago, a peaceful home. You see, I had just come from the South Seas, where war is nowadays nothing more than a private misdemeanor and the ramshackle houses of that torrid cline last as long as the weather will let them. And I was coming back to civilization, to settled things which had lasted for a thousand years. And I found all those things in ruins— deplorable heaps of stone, ugly, loathsome, the wreckage of all life. It made a great impression on me, and the impression grew.

…when I heard that the White Chateaux of Flanders were being rebuilt the news came with a sense of shock. They had been rebuilt after every war, in every century. The blind courage of the Flanders folk ignored the possibility of an ensuing disaster. And somehow the White Chateaux took shape in my mind as a single separate thing, not only a house which endures in transmigration after transmigration through centuries, but as a symbol of European civilization, rebuilt again and again and again.\(^{556}\)

Berkeley explained that in talking about the house and not about the people in his play he was emphasizing and revealing that ‘as a matter of fact, a house is the hero of my play.’\(^{557}\) This is very

\(^{554}\) Ibid, p.76.


\(^{556}\) Ibid.

\(^{557}\) Ibid.
much demonstrated in the illustrative cover of the radio drama script published by Williams and Norgate. This shows a silhouette of a building wrecked by shellfire, with the outline of barbed wire and a few birds in the sky above. His newspaper interview was also accompanied in the programme published for the West End performance at the St Martin’s Theatre with a full black and white image of ‘The White Chateau at Hollebeke’ that is captioned ‘A typical Flanders Chateau, destroyed during the War. It is around such a house as this that Captain Berkeley has constructed his play.’

Up until now the development of *The White Châteaux* for theatre and film and how this influenced and advanced its radio presentation has not had any consideration. The radio production by the BBC for Armistice Night 1925 by the then Director of BBC Drama Productions R.E. Jeffrey convinced Gainsborough Pictures that it had ‘possibilities for the screen.’ This film company bought the rights and ‘suggested that before they risked the great expense of producing a film they would like to see the play tried out on the stage.’ Consequently, it had a trial run at the Everyman theatre in Hampstead for thirteen performances between 29th March and 9th April 1927, and then the St Martin’s Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue for thirty six performances 28th April to 28th May 1927. It was expensive, ambitious and large-scale for there was a cast of twenty-six different actors and the stage set and scenery was designed by Aubrey Hammond and actually built by Gainsborough Pictures.

Between the first BBC broadcast in 1925 and its theatre presentation, the play underwent two significant changes. Another half hour of script was written and added, and this was further tried out on the radio by the BBC in another production transmitted on Armistice night 1926. The approval for production and broadcast in the one and a half hour form sign-posted an extension of the BBC’s confidence in how long an original play for radio could sustain the attention of its audience. The other important transformation was in the play’s affirmation and approval by state theatre censorship.

Unlike the BBC, the Lord Chamberlain’s office had by 1927 a systematic framework of conditions that would determine whether a stage play could be licensed for public exhibition. As Anthony

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Aldgate and James C Robertson explained, in 1909 a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on theatre censorship issued an edict that there would always be:

…a presumption that any play would receive a licence unless:

(1) was considered indecent,
(2) contained the portrayal of offensive personalities,
(3) depicted living people or people who had died only recently,
(4) violated religious reverence,
(5) encouraged crime or vice,
(6) impaired relations with any foreign power,
(7) or was calculated to cause or bring about a breach of the peace.\footnote{Aldgate, Anthony, Roberston, James C., \textit{Censorship In Theatre And Cinema}, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) p.1.}

\textit{The White Château} came under the consideration of the Lord Chamberlain’s Senior Reader of Plays from 1920, George Street. Street’s report is more than a mere bureaucrat’s processing of the manuscript against the seven tick-boxes for statutory approval. It is also a critical review of the play’s political and cultural significance:

The Chateau round which his war play is built is an old house in Flanders and symbolises the war itself: in the last scene of all the symbolism is extended. The theme of the play is the cruelty and misery and waste of war; and the “plot” is of a slight nature. In the beginning we see Charles Van Eysen and his family happily at breakfast. Jacques, the son of the house, has been to Oxford and become engaged to an English girl, Violet. Mention is made of two young Englishmen called Luttrel (who are expected). Then they read of war being declared and suddenly he Germans appeal. (This strains possibility but is the only point in the lay, except that foreigners talk English in this scene, where illusion is difficult) Jacques fights with a German who kissed Violet and shoots him in a scuffle, and we afterwards learn that he is court martialed and shot. The next phase of the Chateau is as headquarters of the German Commander-in-Chief: technical talk, argument with the Chancellor and so on. In the next our troops are being shot at by machine guns in the Chateau and it is demolished by our artillery. In the next our men are on the point of attack. Captain Luttrel, who with Philip is mentioned in Scene 1 as intending guests, has a
premonition of death; he is shot and the party is commanded by his brother Philip. Two years later, Philip is lying wounded in a hospital hut near where the Chateau stood. Diane Van Eysen, Jacque’s sister is his nurse. They have fallen in love and agree to marry. The armistice is declared.

In the last scene Diane and Philip are rebuilding the Chateau. Diane, left alone, hears—or dreams she hears—the voice of the spirit of the Chateau, telling of its history, the many times it has been destroyed and rebuilt, questioning the wisdom of rebuilding it, since men seem not to have learned the lesson of the war and another war will mean the end of our civilization.

It is a moving play, and well done. I assume that the author who served in the war has the technical part right. I think it is a good thing that people should be reminded of what war means since many forget. The horrors are rather less stressed physically than in most war plays. Recommended for Licence (Sd.) G.S. Street. 21/3/27

The final paragraph of George Street’s report confirms that a play so political on the subject of war was expressing a sentiment matching a public mood that it was ‘a good thing that people should be reminded of what war means since many forget.’ The Lord Chamberlain at the time, Colonel Honourable Sir George Crichton, clearly approved for he wrote in longhand red fountain pen ink the word ‘good’ before signing his affirmation.

**Identifying the modernist credentials and eventual resonance**

The core of the modernist text in the original radio drama text of *The White Chateau* is its sound design and the music specifically commissioned from and composed by Norman O’Neill to complement and take part in the drama as a direction of characterization. This aspect of the play has probably been missed because the sound of its archive does not exist. This is evident at the beginning of the Second Scene:

*(A great slow theme, given out by the basses and taken up by the rest of the strings, suggests the steady forward march of a mighty army. A few bars indicate the cantering of the cavalry patrols, broken in upon by the chatter of machine-guns and the sharp bark of field artillery. Always the army moves onward like some relentless piece of machinery. This theme dies away and is*

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561 Lord Chamberlain’s Plays Correspondence Files, *The White Château*, LR 1927/7546
replaced by one suggesting the distant boom of the sea breaking on a reef. The voice of the CHRONICLER is heard speaking through the music.)\textsuperscript{562}

The writing of the sound effects in the play is reminiscent of the poetry in Filippo Marinetti’s ‘Zang Tumb tumb Tumb Tuum Tuum Tuuum Tuuum.’ The writing of the onomatopoeia had the potential through realistic production values to have a visceral impact on the listener’s imagination; particularly if the listener was a veteran of trench warfare like Berkeley. Berkeley writes the sound of war- the terrible noise and the rhythm and beat of killing because that is something he knew and experienced. Extracting the sound design directions for the end of Scene Three highlights the Marinetti style of writing sonically and with poetic impact.

\begin{itemize}
\item[(The telephone buzz buzz buzz buzz.)]
\item[(Far-away BOOM...a noise like a runaway train...CRRANG, and the thud of falling debris.)]
\item[(Tut-tut-tut-tut-tutter-tutter-tutter-tut.)]
\item[(BOOM...RooooooO00-oo00-CRRANG. The falling of masonry.)]
\item[(BOOM...BOOM...BOOM...)]\textsuperscript{563}
\end{itemize}

Berkeley’s political intentions were made clear when he said: ‘the story I try to tell is such as might be true in any war between any civilized peoples; for the subject of the play is not the war between A and B, but War the hideous Giant Despair of our times.’ \textsuperscript{564} However, while hailed on so many levels as a success \textit{The White Chateau} had censorship and legal issues that would mark the beginning of Berkeley’s problems with censorship.

Another of the firsts to be achieved with the play’s broadcast was the launch of an essay competition with listeners- an early audience interaction project. The scheme depended on copies of the book being obtainable, but the BBC mistakenly announced they were not printed because of a labour dispute. The publishers sued the BBC for slander, and this became the first broadcast defamation case in legal

\textsuperscript{562} Berkeley, 1925, p.25.
\textsuperscript{563} Berkeley, 1925, p.45.
\textsuperscript{564} Berkeley, 1925, p. vi.
However, behind the scenes Berkeley had cause to worry whether this first ever full-length play commissioned for BBC Radio Drama broadcasting would ever be transmitted in its intended form:

The script was delivered and accepted. The music was commissioned and written. And then the Programme Board stepped in, took umbrage because it had not been consulted, and declined to allot more than half an hour on Armistice Day for the broadcast. That meant reducing the play to less than half its size, which I absolutely refused to do. The Programme Board then bore off the script to its lair, and a few days later allowed it to be known that fully half its members were strongly against broadcasting the play at all on the grounds that the thing to do was to forget about the war- not remind people of it. However, that difficulty was smoothed over, arrangements were made for casting, Armistice Day drew near, arrangements were entered into (at the suggestion of the B.B.C.) for the publication of the play, and then the Treaty of Locarno was signed, and immediately the performance of ‘The White Château’ was cancelled. I was told by the responsible official, to use his own words, ‘Locarno has killed ‘The White Château.’’ Yet, another department had intervened, on the plea that the broadcast might annoy the Germans.\[566\]

Berkeley reported that broadcast was only successfully achieved when the Director of Publicity advised the Managing Director John Reith that it should go ahead.

*The White Château* was never made into a film. Gainsborough Pictures may have been discouraged by the fact that the West End theatre run in 1927 did not gain traction. It played to dwindling audiences for only one month. MacQueen-Pope explained that though ‘a most interesting play by that imaginative author Reginald Berkeley […] it deserved to do much better. It was before its time.’\[567\] It is certainly the case that in cultural memory R.C. Sheriff’s *Journey’s End* is the iconic dramatic stage representation of the Great War from the period between 1918 and 1939. After premiering at the Apollo in December 1928, it would sustain 594 performances. This contrast could be explained by the fact that *Journey’s End* was less experimental in its artistic enterprise. This play’s easy and accessible naturalism contained in the relationship of human characters in the claustrophobic trench dugout of the

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565 ‘Slander by Wireless’ *Daily Mail* (London, England), Saturday, April 24, 1926; pg. 5; Issue 9363.
Western Front captured the emotional Zeitgeist of a generation that had by then a decade to reflect on what this war meant. There was a long, stunned silence among the one thousand plus audience at its first performance followed by ecstatic and thundering applause and cheering.

*The White Château* was too political and artistically sophisticated to enjoy this kind of reception. Its modernist aesthetic value though was fully realized by its live BBC Television production at Alexandra Palace for Armistice night 1938, only a matter of weeks after the profound emotional vicissitudes attending the Munich crisis. Sadly, Berkeley had died three years before from pneumonia after an operation in Hollywood where he was living and working as a very successful scriptwriter. It could be argued that this was the BBC’s most ambitious television drama production of its time. The production by Royston Morley had a cast of 23, and: ‘had made intricate arrangements for the right atmosphere. The front-line trench will be in the studio, but in the grounds of Alexandra Palace will be two 6-inch howitzers and about thirty men of the Territorial Army.’\(^{568}\) It was certainly the first time the BBC had engaged live artillery as a key part in a live broadcast drama event.

Unfortunately, no recording of any of the production has survived apart from a few black and white stills of the set and a rehearsal performance. No script or production file has been retained in BBC Written Archives. There were clearly some innovations for the television version. *The Radio Times* credits not only acknowledges ‘the co-operation of members of the 53rd (London) Medium Brigade, R.A., T.A., and the 7th Bn. the Middlesex Regiment, T.A.,’ but also refers to the inclusion of ‘Music from Sibelius’s Second Symphony, verse from the works of Cecil Day Lewis, Wilfred Owen, T.S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and Ezra Pound.’\(^{569}\) The critical and modernist poetic voice against war had been extended to include the political force of modernist poets some of whom were then just beginning to achieve a significant rise in their stature and reputation.

**The Quest of Elizabeth - the beginning of the end for Berkeley and the BBC**


\(^{569}\) Ibid, p.18.
Berkeley had to write a letter to the *Daily Mail* to explain the purpose and the meaning of his brilliant and pioneering modernist play for radio *The Quest of Elizabeth*:

The play concerns a little orphan girl whose quest in search of her parents is rewarded by her finding them in another world. The ‘idea of the play is the Christian belief in which we have all been brought up, and which I happen to hold strong, that there is a future life and those who are separated in this world by death are reunited in the next.’

The problem for Berkeley was that was not how *The Daily Mail* saw the play. When broadcast in February 1926, the influential newspaper published the headline ‘Stupid 2LO’ (the call sign of the BBC’s London station), and condemned it as a ‘Grand Guignol’ play described by listeners as ‘revolting’ and ‘horrible.’ It summarized the plot in the following way:

The play, ‘The Quest of Elizabeth’ was written specially to be broadcast, and it was described in the programme as a scene in a London hospital, where Elizabeth, who has met with an accident, dreams, while under an anaesthetic, ‘and goes on her quest.’ At 8.15, as the play was about to start, the announcer advised all weak-hearted people, invalids, and hospitals not to listen. This seemed an extraordinary statement in view of the fact that recently hospitals have been fitted with wireless for the benefit of sick people and the public have been asked to subscribe towards the installation of sets.

A woman listener said to a Daily Mail reporter last night that the idea of the play was horrible and added: ‘Thank God! My child did not hear it.’

Elizabeth is a girl brought into hospital after being run over by an omnibus when looking for her father; and a man, in an aside, says, ‘He’s dead.’ Despite Elizabeth’s tearful protests, she is taken off to the operating theatre, and listeners hear her inhaling the anaesthetic. Then her dream begins. She meets the characters of several nursery rhymes and sees Davy Jones in his boat at the edge of the Styx. She says that she is looking for her father, but Davy will not take her across because she has not got a ticket. The child, in her anxiety to find her father, jumps into the Styx, and then follows a heartrending cry of “Daddy, Daddy, save me, I am sinking.”

After a pause, the words ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me’ are uttered by a ghostly voice.

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Thus for half an hour sick people, who perhaps more than any find pleasure in listening, were deprived of their enjoyment, while many of those who did listen were shocked and upset.\textsuperscript{571}

But the newspaper had not realized that the BBC had been so worried about the psychological impact on listeners that it had cut a significant part of the end without seeking Berkeley’s permission. The whole affair turned into an embarrassing public row. Berkeley informed the media: ‘I demanded an apology from the BBC, together with a promise that the play should be re-broadcast complete and an undertaking that in future, plays of mine should not be cut without my knowledge. They replied that they could not see their way to give such an undertaking.’\textsuperscript{572} The BBC replied that they had ‘been requested to surrender those functions of censorship which the company considers it vital to retain. We do not mutilate any author’s play, but merely, where necessary, cut it.’\textsuperscript{573} Berkeley then punished the BBC by withdrawing permission to broadcast an act from his new stage play \textit{Mr Abdulla}. Berkeley also retaliated by publishing the play in a compendium that very year and putting it on in the theatre when the \textit{Daily Mail}’s theatrical correspondent decided that there was nothing ‘unpleasant or objectional in the little play. On the contrary, it is rather nice in its pathetic way, and it was well applauded by last night’s audience.’\textsuperscript{574}

\textit{The Quest of Elizabeth} was not a political play, but pushed the boundaries of human emotions and understanding in exploring the idea of after-life and, in particular, the near death experience. It may well be the case that Berkeley’s \textit{grand guignol} expertise enabled him to test the limits of the audience’s sensibility. The full and unexpurgated script of the end reveals the quality of the writing, its suitability for the radio medium, and certainly gives some idea of why BBC managers were anxious about its emotional impact. Dramatising the death of a young child, and the idea of it being distressed and haunted by the disappearance of its parents was not something radio drama had ever confronted before:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{572} ‘BBC And Authors’, \textit{Daily Mail}, (London, England, Tuesday 9 February 1926) p.5., Issue 9300.
\item \textsuperscript{573} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Elizabeth. Bronwen. Why, that’s mother’s name. Oh, I must go on and find them.
Davy. But you haven’t got a ticket.
Elizabeth. Oh, but please can’t you let me past without?
Davy (persuasively). Now, you go back, see! You’ll forget all about it and grow into a great lady and come back’ere when yer proper time comes and when yer got yer ticket an’ all in order …Fancy anyone crossin’ the Styx oo ‘adn’t got ter!
Elizabeth (almost crying). But please, I’ve come all this way to look for my father. And if you say he’s over there with Mummy, won’t you please take me over?
Davy (severely). Belay there! Don’t you try to get honest sailor-men into trouble. You show me a ticket an’ the boat’s there. Otherwise she ain’t stirring…Why, shiver my timbers, I wouldn’t ferry a lovely kid like you across the Styx unless I’d got ter, by reason of you ‘avin a ticket, not fer all the gold at the bottom of the sea…Go back and forget, I tell yer. (The warning music again)
Elizabeth (hotly). I’ve told you I’m looking for my father. I can’t go back. I don’t want to forget. I’m going on. An’ I’ll manage without your horrid boat… Good-bye.
Bill (mockingly as she moves off). You’ll find it a long swim, missy!
Davy (shouting after her). Don’t say you weren’t warned- when it’s too late to change your mind…
Elizabeth. I don’t care. I don’t care. I will go on… Nasty old things, they might take me across in their boat…I’ll climb down to the water, anyway.
(Sound of scrambling down a bank, and the scrunching of her feet on the shingle of the riverside.) Ugh! How hard…I ‘spect the water’s ever so cold… Take off my shoes and stockings; Aunt Ellen’d be so cross if they were wet… There! (sludge, sludge on the shingle). Now, then! (In sudden surprise) It isn’t cold at all. (She is heard paddling in.) Daddy! (Louder) Daddy! (To herself) perhaps he’d bring a boat over..
DADDY!
A FAR-AWAY VOICE. Sweet-heart…Eliza-beth.
ELIZABETH. It’s his voice. (Wildly) DADDY! …DADDY!
A WOMAN’S VOICE IN THE DISTANCE. Little Heart…My Baby!
ELIZABETH…It’s Mummy. They’re both there. (Hoarse with excitement)
DADDY…MUMMY…I’m coming (Splash, splash, splash as she runs in the water. Then, with a touch of apprehension). It’s getting awful deep. (Floundering.) No. No… I’m frightened. It’s too deep… I’m sinking… (Splashing wildly) Daddy!…DADDY!…Save me! (Her voice is lost in a choking gurgle. There is another feeble splash; then silence.)
[A little pause.]

AN INFINITELY TENDER VOICE…Suffer little children to come unto Me…

[The BBC decided to cut the play at this point, thereby concealing the fact of the child’s tragic death on the operating table. The censorship did not prevent listeners still thinking the child drowned in the River Styx trying to find her father.]

[Another little pause. Then the faint clatter of instruments being laid down on a glass surface.]

DOCTOR HOBDAY’S VOICE …Just help me with these stitches, Nurse…There! I think that’ll do nicely. (Suddenly alarmed) Why, Anderson, she’s very limp. Oxygen, man. Quickly!

ANDERSON (grabbing the cylinder) …Massage the heart…

HOBDAY (inarticulately). Confounded gloves. Can get’em off or on. NURSE. All right. Let me…You give the oxygen. ANDERSON (panting). It’s too late, I’m afraid…

HOBDAY (roughly). Go on. Go on. Artificial respiration.

[They work in silence for a moment]

ANDERSON (at last) It’s no good. The pulse has gone and the heart has stopped; and…Who’s that? Is it you, padre?

A CLERGYMAN’S VOICE. Yes. I’ve got your little patient’s relative down below. How is the child?

HOBDAY (gravely). She’s dead.

THE PADRE… “Forasmuch as it hath pleased almighty God”…

NURSE (Shakily). Poor little mite. Let’s hope she’s found her father.

THE PADRE (with grave confidence). You need be in no doubt as to that, Nurse….

THE END.

The intensity of this row between the BBC and Berkeley must have severely poisoned their relationship. It is perplexing there are no references to it in the BBC Written Archives. The row was never resolved. And in the introduction to the volume of plays including *The Quest of Elizabeth* in 1926, Berkeley could not stop himself publishing a public insult directed at the BBC’s Managing Director John Reith:
Finally, my dear Reith, although the process of amputation which the play subsequently underwent may perhaps be regarded as a part atonement for the original commission, *The Quest of Elizabeth* might never have been written if there were not a British Broadcasting Company, wherefore you cannot escape a measure of responsibility for its existence.575

This background has to be taken into account when considering why the BBC would refuse to produce Berkeley’s next script generally regarded as the best play written for the BBC during the 1920s that was never given a broadcast.

Berkeley had also embarrassed the BBC further by almost immediately obtaining a public performance licence from the Lord Chamberlain after the debacle and row attending the BBC’s first broadcast. Approval was given on 22nd February for performance at the Playhouse on 1st March 1926. The Chief Reader, George Street, and indeed the Lord Chamberlain himself recognized how emotionally wrought the play actually was, but unlike the BBC, the powerfully upsetting final scene was something to be performed and appreciated on the stage rather than excised and extinguished on the radio:

A very sad little play. Elizabeth is a child of seven. Her father is dead, and she has been told that he has gone to look for her mother, who is also dead. So, she goes to look for her daddy and is knocked over by a motor. The play opens in a hospital. She is put under an anaesthetic for an operation. Then we are given a childish dream of Jack Horner, Jack and Jill and so/on. It ends with Elizabeth, because she is refused a passage over the Styx, wading over and hearing her Daddy’s voice. Then of course we learn that she died under the operation. I gather that the hospital part is in darkness, though it is not stated explicitly. We hear only the voices of doctor, nurse etc. But it is dreadfully sad. There is, however, no reason whatever for refusing it. Recommend for licence. (Sd.) G.S. Street.576

Lord Chamberlain Colonel Sir George Crichton was so moved on reading the script he wrote in his longhand with a fountain pen applying red ink ‘A painfully harrowing piece,’ above his confirmatory

576 Lord Chamberlain’s Plays Correspondence Files, *The Quest of Elizabeth*, 1926/6744
signature. The Chief Reader George Street gives historians the advantage of explaining how the final and perhaps earlier hospital scene was devised for theatre. This was a pioneering and early example of dramatic intertextuality where scenes written for the radio medium, with voices and sounds only, would be given their sonic integrity and power by performance in an unlit set and darkness framed by the theatre stage.

**Machines- Modernism and Nemesis**

Previous scholars have subjected the last script the BBC commissioned from Reginald Berkeley, *Machines*, to detailed analysis. The consensus is that the play was a great aesthetic advance on *The White Château* and that it served to provide the promise that Berkeley hoped for when writing an article for the *Radio Times* in May 1927 entitled: ‘Broadcasting and the Theatre’:

The ‘idea’ behind his play must be a big one, one which catches the imagination, and he must take care to shape it as faultlessly as is in him; for his audience, without the visual and sensual glamour of the auditorium to lull and distract it, will be keenly alive to flaws in his story’s unfolding. He must make words his servants and exact full service from them. He must give them sharp meaning and keen beauty. [...] Broadcasting, far less shackled by ‘box office considerations’ than the average theatre-manager can ever hope to be, can experiment with new angles of the drama which, once it has the listening public interested, it can hand over for acceptance, adaptation or modification by the theatre. The theatre cannot allow itself to stagnate- disaster lies that way- but financial considerations compel it to play safe rather than risk experiment. The radio-playwright can break fresh ground for the theatre, he can open up new horizons. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the nursery of the serious, intellectual drama of the future may well be the BBC.577

Sadly, for Reginald Berkeley disaster did come his way. The BBC would refuse to risk the experiment of producing it for broadcast in 1927. Wood has summarized the plot succinctly. Taking into account the fact that the BBC received the script less than a year after the General Strike, that it was also negotiating its transformation from a Private Company to public corporation, and had a policy to avoid

programming that was politically controversial, it is not too difficult to appreciate how Berkeley was stepping on trip-wires.

Machines is the story of Mansell, who rises from the factory floor to the House of Commons as the champion of the working man. Berkeley gives Mansell all the attributes of an idealistic hero - he is a conscientious objector, imprisoned during the War, but ‘He has the Albert Medal of the first class for life-saving’ and his lover likens him to Siegfried. A Parliament of factory owners, of course, cannot see the sense of working with their factory hands and so the Industrial League calls a General Strike. To prevent the strike, the Tories set out to discredit Mansell. The blimpish Colonel Willoughby tells press baron Lord Bouverie that Mansell is being funded by the Russians. In fact, Mansell's money comes from his lover, Willoughby's daughter Joyce. The Party instructs a ‘private inquiry agent’ who discovers that Mansell is already married. Mansell is expelled from the Commons for trying to make a personal statement repudiating scandalous reports about him. The Home Secretary authorizes a Special Branch raid on the offices of the Workers’ Industrial Fellowship. The officers find Mansell standing over Joyce's dead body. She tried to leave him – ‘I'd sooner marry a leper than a liar’ and he lashed out. The last headlines Mansell makes are when he meets the hangman.578

When the BBC refused to agree to produce his play, Berkeley published the script in book form, included the correspondence between him and BBC executives and wrote a preface that is one of the finest denunciations of censorship in broadcasting history. His exhortation was also rather modernist in spirit:

The spectacle of the Wireless Aunts and Uncles diligently protecting the great British public from the contamination of modern ideas deserves to be enshrined by a satirist with the Laputan Academy of Projects and the Erewhonian College of unreason …. I have written strongly because I feel strongly. A great instrument of intellectual development is being blunted and misused for want of courage. It is no good replying that British broadcasting is better than any other. It ought to be. And it ought to be better than it is.579

578 Wood, p.53.
579 Berkeley, 1927, 22-23.
Machines is the most pioneering and significant radio drama modernist script of the 1920s. He defined his play in its subtitle as ‘A Symphony of Modern Life’ and as in The White Chateau he deployed originally composed music with montage sound effect design and dialogic writing. One of the BBC executives tasked with plotting its rejection for production explicitly recognised it as a sound ‘Metropolis’. Gladstone Murray was described as head of intelligence in the BBC management and said the play was ‘reminiscent of the German film Metropolis…but had dramatic quality and good dialogue…But from beginning to end it bristles with political controversiality.’\textsuperscript{580}

Machines had a lot more- adultery, ‘easy virtue’ issues between middle class women and working-class men, and to use Berkeley’s own words, a purpose in creating radio plays that required ‘thinking in verbal images’ and the revival of poetic drama. Berkeley himself had just emerged from a divorce case in relation to his first wife and had been cited as the third-party adulterer in the divorce hearing of the woman to be his second wife. Both files have been preserved in the National Archives.

Beck said the writing showed an advance on what Berkeley had achieved in The White Chateau. It was a realist play and broke with the stage model. It was also unprecedented in length most probably running to more than two hours. Beck proclaimed the play had ‘the dignity, tension and passion of plays of the coming decade. It was a prophet before its time.’\textsuperscript{581} Wood argues that it was obvious at the time why the BBC would ban the play:

As if a General Strike were not controversial enough, Berkeley adds an obvious reference to the faked Zinoviev Letter that helped bring down the first Labour government in 1924, a matter-of-fact allusion to Government dirty tricks, legally dubious Special Branch activities and a very thinly disguised Lord Rothermere, owner of the Daily Mirror in Bouverie Street for most of the Twenties. Berkeley knew full well what he was doing and claimed to see no problem with controversy. \textsuperscript{582}

\textsuperscript{580} Pepler, p.206.
\textsuperscript{581} Beck, 8.4.1.
\textsuperscript{582} Wood, p.53.
Beck describes *Machines* as ‘a monumental political parable’ which ‘could have founded the “National Theatre of the Air.”’ Reading it some seventy-five years later, there are elements of the contemporary playwright David Hare, especially in its vivid and satiric presentation of the Press, the Church, a conniving Tory MP, and the House of Commons. It has the sweep of “Pravda.””

Notwithstanding the exigencies and consequences of the censorship row, *Machines* deserved to be recognized as a masterpiece of modernist audio drama. The charge of modernism in the play is the intertwining of disrupting and thought-provoking politics with great advances in the aesthetics of style. If Chothia wanted artifice, it is present in great abundance. The modernist ideology is expressed with full force in the Prologue:

The Age of Machines, in which we live, has diminished the World to an almost contemptible bulk. Where the ancient navigators took half a hundred months to encompass it, the machines of to-day can achieve as much in the same number of hours. They have made us richer in material possession, in power, in variety of pleasures, in the mastery of natural forces, than at any previous time in the history of the human race… But have they brought us near to the Stars?

Man, in his age-long struggle with Nature, created Machinery. The first Man who fashioned a rude stone axe, or dug a snake pit for trapping, laid the foundation of the Mechanical Era. Out of that creative act have grown not only the Machines great and small that roar in the factories and drive great ships across the ocean, or through the air, but also the whole invisible machinery of Civilization- Government, Industry, the Press, the Law, the Party System, the Churches, Public Opinion…

Man has succeeded in shackling and subduing Nature by the help of his Machines. He has even put fetters on himself the better to contrive them. Can he succeed in retaining control- or will they ultimately come to rule over and govern him?

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583 Beck, 8.4.1.
The end of the play demonstrates an exquisite use of ambient montage and dialogue to bring to a close all the acute strands of dramatic tension and present the execution of the central character in everyday public space rather than by melodrama in the execution block with the hangman.

[A roar of traffic in the Strand.]
A POLICEMAN
…Charing Cross? Any bus going this way will take you there, madam…Pass along there, please…
A VOICE IN THE DISTANCE
Mansell- Execution Scene…Special!
A MAN IN THE STREET
Half a minute. Let’s get a paper.
HIS WIFE
Get me a Globe, then- will you?
THE MAN
…That awful rag!
HIS WIFE
Yes, dear…but their face-renovation hints are the best in London.
THE MAN
Face-renovation!…My hat!
THE NEWSBOY
[Nearer] MANSELL – EXECUTION SCENES…SPEESHALL!…
THE MAN
Hi!...Got a Globe?
THE BOY
[Pausing- husky voiced] Yes, mister.
THE MAN
…I’ll have the Sun as well [Chink of coins.]
Here’s your Globe, Elsie. [With animation]
I say, Surrey all out for 72. That’s a bit of a collapse, isn’t it?
THE NEWSBOY
[His voice receding as he scurries on] Mansell- Execution Scenes…Special!
Elsie
[Reading] Listen, dear…Mansell walked to the scaffold without assistance. Less than two minutes elapsed from the time he left his cell…Poor wretch!

THE MAN

…Who’s that?…Oh, did he?…Hello! That’s strike’s off at last. Good job. The men have agreed to the employers’ terms.

ELSIE

What does it mean…Victory of the Machines, dear? What machines?

THE MAN

Oh, I suppose something to do with the Trade Unions. They always put that sort of rot in newspapers…Look out! There’s our bus coming. Hi!

[The sound of an omnibus drawing up.]

THE CONDUCTOR

…No room on top. Inside…Hold tight, please…

[The sound of the starting bell. The omnibus lumbers away. A neighbouring clock strikes the half-hour. The chimes blend into the rhythmical clangour of machinery, bringing the play to an end.]

Berkeley defied BBC censorship by having the full script published in book form along with BBC correspondence, some of which did not survive weeding and destruction to finish up in the BBC written archives. Newspaper advertisements in 1928 promoted the availability of the play script and the veritable ‘J’accuse’ directed at the BBC: ‘Now that the question of who should be or should not be broadcast is before the public, it is important that you should read the type of thing that is being banned.’

By this stage the banning of the play had been whipped up, to use the language of the Nottingham Journal on 2nd January 1928, into ‘an acute controversy’ of censor and wireless with an impending discussion of the issue by the BBC’s directors:

There is known to be division of opinion among the directors of the B.B.C. on censorship matters. The Government instructions to the B.B.C. are to refrain from broadcasting speeches or


586 The Nottingham Journal, ‘Machines by Reginald Berkeley (Author of the White Chateau.), Friday 13 January 1928, p. 3.
lectures containing statements on topics of political, religious, or industrial controversy. Whether plays should be included in the censorship appears to be a matter for discussion.

Recently Captain Berkeley’s play, “Machines,” commissioned by the B.B.C., was considered by them to be unsuitable for broadcasting. Previous to that deletions from another play by Captain Berkeley, “The Quest of Elizabeth,” were made without his permission when broadcast, and he then withdraw his permission for the broadcasting of part of his play, “Mr Abdulla.”

Following the actual meeting of the BBC directors to discuss the issue and the pressure being brought to bear on them in support of Berkeley The Leeds Mercury reported:

‘…it was rejected on the grounds that it was politically controversial and that listeners switching on and off might receive a wrong impression, like that given to certain listeners by Father Ronald Knox in a humorous broadcast account of an imaginary British revolution.

The B.B.C. in a statement issued to-night, said: “The B.B.C. has no time to enter into prolonged arguments with disappointed authors. Moreover, the B.B.C. is so keen on securing authority to add controversial matter to its normal programme that it is concentrating on all practical and reasonable means to that end, avoiding measures calculated to defeat the main purpose.”

The BBC’s line that they had no time for ‘disappointed authors’ was patronizing in tone and a sign of the bitterness felt on both sides and the deep anger over Berkeley’s public embarrassment of the BBC at such a difficult time. Berkeley was scathing about the BBC’s argument that listeners might think they were hearing reality rather than fiction in any production of his play: ‘Really it is absurd for the BBC to assume that the majority of listeners are children and fools; nobody but a child or a fool could conceivably confuse my play for reality.’

The rest of the BBC’s statement was more of an

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advocacy to give it more freedom rather than a defence of its decision over *Machines*. The political pressure remained intense with Mrs Philip Snowden, one of the BBC’s Governors, intending to raise the censorship question at a meeting of the Governors the following week:

The B.B.C.’s present position is precisely the same as it was when, two years ago, it gave evidence before Lord Crawford’s Committee—evidence which induced that Committee to recommend the inclusion of a reasonable amount of controversial matter in the programmes.

By regularly arranged debates on political and other controversial topics, and by affording opportunities to leaders of opinion to place their case before the public, a great service could be rendered, and little danger would be incurred so long as the necessary safeguards for impartiality were provided and discrimination exercised in the choice of subjects. While the routine of ordinary MSS. is a necessary safeguard against advertisement or harmful matter, the present rigorous censorship without regard to the eminence of the talker is hampering the due development of one of the most important sides of the work, and deterring prominent men from making as much use of the service as they might.\(^{590}\)

Berkeley was reported in the Labour Party supporting paper *The Daily Herald* distancing the content of his play from any revolutionary rousing potential. He said it was wrong of the BBC to underestimate the public mentality:

“I contend that the whole play is fantastic. I have nothing to say about a rule about political speeches and lectures not being broadcast, but I must emphatically protest against this rule being extended to works of imagination.”\(^{591}\)

\(^{590}\) *The Yorkshire Post*, ‘B.B.C. And Rejected Play. “No Time For Disappointed Authors”’, 5 January 1928, p. 10.

The most detailed account of Berkeley’s position appeared in the liberal Manchester Guardian, which given the author’s background as a radical Liberal Party MP, gave much more prominence to his argument:

“Machines” is the story of a working man, Captain Berkeley said, who forms a fellowship of labour, with the object of raising the status of the worker to that of a copartner industry. Financed by the daughter of a capitalist, the organization grows, and the play works up to a scene in the House of Commons, concluding with the downfall of the man as a result of divorce proceedings instituted by his wife, the daughter of the capitalist cited. […]

“The minutest details of the whole plot were discussed with and approved by the head of the Dramatic Department of the B.B.C. beforehand. […] The only censorship that ought to be imposed on broadcast material, in my opinion, is that imposed on book publications. The question ought to be clear up once and for all. Unless a work fails because it is not good enough to broadcast, if it is not of high enough standard artistically, the B.B.C. should not tear up their contract—except on the ground that the work is obscene, blasphemous, or seditious.

As to the suggestion that listeners coming on in the middle of the play would be deceived into thinking that it was a reality, there does not seem to me the faintest possibility of this happening. There is no passage in the play that suggests such a thing, and there is a thread of music running through it, and nobody could imagine a revolution set to music.”592

In many respects Berkeley’s political position of co-partnership between work and industry, social credit and cooperation not revolution chimes fully with D.G. Bridson who was to find his pioneering and innovative verse play Prometheus covering the same theme through radio drama censored in mid-rehearsal and after being scheduled and promoted in The Radio Times in 1934.

There is evidence that the critical reception of the publication of Machines in book form confirmed that the BBC had effectively martyred ‘something new in the way of dramatic art’ according to The Scotsman:

“Machines” as not written for the stage, but for the microphone. One gathers from the preface something of the reason why it was never broadcasted—the letters which passed between author and the B.B.C. make interesting reading—and one gathers, from the same source, something of the problems which wireless drama raises. The play deals with man’s revolt against machinery and capitalism. It is cleverly constructed, and the author’s method of conveying to the ear the atmosphere of a newspaper office, a political meeting, or a factory is ingenious.\textsuperscript{593}

After publication of the book of the play along with the exposure the BBC’s mean-spirited and disingenuous attempt to originally pretend the decision to not go ahead with its production and broadcast was on qualitative rather political grounds, Berkeley understandably sought to have it presented to live theatre audiences. This he had done so successfully with \textit{The White Château} and \textit{The Quest of Elizabeth}. The BBC’s lack of courage could thus be exposed on stage. However, the Lord Chamberlain clearly frustrated that ambition.

It would have been helpful if the Lord Chamberlain’s correspondence with Berkeley had survived so that we could compare the theatre correlative of censorship. An index card confirms that Berkeley submitted the stage version for approval and licensing and refers to hitherto unfound ‘file 221,’ but it does not disclose any date, so we do not know how soon after the 1927-8 row and book publication, the theatre project was engaged. All we do know is that the stage manuscript was returned to him, implying a refusal. We have no indication of the reasons for that refusal or whether there had been any attempted negotiation over proposed cuts and changes.

Towards the end of 1930 \textit{Machines} was produced and performed at the Arts Theatre Club—a venue and ‘members only’ reception that outmanoevred and evaded the control of state theatre censorship, but certainly limited its commercial potential and reach in terms of size of audience. The \textit{Manchester Guardian}’s review by Ivor Brown, a later editor of \textit{The Observer}, confirms its political importance and dramaturgical validity:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
Mr Reginald Berkeley’s play “Machines” has for its subject the grip of the organization on the individual, not only as a thing of metal but as a thing of mind. The specialist, we have been wittily told, is one who knows more and more about less and less, which the rest of us know less and less about more and more. The machine-minder used to be a specialist, but now he is reduced to smaller knowledge and smaller functions. We see him in the factory and hear his discontent, not with his wage but with his work. The anger is voiced by an enthusiast called Mansell, who determines to found a Labour League, independent alike of politics and trade unionism, working simply for equality of industrial control with the capitalist.

[…]
Mr Berkeley has attempted a great deal. For that we must be extremely grateful. [...] The best scenes are in Fleet Street, where the author has sketched with incisive accuracy the realism of newspaper life. But the factory is well done too. [...] The play is large, it contains abundance of opinion, scene and character, and it should certainly interest a wider audience. [...] No member of the audience could complain that he had not had something in his own line, from homicidal and amorous drama to industrial psychology. Mr Berkeley can put large things lucidly, and, with a little sharpening and shortening, his piece should have a considerable future.  

*Machines* though would have no future. Berkeley’s pre-eminence as a dramatic force in writing at the time was certainly sustained by his play about Florence Nightingale *The Lady With The Lamp* (1929). It is intriguing that this would be first premièred at the Arts Theatre Club in 1929 before its transfer to the Garrick for 176 performances. But he would soon leave Britain for Hollywood where he would thrive as a screenwriter with many significant credits *Dreyfus* (1931), *Cavalcade* (1933), *The World Moves On* (1934), *Carolina* (1934) and *Nurse Edith Cavell* (1939) before his untimely death at the age of 44 in 1935 from pneumonia following an operation in Los Angeles.

**Conclusion**

Berkeley’s first BBC radio play *The Dweller In The Darkness* (1924) was informed by his penchant for *grand guignol*. It was set in a blind mise-en-scène for the characters when the lights go out and inspired by the contemporary cultural preoccupation with spiritualism. It ended with the savage murder

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594 Brown, Ivor, ““Machines” Mr. Reginald’s Berkeley’s Play,” *The Manchester Guardian*, Nov 7 1930) p. 8
of the living by a living dead or ghost. *The White Chateau* was a significant landmark in radio drama modernism because it mixed reality with mythology, it disconnected sounds from reality into symbolic meaning through originally composed music and a unique rhythm of sound effects that were written as a sound metaphor for war. There was an almost menacing poetic texture to the verbal representations of mechanized and machine-driven war. It gave voice to a symbolic building, The White Château itself, as a mythological witness and ontological testimony to humankind’s folly, tragedy and indictment of itself in global and industrialised war.

The pioneering length of the play and its political subject challenged and disrupted the pre-established policy that radio plays should not last more than half an hour. It challenged and overcame the media institutional and socio-political reluctance to deal with the subject of war. Berkeley had to struggle to ensure his play was broadcast in the form and length he envisaged and was not delayed to the point of oblivion by the external politics concerning the Treaty of Locarno. He was successful because he benefited from the fact that any political consensus was largely on his side and had the power of intervention, persuasion and giving the green light for transmission. But the situation could certainly be said to be ‘touch and go.’

*The White Chateau* (1925) was not followed by *Machines* but by an original radio play *The Quest of Elizabeth* (1926) in which he was encouraged to push the boundaries of emotional sensibility. It can be seen as a modernist development in the radio drama form because it engages a long dream sequence, the audiogenic exploration of close to death consciousness of a child in a hospital emergency, and its ending is harsh and by no means happy. A child knocked over by a car while searching for her mother and father is unaware they had previously died, and she dies herself on the operating table. The BBC cut the final scene without Berkeley’s permission thinking it was too horrible for their listeners. Berkeley instructed his agent to withdraw the BBC’s rights to an outside broadcast of one of his stage plays, and he publicly rebuked Reith himself when the script was published in May 1926. The destructive and disruptive hand of institutional censorship gestated a public row and protest, an intense media debate about what is acceptable in content and form in the new medium of radio drama. This was a quintessential modernist media event and controversy.
Machines was commissioned, written and delivered but then rejected because Reith and the BBC hierarchy were negotiating relative independence through incorporation, licence fee, and feared its politics was too ‘controversial.’ But it is also a real possibility that both parties knew that his last commissioned play would never get to air. The necessary relationship of trust and respect had wholly ruptured during the public row over The Quest of Elizabeth. It seems inconceivable that there was any platform for harmonious working together. Nothing had been mediated and resolved. No apologies had been exchanged. The BBC only had to honour the contract by paying for the script. They had no obligation to put it into production. It would appear the surviving archives are silent on memos and correspondence most likely destroyed, and consequently, so many things that might have been said have not been fully documented and preserved for posterity.

What has not been considered is whether Reginald Berkeley also knew the play he wanted to write would be rejected. He was an accomplished politician. He knew he had book publication, theatre options, and perhaps even film options. It may well be the case that Berkeley pushed political boundaries to what he knew were the extreme points in order to generate so much consternation and controversy that the publicity would achieve some positive outcome for the play, and the agitational contemporaneity could carry its fate onto some unpredictable and unforeseen benefit for society and culture in general as well as for himself as a political dramatist.

An analysis of Reginald Berkeley’s battles of censorship with the BBC over the cutting and rejection of his work in relation to the yardstick of MacMurraugh-Kavanagh and Aldgate’s understanding of institutional containment versus ‘agitational contemporaneity’ suggests Berkeley lacked finesse and patience in dealing with the forces of caution and conservatism. Berkeley’s producer, the then head of BBC Drama Production, R.E. Jeffrey was not a Sydney Newman at the BBC in the early 1960s. BBC Managing director John Reith was not Newman’s enlightened Director-General Carlton Greene who was so attuned to developments in counter-culture. It was as though Berkeley was writing for the late 1930s or even 1960s. Institutional containment defeated Berkeley because his agitational contemporaneity was too explosive and provocative for his time.
Berkeley can also be criticized for not being modernist enough. One of the artifices of modernism could be in the ability to disguise politics with art. In 1928 the BBC began to broadcast science fiction plays. ‘X’ by George Crayton was described as a radio thriller and compared to the works of Jules Verne and the Fabian socialist exponent of science fiction H.G. Wells. *The Radio Times* entry for 29th October 1928 stated:

‘X’ was the name given by three wireless enthusiasts in England to an unknown station that seemed to broadcast the same programme every night until one occasion when it was interrupted by a desperate cry for help. Behind the enigma of the mystery station lies a tale of machinery run riot; of men imprisoned in a fortress of steel; of a city ruled by semi-human machines, crushing the men who made them in their metallic grip. No stranger, more thrilling story was ever written by Jules Verne or H.G. Wells. And underlying it all is the hint of that unknown quantity— that dangerous, incalculable ‘X’— that lurks in the machinery made by man.596

‘X’ explored some of the modernist themes in Berkeley’s play *Machines*. The script has been retained in the BBC’s Written Archives and in many respects the writing has a political edge that through the science fiction genre can mask the potential problem of controversy:

Morton: Yes. For generations they had been making use of their extraordinary gifts. It is difficult for you to imagine it, but they were ahead of the civilization we know. They had solved many problems we have not solved. I spoke just now of thought transference – it was in every day use here. They were great engineers, and their inventive genius was amazing. They used their mechanical skill in trying to invent means of lightening their daily burdens – the irksome routine which had to be done.

Spent: Labour saving devices.

Morton: Yes that is a fair analogy in our civilisation. They spent their time trying to make more time. (pause) You don’t understand me? They set out with the idea that the more time they had free from work, the more they could devote to the pursuits they liked…music, art, sport, and similar things – pleasures, you might say. Their problem was to diminish the amount of work

each man had to do unwillingly. They devoted themselves to solving this, and…and they succeeded.

Clearon: How?

Morton: In short, by making machinery – marvellous, devilish machinery – to do everything. They tackled the thing in a characteristically logical way. They took one man’s job, and analysed it – was it necessary? If it was, they used their ingenuity to make a machine to do it. For generations at least – perhaps for centuries – they went on with this work – a little at a time – until they had created a vast, organized machine to do everything. You have no conception of the amazing ingenuity they used – no conception, because the ideas you have were out of date here generations ago.597

It is obvious that the writing in Crayton’s script is inferior to that in Berkeley’s Machines. Crayton had no significant author’s profile in theatre or other fields. He may have been the pseudonym of a producer at the BBC. He cannot be compared to Berkeley. But the fact that the BBC was prepared to accommodate a modernist genre of story-telling in the radio drama form within a year of the censorship crisis that saw the end of Berkeley’s BBC writing career suggests that a less provocative and uncompromising stance on his part in relation to all his dealings with the BBC might have led to a different course. The artifice of modernism could have been a cleverer solution to sustaining his writing relationship with the BBC and the art of radio drama may have benefited from his continuing participation as an experimental and pioneering audio-dramatist.

Chapter Four. Direct BBC censorship of modernist texts by D.G Bridson and his negotiation with Joan Littlewood and Olive Shapley of ‘institutional containment.’

BBC Northern Region in Manchester played host to significant developments in radio drama modernism during the 1930s. Many of the programme makers were left-wing and subject to vetting and joint BBC and Security Service surveillance. However, they seemed to be capable of successfully negotiating the controlling hand of BBC censorship and succeeded in making and broadcasting highly political and aesthetically ground-breaking radio drama and documentary features. Key players had continuing and thriving BBC careers and those who were freelance flourished and endured despite having the mark of the MI5 Christmas Tree stamp on their files. Their agitational contemporaneity appears to have been tolerated or not greatly noticed and constructed as a problem. The work, context and political dimensions of the so-called ‘BBC Manchester School’ of radio-feature makers has been exhaustively researched and written about by academics. However, this thesis seeks to revisit some of the personalities, a limited selection of some of their work, and investigate their contribution to radio modernism and how they were able to negotiate the containment of the BBC as a media institution much more effectively than Reginald Berkeley.

D.G. Bridson was the protégé of Edward Archibald ‘Archie’ Harding (1903-53). Harding was Bridson’s mentor and sponsor in his early years at the BBC in his role of head of features in Manchester up until 1936. Harding went on to have a major influence on the culture of feature production in the BBC and beyond by taking on the role of Chief Instructor. While in Manchester, Bridson and Harding have been credited with developing the radio feature form into more challenging ‘social documentaries’. It could be argued that the blend in the radio feature form shifted aesthetically and ideologically in content from majority dramatization of documentary reality to majority representation of actuality, but still with performance and the radio dramatic arts contributing to the programme’s tapestry of sound.

The trouble with Harding

Harding’s legend was rather sealed in D.G. Bridson’s autobiography when he recalled that the BBC’s Director General John Reith banished him to Manchester after politically controversial content in the broadcast feature New Year Over Europe: “You’re a very dangerous man, Harding. I think you’d be better up North where you can’t do so much damage.”599 The programme had been designed to link the countries of Europe on New Year’s Eve in a spirit of good will and transnational harmony. However, his commentary had been invested, according to Peter Black, with ‘some help from Claud Cockburn’ which:

…included some punchy but in the context inappropriate information about the proportion of national income Poland was spending on arms. The Polish government protested and Harding was sent to be Programme Director in the North Region, an appointment considered by some of his colleagues in the South much as the inmates of the Kremlin would have regarded the promotion of a fellow-member to be stationmaster at Omsk.600

As Black says, Bridson provides an ‘exhilarating account’601 of Harding’s features making regime in Manchester in Prospero and Ariel:

Along with Lance Sievking, E.J.King-Bull and Mary Hope Allen, he had created the Feature Programme, for which the BBC was soon to become renowned. He had worked along with Val Gielgud in pioneering radio drama, and with Eric Maschwitz and John Watt before the Variety Department had even been formed. His whole attitude to the medium was stimulating and somehow exiting. To him, the microphone had been an invention no less revolutionary than the printing-press, and the spoken word was far more immediate in its impact than printed words could ever be. Marshall McLuhan might have learnt a great deal from Harding’s theories, back in the early thirties.602

599 Bridson, 1971, p. 22.
601 Ibid.
602 Bridson, 1972, p. 30.
Scannell has effectively defined and delineated the difference in radio modernism between Sieveking and Harding. Sieveking was art for art’s sake innovative in the modern era. Harding was modern, innovative and political. In *Stuff of Radio* Sieveking had confessed to being Christian and a loyal subject of the King: ‘All the politics I have can be summed up in a few words: if the excellent civil service could be left to administer the wide liberties of the British constitution, we might be rid of these jiggling politicians for ever.’ Scannell profiled Harding as a stark political contrast though sharing Sieveking’s modernist tastes:

Harding’s work was quite different from Sieveking’s allegorical whimsies. It included special features for the major feast days in the BBC calendar and a varied mix of literary productions including a memorable feature on the sixteenth-century French poet, François Villon, written in collaboration with Ezra Pound.

Harding’s more historical and political productions included *The Republic of Austria, Crisis in Spain*, and *New Year Over Europe*.

The scripts of Harding’s collaboration with Ezra Pound on radio operas for the BBC have been published and analyzed as key radio modernist events by Margaret Fisher in *Ezra Pound’s Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933* (2002). Scannell argues *Crisis in Spain* was a brilliant programme which ‘broke new ground’ and went beyond *The Radio Times* proclaiming it ‘the first English example of the reporting in Radio form of contemporary events […] The programme contains no comment, the facts themselves are dramatic enough.’ The original programme broadcast 11th June 1931 was not archived by the BBC though credited as having been ‘composed and produced by E.A. Harding and John Watt.” It is fascinating that it should be described as having been ‘composed’ as opposed to being ‘produced.’ The language here emphasizes a creative process of more playing

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603 Sieveking, 1934, p. 32.
604 Scannell, 1986, p. 5.
605 Ibid.
607 Ibid.
rather than construction and facilitation. It could certainly be described as journalistic montage. Scannell’s analysis serves to enhance its modernist credentials:

There was no single narrator to control and guide the narrative. Events spoke themselves via “caption voices” in French, Spanish, German, English and American as events in Spain were relayed round the world by international press agencies, radio and news reporters. Music, with strong royalist or republican associations, was used to build momentum into the sequence of events. Impressionistic montage was used to generate the sense of an irresistible march of events towards the proclamation of the republic. By foregrounding the role of the modern media, the narrative achieved a complex cross-cutting between events taking place in Spain and their simultaneous retransmission round the world. The significance of the Spanish crisis was extended beyond its own frontiers by the formal devices of the narrative itself.  

Scannell was able to study a re-production by Harding for BBC Staff Training made on 25th March 1938 that had been preserved in the BBC’s sound archives and a copy of which has also been provided to the author by Bennett Maxwell.  

There is no doubt that Harding was a magnet and indeed significant recruiter of left-wing innovative writers, poets, and performers. Peter Black’s lively description of how Joan Littlewood decided to hitchhike to Manchester where she would meet and marry the Communist Party activist Jimmy Miller who later changed his name to Ewan McColl emphasizes how Harding was the spider weaving the web:

…another talent had begun to flower. This belonged to Joan Littlewood, whom Harding had met when he presented the first RADA gold medal for microphone technique to her. She came from East End of London, had won a scholarship to RADA, which, said Bridson, she detested as heartily as the genteel mediocrity of the West End theatre. That sounds like Joan Littlewood all

608 Ibid.
609 Audio track 127.
right. Harding asked her to go and see him, and she walked the 180 miles with a rucksack, sleeping out, living on raw potatoes and turnips.\textsuperscript{610}

Harding and Bridson established a platform and culture to give voice for working class communities. The spirit of their work was left-wing and questioning of social injustice. One of their first projects involved a clash of literary modernism and censorship. Harding wanted to use Bridson’s poem ‘The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins’ in \textit{Jannock} described as ‘a Malicious Medley of the North- In which is unfolded the whole story of a Southern Innocence abroad’ in the autumn of 1934. But BBC managers objected to the use of the section of the poem dealing with the subject of ‘lechery.’ Bridson explained:

This monologue was written as far back as 1933. The major part of it was broadcast by the old North Region of the B.B.C. on 14\textsuperscript{th} November, 1934 […] I say ‘the major part of it’ was broadcast because one-seventh of it— notably the deadly sin of lechery— was removed from the script at the last minute. Alas, poor Susie…! \textsuperscript{611}

The script retained in the BBC Written Archives does not include the censored section in terms of any passage with blue pencil lines through it. Other parts of the script do indicate cuts, so it can only be assumed that ‘at the last minute’ the production team were also able to type up a new production manuscript for rehearsal and live performance. It is also intriguing that Bridson did not restore the excised sequence on lechery when publishing the poem in \textit{The Christmas Child} volume in 1950. The production script version of ‘The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins’ has a considerable range of nuanced differences in vocabulary and language throughout compared to Bridson’s polished version published sixteen years later.\textsuperscript{612} For example, in the BBC production script ‘If you please, Susie…’\textsuperscript{613}

\textsuperscript{610} Black, 1972, p. 131.
\textsuperscript{611} Bridson, 1950, p.232.
\textsuperscript{612} Ibid pp. 33-37.
\textsuperscript{613} Bridson D.G. \textit{Jannock: A Malicious Medley of the North} (BBC Northern Scripts 1934, provided by BBC Written Archives, Caversham) p. 21.
is rendered in the book as ‘If you don’t mind, Susie….’ The mockingly ‘Solemn Voice’ saying ‘In my time, Jim boy, in my time…’ with FX of ‘Occasional ring of till bell through following’ is also excised from the 1950 representation of this part of the poem.

The BBC’s Culture of Censorship

The very idea that troublesome producers had to be exiled to far-flung outposts of BBC operations chimes with the policy of censorship and containment of subversive subjects, programmes and styles in radio broadcasting operating during the 1930s. The decade began with the resignation of Head of Talks, Hilda Matheson, towards the end of 1931 over the censorship of Harold Nicolson’s presentation on James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*. This was something Nicolson was prepared to tolerate and then negotiate around, but an additional pressure and interference that Matheson was unable to bear. When she died in 1941, H.G. Wells argued that she had unnecessarily abandoned her agitational contemporaneity from the position of influence that she had within the media institution:

She maintained a steady fight against Sir John Reith, who was inspired by a loyalty to influences above him far stronger than any sense of duty to the greater possibilities of his position. She lost the fight. She was manoeuvred into an uncomfortable position and she was so unwise to resign her position. She was not thick-skinned enough for that sort of struggle. ‘Never resign, never abdicate,’ is a sound rule of life for anyone holding an official position. People will back you when you sit tight who will make no attempt to replace you if you stand down.

Matheson maintained a close eye on matters of censorship through the rest of the 1930s and condemned what Scannell described as a ‘purge […] imposed on Talks’ in 1935 after Reith became suspicious of her successor Charles Siepmann. In the same manner of Harding’s exile to Manchester leading figures were promoted to positions away from Broadcasting House which Matheson strongly criticized in *Political Quarterly*: ‘Because this is the real battle ground of opinion, prejudice, fear,
influence, it is in this sphere that there has been most vacillation in policy, and most change in organisation and in personnel [...] a dispersal and a disintegration unparalleled in any other department.\footnote{Matheson, 1935, p.}

Matheson addressed censorship issues when writing for her column in the Observer newspaper. Harding and his Manchester team could be in no doubt about the BBC’s sensitivity to giving voice to people perceived to be advancing revolutionary or subversive messages. On March 5th 1934, engineer William Ferrie, invited to provide a talk on modern industry in a series about ‘National Character’, waited until he was live on air in front of the microphone to protest about how his script had been cut and censored: ‘What I wanted to tell you has been so censored by the BBC that it would be a travesty to give what is left.’\footnote{The Yorkshire Evening Post, ‘B.B.C. Censorship: Statement After Last Night’s Protest’, Tuesday March 6, 1934, pg. 6.} He then stopped and the embarrassing silence was eventually filled with the playing of gramophone records. He explained afterwards:

What the BBC censor wanted me to say was absolutely against my principles as a working-class man and a trade unionist. I was indignant when I saw the corrections that had been made in my manuscript, and determined, since I could not give my own speech over the microphone, to say nothing. \footnote{Ibid.}

Matheson rather relished analyzing the event in her column under the title ‘B.B.C Blue Pencils; Talks And The Censor’:

Many people when they heard Mr. William Ferrie’s dramatic protest at the microphone on Monday must have felt that quickening of the pulse which all true Britons tend to feel for any David tilting at Goliath, whether they share his views or not. Mr Ferrie seems to have treated with scant courtesy those who had been trying to help him put his point of view effectively for the microphone, since he had given no hint of his intentions during the weeks of drafting and redrafting, nor during the hour’s rehearsal which immediately preceded the actual broadcast. […]

\footnote{Matheson, 1935, p.}
\footnote{The Yorkshire Evening Post, ‘B.B.C. Censorship: Statement After Last Night’s Protest’, Tuesday March 6, 1934, pg. 6.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
It is surely along the lines of great freedom to responsible speakers that broadcasting can contribute most to public understanding. An occasional lapse of taste or error of judgment is a price worth paying and a risk worth taking.620

The William Ferrie furore was followed by another row a few days later when, George Staunton, an unemployed man who had been on a hunger-march to London, rejected the substitute manuscript provided to him by the BBC. His three-minute talk was simply dropped out of the programme when he refused to accept the edited version and all attempts at reaching a compromise had failed. The Manchester Guardian published both versions. Even though the BBC denied it was exercising ‘dictatorship’ it explained:

The manuscript contained a number of claims and statements of highly provocative and propagandist nature. They were not strictly relevant to the subject of the talk and, as such, were wholly unacceptable to us. The manuscript was therefore rejected.621

Staunton had concluded his original talk exclaiming:

Already there is a revolt against the niggardly sum of 2s. for an unemployed man’s child. Already there is talk of restoring the dole cuts—cuts which have meant untold suffering and mass starvation to millions. But the hunger march and the congress of action are only the beginning. Decisions were taken in London and are already being operated throughout the country to take the necessary actions for the withdrawal of the new Unemployment Bill and to make capitalism provide work and wages at trade union rates and conditions. Workers! Build a mighty united front and smash the Government of hunger and War!622

622 Ibid.
Much else has been written about the culture of BBC censorship during the 1930s. Ian Rodger described how ‘unaccountably touchy’ it could be about a 1938 production of *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot. The poet was enraged when references to abortion had to be cut. Rodger reported other instances of censorship not present in historical accounts of BBC broadcasting from this time:

George Reavey, who was Russian-Irish, sold a number of Russian plays in translation from 1933 onwards but when he offered *Krassin Saves Italia* in 1937, the Foreign Office intervened and prevented the play being broadcast on the grounds that it was pro-Soviet. When the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941, the Foreign Office finally relented but there was still a proviso that the production should not contain the singing of the Red Flag.

The writer R. F. Delderfield who became famous for the television dramatization of his novel *To Serve Them All Our Days* made no reference to the censorship troubles he had with the BBC during the 1930s in his autobiography published in 1968 *For My Own Amusement*. But he did share his experience with Ian Rodger who recounted how in 1935 he was then a journalist working on a West England weekly newspaper and turning first to the BBC rather than the theatre as a market for his dramatic writing:

He submitted a play about the war in Abyssinia entitled *Experiment in Futility* which was turned down on the grounds that it was too controversial. He had no better luck with another play in 1937. In 1938 he actually encountered religious censorship when he offered *Spark In Judaea*, which viewed the events of the Crucifixion from the vantage of the Roman soldiers. John Pudney, the poet, who was in charge of scripts, found the play acceptable but he decided to play safe and submitted it to the Religious Department of the BBC, who immediately rejected it on the grounds that its content was ‘too realistic’. *Spark in Judaea* was eventually performed successfully in several theatres without causing religious riots, but it was banned from the radio.

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624 Ibid p.52.
625 Ibid.
Rodger’s chronicling of the BBC’s hypersensitivity to politics extending to the experimental. The well-established radio playwright and producer Tyrone Guthrie had had to wait for seven years before his modernist script Matrimonial News would be accepted for production in 1938. But Director of Drama productions Val Gielgud would reject his further experimental offering of Traveller’s Joy in 1939.

The March of The ‘45

Scannell and Cardiff would observe: ‘In the second half of the thirties most of the interesting and innovative work in features and documentaries was being done in Manchester.’626 Bridson himself recognized how Harding’s enthusiasm for his work meant that The March of The ‘45.

…was his favourite demonstration piece, and as his students included radio producers from all over the world, news of the programme naturally got around. Archibald MacLeish referred to it as a prototype (unheard by him) in his preface to The Fall of the City. Milton Allen Kaplan quoted from it copiously in his Radio and Poetry. Louis MacNeice paid handsome tribute to it in his foreword to Christopher Columbus.627

The March of The ‘45 in 1936 was a multiple studio produced epic dramatizing Bonnie Prince Charlie’s invasion with the Scottish clans of England in 1745 and can be interpreted as symbolizing social rebellion against oppression and injustice. A trace of concern about the impact on English Scottish relations was recorded in the BBC written archives during a remake in the 1940s, but Bridson himself disclosed in his 1971 autobiography that his desire to explicitly confront the social injustice of the present with the mythology and narrative of rebellion from the past was directly censored prior to broadcast. His original script included the following verse narrative:

As for Salford, it is a different place—
Manchester also. We can hardly remember

626 Cardiff & Scannell, pp.151-2.
Where or when he came among us.

Not many joined him, as it was;
     And traces vanish as the years lapse.
Very few would join him now—
     Apart from the unemployed, perhaps:

Monotony tries everything once… 628

Bridson regarded this intervention as censorial and used his autobiography perhaps to set the record and even settle old scores:

As for the unemployed, they were becoming so monotonous- as a continuing national reproach- that the thirties were doing their best to forget all about them. It was felt that they posed a far greater threat to government than the Jacobites had ever done; and the very mention of them was getting to be tendentious. Accordingly, I was ordered by the policy scrutineers to remove the reference. This I reluctantly did; and until re-armament had improved the national situation, ‘corner-boys’ had to be substituted for the offending word! I rather wonder which constitutes the greater menace today… 629

Notwithstanding this unwelcome interference with what was in reality a radio drama script The March of the ’45 was an outstanding achievement in sound drama writing and production. It was live produced from two regional broadcasting centres; one in Manchester and the other in Glasgow, Scotland. Roger Wood observed:

…the auditory backcloth of The March of the ’45 demonstrates the extraordinary virtuosity of technique that the BBC had achieved in little more than a decade. The piece has true acoustic depth: the listener knows, without need of explanatory dialogue, that in Perth the clansmen are celebrating in the street below the room where their leaders confer. Such sound texturing was clearly commonplace because Bridson uses silence to point up the horror of the battle of

628 Bridson, 1971, p. 59.
629 Ibid.
Prestonpans. On the eve of the battle horses whinny and a distant bugle sounds. Close to, clansmen whisper with a local who knows a way through the quagmire. The battle begins to the rumble of the battle drum. Orchestral music underscores the advance- then all sounds cease. The carnage is described, not heard.630

Bridson’s original script for the first broadcast in February 1936 reveals that the subsidiary title to the play was ‘A Radio-Panorama in Verse and Song.’ The breadth and depth of the sound texture, the complexity of production, the scale of cast, sound design and musical orchestration, and Odyssean tragedy encapsulated in the journey of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Scottish clans in 1745 certainly qualifies for the term Panorama of storytelling. In an article for The Radio Times when it was broadcast for the second time in November 1936, Bridson explained the programme was:

...still very largely an experiment- an attempt to give back to poetry its very oldest function: the telling of a grand story in the most picturesque, most stirring, most compelling way. It is an attempt to write poetry for the ear of the listener rather than the eye of the reader.

But a radio programme has to be more than a mere experiment in the writing of poetry. And here is a programme that has been written to unite the resources of two large broadcasting regions. It is a programme too wide in its sweep to be coped with individually by either Scotland or the North, and it relies upon the clash of two national temperaments for its full dramatic force. To produce it, the dramatic control panels of Manchester and Glasgow have had to be linked in such a way that either station can feed the other. Listeners may be interested to realise that the resulting programme is being further flashed down to the National transmitter for reception all over the country. In fact, it will travel very nearly as far down as the rebels themselves travelled on foot! 631

The reception of the play’s broadcast by critics indicate that it was being recognized for its ambition and wide artistic horizon in embracing the multi-various sources of sound, styles of writing and performance. It could be argued that Grace Wyndham Goldie recognized its collage approach when reviewing the first broadcast in February 1936:

630 Wood, p. 257.
The March of the ’45, which was given by the Scottish and Northern stations last Friday, was a highly coloured programme and very good fun. It was certainly somewhat of a jumble. Its curious mixture of recitation, new verse, old verse, prose dialogue, instrumental music of all kinds and effects of all sorts was sometimes rather like a Scottish village concert with ‘the Meenister’ making poetic speeches between the turns. Nevertheless this, I maintain, is the way to give us our history over the microphone. The triumphant entry into Edinburgh after Prestonpans with pipers playing and the surge of the verse description and the cheers and the shouting and the ringing of bells made me feel the intoxication of the Highland army at that moment. And I felt, too, the bitter cold over the Cheviots and the slowly growing despair of the march south. Here was experience; not a bundle of facts. This is what I want from feature programmes.632

The potential undercurrent of romanticizing Scottish nationalism that can be felt in the passion and force of the verse and music was picked up by another Listener review to the production in 1956:

THE MARCH OF THE ’45 is the kind of play that makes Jacobites of us all. I don’t know whether D.G. Bridson wrote it with that in mind; but on Sunday night, just as on those other nights in 1936, when the clans first streamed through Scotland, I found myself wearing the white cockade. [...] The triumph of The March is in its movement. We hear it in the iterated phrase, ‘The clans are coming, the clans are coming’. In the imagination Scotland is alive with marching men, the moving flash of steel, the surge and swoop of the clans. It is a lesson in the writing of narrative verse. We are unconscious of the studio, unconscious indeed of the twentieth century.633

Bridson censored but not unbowed

The new research for this thesis has involved analyzing in great detail all of the material held in the BBC’s written archives on D.G. Bridson as well as cross-referencing what he published in his autobiography Prospero and Ariel. In his internal dealings at the BBC, Bridson did not respond aggressively, defiantly or particularly aggressively to interference, censorship and all the other

machinations of institutional containment. Bridson’s career as a freelance and staff producer in the BBC would be characterized by negotiating the forces of institutional censorship through producing socially questioning creative writing and production. Sometimes it would result in direct censorship and withdrawal of productions after they had been listed in the *Radio Times* and were in mid-rehearsal. This was the fate for an impressive modernist verse play with the title *Prometheus* which was scheduled for broadcast on 27th August 1934:

> It was written in the form of classical tragedy, and set in what I described as the Workshop of the World. Its hero, the Engineer, was vainly attempting to hold the balance between the factory floor and management. As was to be expected, he ended up as a victim of neo-luddite violence: the workers threw him to the machines.

> Despite its anti-Marxist economics, Harding liked the play and accepted it; in due course it was cast and billed and went into rehearsal. Once again, Ewan MacColl was given a major part to play; there couldn’t have been a better choice for the militant leader of the workers. Robin Whitworth and I were billed as co-producers, he looking after the technical aspects at the control panel and I the speaking of the verse dialogue and the various choruses. 634

The problem with *Prometheus* was the institutional context at the BBC where the Director-General’s state of nervousness was most likely in direct proportion with the tone and nature of complaints heard during his regular conversations with the Postmaster-General- the government minister responsible for broadcasting. Harding had been given a dressing down from London by Reith over the broadcasting of an interview with hunger-marchers from BBC Northern Region Manchester that had not been particularly complimentary about the National Government. An international comparative study of the political use of radio published in 1939 by the Geneva Research Centre concluded that ‘The British Broadcasting Corporation is not nominally a branch of the Government, but has been always under its influence.’ 635 The report’s author Thomas Grandin observed:

This is due to the fact, as Mr. H.V. Kaltenborn points out, that there is a clause in the BBC license which allows ‘the politically minded Postmaster General to order the Corporation to do or not to do a specific thing. Sir John Reith, Director of the British Broadcasting Corporation, tells me’, continues Mr. Kaltenborn, ‘that a friendly telephone conversation between himself and the Postmaster General has sufficed to clear every issue that has arisen. This may be so, but it is evident that the mere threat of government interference has made the Corporation a very conservative organization.’

Harding had already lost a few of his metaphorical nine lives in pushing the boundaries of risk-taking and admonition. He decided that with Prometheus it was prudent to send the script to London for what was described as ‘policy scrutiny.’ As Bridson makes so clear, nobody at Broadcasting House had any appreciation of the political concept of Social Credit:

To a policy scrutiniser, an argumentative play written around a revolt of the workers was manifestly inspired by the Comintern. Prometheus was banned by the BBC Controller of Programmes, Colonel Dawny, as being dangerously seditious. Rehearsals immediately had to be stopped, and a substitute found to take its place. A few enquiries were made by the press, as the Radio Times had billed the play quite prominently; but no official explanations were offered. In view of his current interest in the writing of dramatic verse, someone in London had sent a script of the play to T.S. Eliot, and had even invited him to Broadcasting House to hear the transmission. As no transmission occurred, profuse apologies had to be offered, and he went away, somewhat mystified. When I met him shortly afterwards, he asked me the reason for the sudden cancellation- and was highly delighted when I told him. Dangerously seditious as it was, he printed the play in The Criterion.

Shortly afterwards, Bridson was invited by Harding to apply for a staff radio drama producer’s job, but he found the interviewing in London hostile, and at least one minute survives in his staff file where vague questions are raised about the nature of his political idealism and how this could interfere with his programme making. He wrote as a footnote in Prospero And Ariel:

636 Ibid.
I was intrigued to learn eventually that the official reason for my rejection, as noted in my BBC staff-file, was that I had ‘an unpolished personality.’ It was also darkly hinted that I was ‘politically minded.’ As Michael Standing established, however, the later charge was later amended: I was then credited with ‘a strong sociological sense.’ We both much enjoyed the reassessment. 638

Bridson would be more successful in his second application for a staff position at BBC Manchester one year later. The official reason for his earlier rejection referred to by Bridson in his autobiography has not survived in his staff-file currently held by BBC Written Archives. But a ‘Private and Confidential’ memo about his next application does:

N.R.D. (Northern Regional Director) wants Bridson as his Feature Programme Assistant. We considered him once before for the job of Drama Assistant there, and you decided that we should postpone judgment on taking him on until we were quite certain that his programme value made up for his alleged political-mindedness. In view of the two very favourable reports attached from D.D. and P.D., (Director of Drama and Programme Director) I hope you will now agree to his being taken on.639

His second encounter with direct censorship that was almost as dramatic as the play he had written followed shortly afterwards when he was still a freelance. His play Scourge was certainly going to be so for him:

Alas, I was not so fortunate with The Scourge, the play which I wrote next. I had intended it as an essay in the imaginative use of sound effects. The story concerned a man whose car was wrecked by a train at a level crossing: the sound of the train continued to thunder in his head. The motivating theme of the play was adultery, which seemed to me usual enough. But since the adultery happened to be committed between a youth and his uncle’s young and attractive wife, I found myself taken off the air- again, curiously enough, on the grounds of condoning incest! I protested that incest was no more involved then it would be if someone were to have an affair

638 Bridson, 1971, p. 45 (footnote).
with his step-mother. “Who on earth would ever do that?” was the scandalized response. I agreed that Phaedra had found the buskin on the other leg, but still held out for the possibility. Nevertheless, the train was cancelled - much to the irritation of Jan Bussel, the new North Regional Drama Director whose first production it should have enlivened. Once again, there were press enquiries: I was even credited with being the only writer to get himself twice into the Radio Times without being able to get himself onto the air. 640

The political artifice of The March Of The ’45 and The Classic Soil.

D.G. Bridson’s The March of The ’45 (1936) was originated at the BBC North cauldron of Marxist and left-wing mischief in Manchester. Archibald Harding, D.G. Bridson, Olive Shapley and Joan Littlewood were political plotters in the modernist mould. It can be argued that there is a revolutionary and avowedly Marxist political articulation in The March of The’45 and The Classic Soil (1939) produced by Shapley and how this was contextualized by the presence of audio dramatic modernism in writing and production. Compared to how Reginald Berkeley fared with his political assertions in 1920s BBC Radio Drama, it is intriguing to assess how and why both productions succeeded in being aired without regulation, intervention and any resulting backlash in what John Stuart Mill described as the tyranny of majority opinion in contemporary media and what Stanley Cohen and Stuart Hall would later define as the media moral panic? 641

The desperate housing conditions of the working class in Manchester were addressed by a drama-documentary form interpolated by readings from Friedrich Engels’ 1844 text The Condition of the Working Class in England which was a description and analysis of the conditions of the working class in Manchester and Salford that he saw for himself.

Shapley was prepared to say later in her memoirs, (whose writing was assisted by her daughter Christina Hart), that The Classic Soil was the most partial programme ever broadcast in BBC history:

640 Ibid pp. 46-47
Joan Littlewood and I produced what was probably the most unfair and biased programme ever put out by the BBC. We called it, with a nod to Engels, *The Classic Soil*. Engels had described Manchester as ‘the classic soil…where capitalism flourished’. By recording much of the programme in Salford flea market among an odd little group of families who lived in a condemned warehouse in Pollard Street, we proved to our satisfaction and everyone else’s intense annoyance that basically Manchester was unchanged since Engels wrote his famous denunciation of the city in 1844. I remember feeling that we needed a statement from a pregnant woman to describe what it was like bringing a new life into this phantasmagoric Manchester that we were creating. Joan was sent out to find someone and, being a perfectionist, came back to Broadcasting House with not one but eight ladies all in advanced stages of pregnancy. They were very sad bundles of humanity, some with small children attached. 642

*The Classic Soil* is a brilliant and disruptive agitational radio feature and also modernist in the way it blends dramatic conventions of historical voices, present narrative, and naturalistic present-day actuality. Paddy Scannell said that *The Classic Soil* was perhaps Olive Shapley’s ‘masterpiece.’643 He admired how the programme covered all dimensions of the working-class experience of housing in 1939 from the relatively well-off through those who were just about managing to those desperately staving off hunger and living in desperate poverty:

It is full of subtle contrasts and shadings that are funny and desolating in turn. Men and women, young and old, all give their testimony. There are no cutaways to officialdom, to the voices of authority. It was, said Shapley, recalling it 40 years after it was made ‘a shameful programme’ because it was so onesided. Manchester Corporation and Head Office both took exception to its lack of balance. For though the programme showed that things had improved for some – there’s a housewife who describes the joys of her new council flat and the wonders of her new electric carpet cleaner – the overwhelming impression is one of resilience in the face of enduring poverty.644

644 Ibid p. 22.
It is possible that it avoided pre-transmission scrutiny because the surviving script in the BBC Written Archives does not transcribe the politically intense interviews with contemporary people living in atrocious housing conditions. The linking script looks like a safe retrospective on an early political pamphlet from the nineteenth century. The documentary actuality is simply cued and referenced as ‘Record.’ What gives the programme so much political resonance is the deeply emotional account by a young mother about how she lost her child because of the housing squalor they were living in. There was also a remarkable exchange between a defiant mother and a debt-collector. It is not known if this was staged through outstanding naturalistic performance and direction, or recorded as it happened. It is likely to have been the former as mobile recording vans at that time were not usually flexible enough to suddenly pick up an impromptu ‘knock-up’ by a bailiff, higher purchase man, or money-lender.

It is the comparative analysis of the archive of the actual broadcast and the production script sent to London for approval that offers interesting evidence about the political artifice on the part of Shapley and Littlewood to avoid the controlling blue pencil of prior institutional containment. There is evidence that the pioneering documentary film and radio feature makers of this time worked in practice to conjure a notion of ‘the truth’ of actuality. There is evidence in The Classic Soil that scripting was developed to provide a representation of reality not only by real interviewees, but also perhaps by actors performing symbolic characterisation.

There are considerable differences between the script in the North Region file of the BBC Written Archives and the archived recording of the broadcast programme. Page two of the script introduced testimony from somebody described as ‘Cotton Worker.’ It is not clear whether he is an actor performing a creative script written from research, or he is an interviewee brought into the broadcast studio. He sounds as though he is acting and the performance diverges from the script in places as though there had been cuts and changes during rehearsal before live broadcast. The sequence from ‘Cotton Worker’ is marked differently from the cues for actuality and documentary interview which are usually delineated as ‘(Record of Mr. Miskell)’ and ‘Record of Mrs. Molloy’.

One of the most compellingly sad interviews recorded was that of ‘Mrs Lamb’ who described how over-crowding in damp housing conditions exacerbated the illness of her little girl who lay in bed for seventeen weeks and passed away.646

Twelve months last May I had a girl sitting down with an illness. She was taken into the sanatorium and she was in a sanatorium three months. And then she came home. February this year, she was again taken ill. And she lay in the bed seventeen weeks. And she passed away in May. But I myself think if the conditions of the house would have been more satisfactory my girl would have been here, or it would have prolonged her life.647

Her account sounded authentic and there was no transcript included in the production script. Actuality scenes were generally specifically cued as ‘Record of Children’s Playground’, ‘Record of Flacks’ Dress Shop’, ‘Record of Cross Lane Market’, ‘Record of Woman’s shout. Child reading notice Boys quarrelling’, ‘Record of Yates’ Bar’, ‘Record of Free Milk’, ‘Record of Hughes’ meat auction’ ‘Record of Fish and Chip shop’, and ‘Record of Free Meals’.

However, the ‘Record of Tallyman’ is cued by the ‘Modern Speaker’ as ‘Many people belong to clothing clubs and pay off their debts week by week, though the problem of regular payments is one which faces almost every working-class mother.’648 It is unclear who Tallyman is. ‘Tallyman’ was an old-fashioned word for a person who sells goods on credit, especially from door to door. The debt-collector featured in this dramatic scene addresses a ‘Mrs Horrocks’ who is not identified or cued in the production script. The suspicion here is that this may have been a dramatized event using actors. Is it likely that a working-class mother and debt-collector would agree to have their tense encounter recorded by the BBC in 1939? How likely was it that the huge seven ton recording truck would have been able to find this scene and record it as though eavesdropping luckily on the event in a Manchester or Salford working-class street?

The recording insert has all the hallmarks of well-produced radio drama with the beginning F/X of knocking on the door. The Tallyman’s accompanying monologue is performed naturalistically, but

647 Audio track 86 at 21 mins 25 seconds.
648 Ibid p.11.
does not seem to represent the realism of such an approach to any household harbouring somebody unable to pay their debts: ‘F/X Door knocking. Ah! Do you know if she’s in? Mrs Horrocks. Do you know if she’s in? Umm! F/X Door knocking. There doesn’t seem to be anybody in. Ahhh. I’ll just give it another go. F/X Louder door knocking. F/X Repeated door knocking. Are you there? Ah Good Morning Mrs Horrocks! 649

Further suspicion applies to the authenticity of the final apparent ‘interviewee’ described as ‘Miss Booth.’ Unlike most of the documentary interviews in the feature, this was not cued as an un-transcribed record. Scannell ascribed to this final sequence great importance in terms of the programme’s political impact: ‘The last words of the programme belong to a young girl who works in one of the cotton mills. Her words sum up the experience, the circumstances and the expectations of a class and a generation.’650 However, the original script, presumably cleared in London, cues Miss Booth by the words of ‘Modern Speaker’:

Modern Speaker: Are these problems never to be solved and recede into that unimportant place where they belong?
Miss Booth: They’re not unimportant for me. I’ve had to work hard ever since I left school, and my mother and father before me. That’s all there is for us, work and eating and sleeping. What else is there? If you don’t work you starve. I know when I was on the dole for two years I walked the shoes off my feet looking for work, and if I hadn’t found work when I did I’d have done away with myself. I’m glad to be working in the mill.651

The broadcast programme has a significantly different content and the changes to the script of Miss Booth’s contribution indicate that her participation cannot have been by documentary interview. There is change of meaning and a substantial addition of utterance:

649 Audio track 86 at 27 mins 35 seconds.
650 Scannell, 1986, p. 22.
Modern Speaker: Perhaps the last words in this programme should go to a young cotton worker who looks to tomorrow.

Miss Booth: I work in the cotton mill in the card room. I’ve had to work hard ever since I left school. My mother and father before me. That’s all there is for me – work, eat and sleep. What else is there? If you don’t work you don’t eat. I know when I was out of work for two years I walked the shoes off me feet. And if I hadn’t found work when I did, (pause) I’d’ve done away with meself. I’m thankful enough to be working now. Although it’s hard I never grumble. All I ask is steady work to keep meself in bread and butter. I don’t want plenty of money and luxuries. All I want is a comfortable living. But what’s the good of looking into the future? I’ve enough to do to worry about tomorrow.652

At this point in the programme, the sound of William Walton’s newly composed ‘First Symphony’ (1934) is faded in as a bed in the same way it began the programme. Joan Littlewood’s biographer Peter Rankin said ‘It made Joan think of wind rushing across the moors outside Manchester.’653

Littlewood and Shapley actually ended the feature with an expression of political emphasis by the ‘Modern Speaker’ that had been originally positioned in the script before ‘Miss Booth’: ‘Yes, I think we have found that man is still pre-occupied with the struggle for food, shelter and clothing. He is still trying to solve the problems of the basic necessities of life.’654

There is no evidence in the BBC’s written archives that any investigation was carried out into the discrepancies between the production script and actual broadcast. There are no clues in anything Littlewood and Shapley wrote in their lifetimes to indicate manipulation, or indeed fabrication. Shapley referred to Joan Littlewood finding women in Manchester who were then ushered into the studio by an awed commissionaire at Broadcasting House and ‘came up to the microphone one by one to give an account of themselves. I do not know what they made of it, but we then all had lunch in the BBC canteen and chatted over cups of tea.’655

652 Audio track 86 at 33 minutes 53 seconds.
654 Audio track 86 at 35 minutes 19 seconds.
655 Shapley, 1996, p. 54.
Casualties of MI5 surveillance?

Shapley recalled that after first meeting the Programme director in Manchester, Archie Harding, she was asked to stay behind: ‘When the room was empty apart from the two of us, he extended his hand and said, ‘Welcome, comrade.’ I was never a very devout communist, but I could tell that I was among friends.’ 656 She also said her brief flirtation with communism left an enduring blot on the secret files: ‘In my sixties I was visited regularly by a gentleman from MI5 who quizzed me about my activities over a pot of tea.’657

Ben Harker wrote that ‘It was Harding’s view that all radio was propaganda: broadcasts which failed to give voice to the working class silenced it, those which failed to address structural inequalities shored up the status quo.’658 Harker said the unending class struggle, covert or overt, underpinned the BBC Manchester broadcasts:

The Classic Soil, written by Miller’s Communist wife (Miller was Ewan MacColl) Joan Littlewood and produced by Olive Shapley, wore its Marx, or Marxism, on its sleeve. […] Interviews with contemporary working-class people were framed by passages from Engels, read by Ernst Hoffmann, a recent refugee from Engels’ hometown in Germany. Littlewood’s up-front claim that Engels provided ‘an accurate’ study of conditions was blue-pencilled, but everything in the broadcast programme insisted on that point. The effect of the carefully sequenced juxtapositions, as Littlewood intended, emphasized historical and social continuity rather than change, and presented Engels not as a voice of yesteryear, but as a dependable guide to the persisting factors – unemployment, pollution, bad food and clothing, overcrowded housing-which were stunting working-class lives in the present. […] (The) programme caused disquiet in London and complaints from the Manchester Corporation. Littlewood was considered to have over-stepped the mark. Over the turbulent months ahead, she would find her access to the microphone increasingly restricted.659

656 Shapley, p.37.
657 Shapley, p.29.
659 Harker, 2013, pp.93-94.
Jean Seaton’s *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the nation 1974-1987* brought up to date the status of released files and understanding of the vetting by the Security Service (MI5) of BBC staff and freelance contributors. After the *Observer* newspaper revealed the longstanding process of vetting at the BBC with a part-time MI5 officer occupying an office at Broadcasting House in 1987, the then Director-General, Michael Checkland, told the Board of Governors that it was their belief then that the surveillance had begun in 1937. However, more recently released government papers indicate MI5 evaluation of what was feared as potential political subversion at the BBC had started as an informal practice from September 1933. Seaton explains:

The system began when Colonel Alan Dawnay was appointed to the BBC as controller of Programmes in 1933, officially in charge of developing BBC administration. Half of his salary was paid by the War Office, and he started an informal checking process, which also considered those who broadcast and what they said. […] Dawnay was in charge of ‘careful and detailed examination of the role of every officer in the BBC’. And the first concern was not, as Checkland later understood, with fascists, but with potential communist infiltration of the Corporation.  

Dawnay had been in direct contact with the Director-General of MI5, Sir Vernon Kell, and an informal system of reporting on possible ‘treachery on the part of the staff inside the BBC’ developed into a regularized system with a formal and written agreement from 1937 when the threat of another war had increased.  

Of the writers and producers investigated for their political modernism in this study, the red Christmas Tree symbol on BBC personnel files indicating MI5 vetting only exists in relation to A.E. ‘Archie’ Harding and Joan Littlewood. A significant proportion of Littlewood’s MI5 file has been released to the National Archives, but this is not the case in relation to Harding, Bridson, Shapley and

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661 Ibid.
Berkeley should any still exist in the historical archives of the Security Service. Their importance in the evaluation of the relevance of political vetting and surveillance by MI5 of writers and producers who were committed to producing politically agitational dramas and features at the BBC is self-evident. As explained previously Freedom of Information requests and appeals are at the time of writing being pursued in the Upper Chamber of the UK’s FOIA tribunal system for Information Rights. Judge Hazel Oliver indicated by her ruling in February 2020 that there are potential remedies through direct requests to the Security Service, judicial review, and raising human rights arguments against the absolute exemption on access to security body archives by complaint to the Information Commissioner.

As Littlewood’s biographer confirms, her MI5 file clearly demonstrates that her political activities blocked her prospects for staff appointments and undoubtedly restricted her broadcasting career at the BBC. Walking into the BBC one morning in 1940-41 to see Olive Shapley, Joan and her first husband Jimmie Miller ‘found the doorman barring their way. No extremists allowed, those were his orders and both were known communists.’662 Littlewood’s MI5 file contains a memo written by the North regional director of the BBC in 1941, John Coatman, explaining that an order barring them from staff employment had been made because:

Miss Littlewood…and her husband Mr. James Miller, are not only well known Communists but are active Communists who have taken a leading part in the organization of the Communist Party and its activities in this area. […] Clearly I could not allow people like this to have the use of the microphone or be prominently identified with the BBC.663

How did MI5 vetting and surveillance impact on the careers of Harding, Bridson, Shapley and Berkeley if at all? Access to this information can be both exculpatory and illuminating and it is hoped the agitational litigation engaged to achieve this may provide answers at some stage in the future.

662 Rankin, 2014, p.44.
Conclusions

Bridson’s *The March of The ’45* was arguably a left-wing political commentary of the present through a dramatization of a revolutionary invasion of England by the rebellious Scots under Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745. Again, the recurring question being raised in this chapter is to what extent was the evasion of institutional containment and pioneering blending of realism, myth and political ideology, an original and further expression of the cultural concept of modernism. It can be strongly argued that it was certainly a factor.

Research in the relevant archives suggests Bridson’s approach to censorship was practical and evolutionary. He would be assertive but never nihilistic in reaction to the consequences. He would try and find a solution by persuasion, alternative outlet or trying again at a later time. This is exemplified by the saga, already referred to, of his first rejection for a staff job in 1935. The intervention here of the MI5 collaborating Colonel Dawnay is undoubtedly present. Left-wing politics and the mischief of Bridson’s dramatic writing content causing his freelance scripts *Prometheus* and *Scourge* being pulled from the schedules for alleged political subversion and indecency had generated too much institutional prejudice and suspicion. By applying again with patience and forbearance he would overcome the obstacle of being seen as too much of a political radical. His later overtly political script *Builders* that debated the aspiration for a more equal and welfare-based state after the Second World War would be blocked from broadcast. But he could still be relatively content by finding a welcoming place for transmission in Australia.  

Bridson’s approach in the 1930s was in stark contrast to Reginald Berkeley in the 1920s who was not prepared to bide his time. Censorship without consultation and fair negotiation would provoke a public expression of outrage. It could be the case that this is the contrast of a politician as writer (Berkeley) compared to the poet as writer (Bridson) though they do share in common a critical ideological stance in relation to establishment and societal norms.

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664 Bridson, 1971, p.94-6).
Prometheus- A Tragedy for his Ransom by the New Power is a modernist verse radio drama confronting the mass industrialization of humanity with action taking place ‘in the Workshop of the World.’ As previously indicated, T.S. Eliot’s endorsement is an indication of its modernist credentials. This research project has discovered that the BBC written archives have, unusually, preserved the original and interrupted production script of this and Bridson’s other ‘pulled’ play The Scourge in 1935. The BBC ordinarily did not retain the scripts of plays that were not broadcast.

The modernist characteristics of Prometheus reveal themselves in the opening page of the script:

CHORUS A. We are the hollow men.

B. We are the fools
Who run the business

A. We are nine in ten.

B. We are the rattling hammer and sickle tools
Of sharking practice and snickling acumen

A. We are the men in whose back-kitchen cools
The Fire of Heaven for lack of oxygen.

B. We are the men who helped the Engineer
Erect this outfit and install this gear. 665

Prometheus, had it been allowed to be broadcast, may have established Bridson as the leading trailblazing modernist verse dramatist of the English-speaking world. This play was innovative and pioneering in exploring modernist metaphor, myth and poetry in the new and exciting medium of radio. The 1934 broadcast would have been two years before The March Of The ’45 and three years before Archibald MacLeish’s poetic and political verse play for CBS in the USA Fall Of The City. This allegory on the rise of fascism would have been preceded by an equally impressive allegory on the vagaries of capitalism and the revolutionary Marxism being propagandized to overcome it.

Institutional containment in this instance had been highly destructive and damaging to radio drama as an artform.

_The Scourge_ is a script in the realist style that had its production and broadcast in March 1935 interrupted due to institutional perceptions of ‘indecency’ in the representation of sexuality and human relationships. It has also been retained and discovered in the BBC’s Written Archives; again something that would not normally happen for a script that did not lead to actual production and transmission. Whilst constructed primarily in characterization through action and dialogue, the play is punctuated by modernist style choral bridges such as:

‘JOAN. Happen to me? What could happen to me?
FADE IN ON LAST REMARK DISTANT TRAIN APPROACHING, PEAK, AND RUMBLE AWAY TO SILENCE.
VOICE 1. Christmas comes but once a year:
    And when it does, it brings food
    Coupons, Charity Balls the leer
    From the gutter, a full-throated
    Shout in a sere avenue.666

The successful broadcast of agitational and modernist productions of _The March of The ’45_ and _The Classic Soil_ prove that it was possible for left-wing authors and producers with radical imperatives to negotiate the forces of control and censorship at the BBC. They could do so while under surveillance by the BBC itself and the State’s Security Service MI5. It could be argued that the toleration extended to their political agitation was due to the artistic quality of their programming, despite the menace and damage that censorship and state surveillance inflicted on qualitative scripts and future careers in broadcasting.

666 Bridson, D.G., _Scourge_, (North Region, Scripts: plays undated, BBC Written Archives) p. 11.
Chapter Five- Sound drama as political and agitational contemporaneity and modernist expression.

In this concluding chapter it is necessary to draw together the various strands of the modernist debate in relation to the overlap between the audio/phonograph drama age and the radio drama age in Great Britain. The study has focused on a range of selected sound texts. Key questions being asked include to what extent have they experimented with form? How have they challenged establishment values and cultural hierarchies: empire, patronymic authority, establishment institutions, sexual and moral values, capitalism, class system, and privilege? Another issue that has been taken into account is whether the sound texts studied have been empowered by harnessing majority public opinion and ideological consensus, patriotic and state/imperial interests and imperatives. Has it been possible to identify disruptions of narrative rituals in terms of time, representation, and point of view? Have the texts expressed disconnection of language utterances from established meaning and has it been possible to find any evidence of texts that express the symbolic and abstract against figurative and concrete? How have these sound texts represented creative origination and innovation in expression in the context of new communications technologies? What has been achieved by the authors and producers in the propagandizing of ideologies through deception, surveillance, concealment, espionage and games of intelligence?

An immediate answer to the last question is that Joan Littlewood and Olive Shapley certainly propagandized Marxist ideology in their political feature on poor housing conditions in Manchester The Classic Soil in 1939. There is certainly prima facie evidence of deception in manipulating the interpolation between dramatized reading performance and documentary actuality. There are at least three sequences in the programme where doubt can be cast upon the authenticity of documentary represented as reality. The programme script sent for approval, presumably in advance to London, avoids the transcribing of most of the recorded inserts. Suspicion is raised by the reference to the debt collecting encounter with ‘Mrs Horrocks’ as ‘Talleyman’ when all the other recorded interviews have specific names assigned. The final documentary testimony of ‘Miss Booth’ is not cued as a recorded
insert. Her actual account and performance is significantly different to the script sent for prior evaluation. Is it possible Littlewood and Shapley were faking documentary material and concealing the deceit for ideological purposes? If they were, they presage modern techniques of modernist radio broadcasting propaganda that would be so fully developed during the Second World War. It may also be the case that the use of contemporary words of ‘faking’ and ‘deceit’ amounts to the present judging the past. The limitations of technology at the time and the inchoate nature of the developing radio feature and documentary form most likely meant that rehearsal and representation of reality using dramatic story telling and production techniques were simply part of the cultural media practice of the time. The truth achieved by production only had to serve the truth achieved and aspired to by the production team’s research and belief system.

The analysis throughout has sought to determine whether these sound drama texts were created to promote a cause. The investigation of academic developments in radio and sound modernism has discovered an expanding and more inclusive range of inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches. There is no clear authority on the theoretical question of whether it is more modernist when a text’s ideology is more complex, or more overt and covert, both in terms of authorship and reception. Another question to be addressed and concluded is whether it should be a condition of modernist audio drama that there should be an aspiration to the apolitical- a resistance to all ideologies? In the exploration of the relationship between audio drama and politics, the research conducted reaches the conclusion that there is not any useful purpose served by restricting modernist definitions to the politically apolitical.

Modernist texts engage ideological objectives and imperatives that are present in the reader, listener and author. There was a clear tension in a clash between authorial ideology and media institutional context in the production of radio drama during the 1920s and 30s. However, there has been little evidence of such contest in the production of sound phonographs prior to and during the Great War of 1914-18. Certainly, the question deserves to be raised whether it is more modernist when propagandist audio drama is challenged for its perpetuation of false consciousness and illusions. The early sound play artists of the Great War have not been canonized as modernist pioneers. The process of elevating
sound drama authorial legitimacy and cultural status appeared to need the media institutional frame of BBC radio broadcasting in the 1920s and 30s. The analysis of the work of Reginald Berkeley, D.G. Bridson, Joan Littlewood and Olive Shapley and the focus on the political dimension of their dramatic expression combines with the consideration of their output as being distinctly modernist. This is an essential component of the original contribution of knowledge to the subject of radio drama and modernism in the first half of the twentieth century.

**Findings- phonograph audio drama**

The institutionalizing of radio drama through production at the BBC in the 1920s and 1930s cohered and convened what I have described as key manifestoes on what could be considered modernist sound drama by Gordon Lea in 1926 and Lance Sieveking in 1934. Their books are benchmarks by which the very good sound play could be recognized. The very good sound play was defined in terms of its fulfilment in creating and telling stories with all the intrinsic qualities of sound and radio drama. Both Lea and Sieveking emphasized the harnessing of the auditory imagination, and how sound story-telling could be self-contained with respect to the musical rhythm and potential of sound production.

Sound drama in terms of audio modernism should be recognized in operating successfully in the context of the social use of the then existing modern sound technologies. Modernism should recognize aspects of disruption, juxtaposition and montage. In the large-scale study of phonograph and radio drama there has been an identification and recurrent recognition of tapestry, texture and form that fits the critical terms in art and literature of mosaic and bricolage with a push and pull of representation and reality, documentary and drama, symbolic and mythical, sub-textual and intertextual. These elements often constitute the development of the descriptive ballad in phonographs such as *The Death of Nelson* and *The Trumpeter* which have been linked in this study to the development of the radio social documentary and British radio feature. The interweaving of song, symphonic music, naturalistic, realistic and symbolic drama, and actuality and documentary is present in research that has traced the development of the audio drama and radio feature form. There has been a linked journey and direction of aesthetic travel between *The Departure of the Troopship*, (1905) *The Battle of the Marne*, (1914) *The Angels of Mons*, (1916), *The Trumpeter* (1930) and *The Classic Soil* (1939).
The political aspects are also relevant whether serving the purpose of state and imperial propaganda or advancing counter-culture considerations and challenging social injustice. Multiple meanings engendered in sound symbolism gives room for irony and political implication. These characteristics are particularly strong in the political radio dramas written by Reginald Berkeley and D.G. Bridson where pioneering modernist stylistics interpolate with politics. This was tolerated by the BBC in respect of *The White Château* (1925) and *The March Of The ‘45* (1936), but suppressed and fully censored in *Machines* (1927) and *Prometheus* (1934)

Russell Hunting can be identified as a pioneering sound drama modernist. He mobilized all the creative skills possible in the acoustic recording age to produce the seminal *Departure of a Troopship* canon that was self-contained montage sound drama. His 1914 *Battle of the Marne* was ahead of its time in representing battle in the Great War through soundscape. He was also a disrupting sound artist in the entertainment field, criminally breaching the values of what was considered indecent in entertainment and going to prison as a result. His creation of the multi-voiced comedy around Michael Jeremiah Casey founded and inspired the development of early radio sitcom by Mabel Constanduros. He could originate irony and an intertextual play of sonic comedy with sound technologies such as the phonograph coin-slot machines and telephony. Major A. E. Rees can be identified and confirmed as a sound modernist because he transformed the potential of single phonograph three to four minute ‘Descriptive Sketches’ into the serial form of *On Active Service*. The modernism in his achievement is also confirmed by the high production values that went with the ground-breaking creation of a multi-disc serial story. Modernist audio drama can be usually recognized by the coming together of multiple strands of innovation, change, liminal impact, social, cultural and political symbolism, use of mythology and confronting the present with the past and vice-versa.

**Radio Drama at the BBC in the 1920s.**

Reginald Berkeley was an originating and significant radio drama modernist at the BBC equal in standing and achievement to Lance Sieveking. His modernist credentials are confirmed by his ability to bring to the radio drama form successful use of dramatic conventions from theatre and literature and serve the imagination of the listener with an intensity of emotional, political and entertaining story
telling. Berkeley transformed and advanced radio drama’s possibilities in form. He challenged and disrupted establishment political values and advanced ideological causes through innovation of form and quality of writing. These utilized modernist techniques such as montage and using sound effects and music to abstractly and symbolically haunt and challenge the imagination and emotions of his listening audience. He did this through exploring storytelling in the realms of dream and non-realist consciousness in *The Quest of Elizabeth*. In *The White Château*, he created the first significant peace play of the 1920s in the radio drama medium that had an intermedia impact in book-form, theatre, and much later, in television in 1938. It effectively scored its sound design in music and effects with modernist rhythm and juxtaposition with dialogue and chronicle style narration.

He characterized the inanimate form so that a building, *The White Château* itself, at different times standing noble and proud, mutilated, wounded, destroyed and rebuilt, is created as a mythical voice articulating the political and ethical doctrine of pacifism. In 1927 he wrote *Machines* that was quintessentially modernist in its writing of dialogue and scenes in montage form and in its symphonic structure and exposition. But he was unable to negotiate the forces of media institutional containment. He was not prepared to compromise his agitational contemporaneity and consequently *Machines* was never produced for the radio drama medium. His pioneering achievements in content and form, in political agitational contemporaneity and modernist experimentation, engendered institutional interference at the BBC in respect of *The White Château* and *The Quest of Elizabeth*. *The White Château* was subject to harassing pressures. There was the threat that it would not be broadcast because of international political considerations over the imminent Treaty of Locarno, and institutional pressures that it should be cut in half because radio drama was not thought to be successful listening beyond half an hour of transmission. *The Quest of Elizabeth* had its final scene peremptorily censored without authorial permission or even consultation. This was done on the grounds of taste and anticipation of emotional harm and offence upon the listener.

In contrast, there was an entirely different approach by the state censorial system for theatre operated by the Lord Chamberlain. The theatre scripts of *The White Château* and *The Quest of Elizabeth* were very similar to the radio versions. The Lord Chamberlain decided without qualification
that they were significant and impressive works of stage literature that merited public performance. In respect of *The Quest of Elizabeth* although the story was ‘harrowing’ its performance should not be curtailed. The evaluation expressed interest in the final scene that was dropped by the BBC being performed in sound only and in darkness at the theatre. The Lord Chamberlain’s office unhesitatingly decided that the message of *The White Château* should be heard, even though they must have recognized that its political foundations were anti-war and pacifist. These fundamental differences in approach between the BBC and the Lord Chamberlain can be explained by the fact that as a media institution the BBC was trying to discover its proper relationship with its audience in a new medium. The impact of content and form with individual imagination and consciousness is different to the physical environment of the public theatre and an audience perceiving and reacting collectively in communal space. In respect of *The White Château* the BBC was conscious and more sensitive to the overriding context of politics and international relations and not merely anything that was intrinsically political and specific to the programme being made and broadcast.

*Machines* became for the BBC the institutionally unacceptable play in all dimensions in 1927. It was far too long in running for more than two hours. It was considered politically explosive and provocative in containing a fictional call for a General Strike after the wounds of the actual General Strike only the year before were unhealed, raw and super-sensitive. It satirized and fictionally contested recognizable figures and parties in contemporary politics and media when the BBC had a mission to avoid the politically controversial at a vulnerable point in its history. It was actively seeking government and Parliamentary approval for the transition from private monopoly company to public monopoly broadcasting corporation.

It is significant that this abjectly censorial blocking and broadcasting suppression of the play was replicated by the Lord Chamberlain. Certainly, in the years that followed up until its limited presentation in the member only Arts Theatre Club in 1930, the Lord Chamberlain’s Office clearly believed it was unacceptable for public theatre performance. We do not at present know the reasons. The justification for withholding licensing and any protests against that would be present in the correspondence file that is still being searched for in the British Library’s archives. Only a brief index
card indicates that the stage script of *Machines* was submitted (date unclear) and the manuscript was returned to the author.

*Machines* was the last broadcasting play Reginald Berkeley ever wrote and the public exhibition of its agitational contemporaneity in the radio and theatre forms was annihilated by full media institutional and state censorship. *Machines* was a political play in modernist form much too ahead of its time. And Reginald Berkeley was a political writer and aesthetic experimentalist in drama far too much of the institutional outsider to be able to negotiate a creative artifice that would serve his cultural and political imperatives in a way that was acceptable in the new industry of broadcasting and in a wider political-economic society struggling with the forces of dysfunctional capitalism, global recession, and communist and fascist ascendancy.

**Radio Drama at the BBC in the 1930s**

The Manchester documentary feature making unit edited by E A ‘Archie’ Harding and convening Marxists, socialists and Communists to advance the representation of the working class on BBC Radio extended modernist expression and political agitation in radio programme making. D.G. Bridson in *The March Of The ’45* demonstrated how exquisite and brilliant production of modernist style and exposition can mask and deliver an underlying political objective that can be revolutionary and reforming. Bridson provided a solution to surviving the forces of censorship and state and institutional containment in broadcasting. In *The March Of The ’45* the artifice and artistry of radio verse drama production operated as an entertaining and panoramic frame and canvas for agitational contemporaneity. This deployment of the sonic mask was also the lesson applied in the successful production and broadcast of *The Classic Soil* in 1939, produced by Olive Shapley and written by Joan Littlewood. The development of the radio feature mixing dramatized literature with documentary interview and actuality was able to cloak a powerful Marxist denunciation of the failures of the political system and the effects of slum housing on the working-class poor. *The March Of The ’45* utilized the history of armed rebellion from 1745 that threatened the seat of English power to the extent of conquering and marching as far as Derby to aesthetically represent the present-day shadow and risk.
of political and social rebellion. The angry and threatening revolutionary advance towards London was by clansmen and mercenaries not by the unemployed and hunger-marchers.

Two years before, D.G. Bridson had written, co-produced and rehearsed to a matter of days or even hours of transmission a political verse play that had it been permitted for broadcast would have most likely become recognized as a significant milestone in radio modernism, a culturally pioneering achievement in the development of the radio verse play and a breakthrough and unique achievement in the history of political radio drama. *Prometheus: A Tragedy of his Ransom and New Power* should have been transmitted at 10 p.m. Monday 27th August 1934. It was and is outstanding radio drama literature. It was admired so much by T.S. Eliot that he made sure it would be later published in the literary periodical he founded and edited, *The Criterion*, which was the first English cultural journal to publish work by Jean Cocteau, Marcel Proust, and Paul Valéry.

It is a modernist masterpiece by using modern verse to dramatize the political dilemma of the time; how to temper the ravages of failing global capitalism without recourse to Marxist revolution. This is something the institutional forces of political censorship and containment at the BBC completely misunderstood. To prevent broadcast so close to the time of broadcast was an astonishing and very rare event in BBC history; particularly after it had been scheduled and promoted by illustrated listing in *The Radio Times*. Consequently, nobody has ever heard Prometheus as The engineer, Zeus as the Managing Director, Hermes as the Works Manager and four numbered characters between 539 and 542 as the Chorus of Mankind in D.G. Bridson’s early 1930s dramatized political discussion of the ‘Workshop of the World: Time— The Present.’

The same professional humiliation would be visited on Bridson’s next play *Scourge* in 1935. Rather like the cutting of a section of his poem ‘The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins’ in *Jannock: A Malicious Medley of the North* (1934) institutional containment and censorship came crashing down through mainly a complete misconception of alleged indecency in the script. Unlike Reginald Berkeley he did not publicly protest in the press. He did not even challenge the decision internally. He recognized the limits of how far his agitational contemporaneity could go; particularly in his status as an outside freelance writer. He would bide his time, apply for a staff position and be rejected on
political grounds, and then apply again and allay the BBC’s concern that they had to be ‘quite certain that his programme value made up for his alleged political-mindedness.’

This toleration by censored staff of the excesses in containment by the media institution which employed them on the part of Bridson and Shapley made the political imperatives in *The March Of The ’45* and *The Classic Soil* possible and tolerated by the media institution itself. There was a negotiation or strategic cunning of approach. In the instance of *The March Of The ’45* Bridson would let go the blue penciled objection to ‘unemployed’ and its replacement with ‘corner-boys.’ He knew a different time and mood would mean that he could substitute the originally written word, which he would do for later productions in future decades. There is evidence that Shapley and Littlewood played a careful game of constructing their blatantly left-wing attack on the social ravages of appalling housing conditions by writing a largely neutral and historical script that would be sent for approval with reference to documentary inserts that were sound only and without transcript. These would carry the political punch including a young mother grieving that she had lost her child due to poor housing and a defiant exchange between a poverty-stricken working-class householder and a demanding and threatening debt collector.

**MI5 Surveillance**

However, the missing link in the research here, and a genuine invisible ‘elephant in the room’ is the role, influence and function operated by an additional form of state censorship which engaged political as well as security exigency. Berkeley’s writing achievements in his plays, first written for radio, had been at the mercy of BBC censorship and then state censorship when put forward in their theatre form for public licensing approval by the Lord Chamberlain. Bridson, Shapley and Littlewood’s radio work was subject to BBC containment in the then ephemeral medium of broadcasting. But there is evidence that the state was also shadowing them through the BBC’s joint agency of staff surveillance and vetting with the Security Service MI5. A large part of Littlewood’s MI5 file has been released to the National Archives. Her BBC staff file and that of the Northern Regional Editor of BBC Manchester

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Features, E A ‘Archie’ Harding has the notorious Christmas tree shaped red stamp proving they had been ‘colleged’ to use the BBC’s institutional euphemistic terminology of the time. The origin of the term ‘college’ is that the BBC had to send files of personnel suspected of being security risks to a PO Box in Oxford and during the second World War part of MI5 was based at Bedford College, in Bedford Square and later Regent’s Park.

Shapley confirmed in her autobiographical memoir she had been ‘colleged’ as well, though the Christmas tree stamp is not present on any documentation in her BBC file. Bridson’s staff file is also free of any evidence of MI5 vetting; somewhat surprising given the substantial intervention by the BBC in the fate of his plays *Prometheus* and *Scourge*, and his initial experience of staff rejection on political grounds.

It is possible to extrapolate from Littlewood’s MI5 file, a strong possibility that state surveillance and caution about her communist activism in drama had an influence on her future BBC employment. This research project has quite rightly sought access to MI5 Security files on the writers and producers engaged for analysis through exhaustive Freedom of Information appeals and hearings. Up until the time of writing and submission, these requests and appeals have been unsuccessful. They are, of course, vital to the purpose of academic historical enquiry. The exculpatory is as important as discovery and confirmation in archival sources. Both the BBC and the Security Service are likely to have been prone to ‘weeding’ out of correspondence, memos and files that are central to the individuals who experienced drama censorship disputes which are focused on in this investigation. The vituperative dispute between Berkeley and the BBC over the cutting of the end of *The Quest of Elizabeth* has absolutely no paper trail in the BBC Written Archives. The same may be the case in relation to the question of MI5 surveillance or involvement concerning Berkeley, Bridson, Harding, Shapley and Littlewood. In fact, the cover of Harding’s BBC personnel file has handwritten annotation stating that all of the papers concerning his Security Service vetting had been destroyed by the BBC in the 1969, almost 16 years after his death in 1953.

The legal advocacy and pursuit of historical researcher rights has led to the breakthrough of First Tier Tribunal Information Rights Judge Hazel Oliver’s ruling on the FOI requests for this project, that
there can be Article 10 freedom of expression and information rights that are exercisable by direct application to the Security Service, or indeed any other security government body such as the Secret Intelligence Service MI6. Judge Oliver also explicitly declared in her judgement that at the very least it should be possible to exercise an English common law right to request the historical material which would be subject to judicial review should it be refused. This is the first time a judge at any level in the British legal system has declared that such a right operates directly in relation to a security body such as MI5. As a result of this FOI litigation, an appeal over the denial of the Berkeley, Harding, Bridson, Shapley and Littlewood files has been lodged with the Upper Chamber of the Tribunal system, and specific Common Law and FOI requests have been served on the Director-General of the Security Service.

Historical academic research access about writers, artists and producers in drama who may have been subject to state security surveillance should not be left to the whimsy, and self-selecting agenda of the security bodies themselves. James Smith’s *British Writers and MI5 Surveillance 1930-1960* (2013) was dependent upon what the state decided should be released to the National Archives. It is hoped that this research project has cast the pebbles that will eventually lead to the rippling out of a full recognition by the UK FOI tribunal and legal system of the right for historical researchers themselves to decide what should be requested and for those applications, if contested, to be fairly adjudicated on by an independent judicial tribunal.

**The answer to the core question**

The key purpose of this study has been to find an answer to the question of whether political subversion in theme combined with origination of form can be successfully argued to be a clearly identifiable dimension of modernist sound drama. Is this the identifiable and indeed clearly defined modernism in the sound and radio form that straddles the phonograph and radio ages, which links the achievements of Russell Hunting and descriptive sketches produced for wax cylinders and shellac discs with the dramaturgy of Reginald Berkeley on the BBC during the 1920s and the BBC Manchester group of agitprop radio feature makers of Harding, Bridson, Shapley and Littlewood during the 1930s? Essentially what they all have in common is artistic innovation in the new medium
of sound recording and radio production. And the complex and aesthetically original sound/radio texts they created had so much agitational contemporaneity that they served a political purpose that provoked or strained institutional or, indeed state containment. Artistic innovation allied with political imperative, whether patriotic or subversive, is the modernism in early twentieth century radio and sound drama.

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41. Army Drill No. 1 Squad Drill Without Arms, Commands by Captain A.E. Rees, 2nd Battalion, The London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) Columbia Records, 2585, 29905, Dated 1915

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Guards (With Fifes and Drums, 1st Batt. Grenadier Guards) Conducted by Captain George
Miller, Columbia DX 44, Wax 5478, Dated 1930

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Troop- Quick March; Drummers Call; Escort for the Colour; Present Arms; Guards March
Past, The Regimental Band of HM Grenadier Guards, Conducted by Captain George Miller,
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57. Christmas in Camp with Kitchener’s Boys, Part Two (J.P. Harrington & M. Scott) Descriptive, Regal G6819, 29173, Dated December 1914

58. An Air Raid, Scene: ‘Somewhere On The Coast’, Descriptive, The Winner, 3190, 5579, Differing archive sources provide two dates for the release of this phonograph record: Dated December 1917, or February 1918
59. The Birkenhead Spirit, An Incident At Sea, Descriptive, The Winner, Differing archive sources provide two dates for the release of this phonograph record: Dated December 1917, or February 1918

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/58anairraidssomewhereonthecoast/s-bnWRx


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/59anincidentatsea/s-y0NuP

61. Arrival of the British Troops in France: Part One, Descriptive Orchestra Accompaniment, (Brooks and Ridout) Descriptive Sketch, Columbia Record, Columbia Graphophone Company, A1672, 29160, Dated 1914

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/61arrivalofthebritishtroopsinfranceembarkation/s-T8oKB


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/62arrivalofthebritishtroopsinfranceontheboat/s-Zq5bZ


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70. With The Fleet in Action Off Heligoland, (Herbert C. Ridout) Descriptive, Regal G6813, 29133, Dated October 1914
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80. Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier, (Leigh de Lyle.) Miss Vesta Tilley, Comedienne. With Orchestra Regal G7079, 29751, Dated September 1915
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/82jollygoodlucktothegirlwholovesasoldiervestati
   lley1915/s-9iA4N

81. The Army of To-day’s All Right, (Leigh de Lyle.) Miss Vesta Tilley, Comedienne. With Orchestra. Regal, G7079, 29752, Dated September 1915
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/83thearmyoftodaysallrightvestatilley1915/s-
   KqXsc

82. March Past of the Brigade, The Winner, Descriptive (Hesse) Empire Guards Band, 2041, 79, Dated February 1912
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/84marchpastofthebrigadewinnerfebruary1912/s-
   pilzS

83. Fire Alarm, The Winner, Descriptive, Empire Guards Band, 2041, 80, Dated February 1912

84. Christmas In Camp, Part One, The Winner, Descriptive, 2502, 980, Dated, December 1913
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/86christmasincamppartonewinnerdec1913/s-
   bL4zH

85. Christmas In Camp, Part Two, The Winner, Descriptive, 2502, 981, Dated, December 1913
86. The Classic Soil, BBC Northern Region, 6 July 1939 at 20.15, Manchester today and a hundred years ago. Script by Joan Littlewood. Recorded and produced by Olive Shapley. “For a full century the industrial tradition of Manchester has remained unbroken. The people who work the mills of 'Cottonopolis' today are the direct descendants of those men whom the industrial revolution swept into its coils in the early eighteen hundreds, and Manchester richly merits the judgment of Frederick Engels, the great German philosopher, when he described it and South Lancashire as the classic soil on which English manufacture achieved its master-work'. This quotation occurs in Engels’ work 'The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844' from which tonight's picture of the Manchester of a hundred years ago will be largely taken. Contrasted with this will be a microphone impression of Manchester today, composed from records made by the present inhabitants of that city, descendants of the people with whom Engels spoke. CD copy of BBC archived transmission provided by Bennett Maxwell, BBC producer retired, who used the recording for teaching at the BBC during the 1970s.

87. The March of The '45, Part One, BBC Northern Region, D.G. Bridson, Regional Programme London, 12 November 1936 20.30, A Radio Panorama in Verse and Song by D. G. BRIDSON in which the march of Prince Charles Edward is followed from the landing at Loch Nan Uamh to the final defeat at Culloden Moor. The programme produced jointly from the Scottish and North Regions Part I 'The High Endeavour', Produced by GORDON GILDARD (From Scottish), Part II 'The Turn of the Tide' Produced by D. G. BRIDSON (From North), Part III 'Time's Last Syllable' (From North and Scottish) Musical arrangements by DAVID STEPHEN and CRAWFORD McNAIR. Copy provided on two separate CDs by Bennett Maxwell, BBC producer retired, who used them for teaching at the BBC during the 1970s.
88. The March of The ’45, Part Two, BBC Northern Region, D.G. Bridson, 1936, Second CD copy of original 12 November 1936 transmission provided by Bennett Maxwell, BBC producer retired. Details set out in description for Track 87 above.

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/themarchof45parttwo/s-BQURw


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/89arrivalofthebritishtroopsinfranceregal1914part1/s-VC6zQ


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/90arrivalofthebritishtroopsinfrancepart2regal1914part2/s-p7bF0


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/112tonamethekingpartone1930/s-TZ1Mc


93. Talking as Michael Casey, Casey as a Judge, Russell Hunting, Regal G7116, 29832, Dated November 1915

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/93caseyasajudgerussellhunting1915/s-y3ii5

94. Talking as Michael Casey, Casey as a Doctor, Russell Hunting, Regal G7116, 29835, Dated November 1915

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/94caseyasadoctorrussellhunting1915/s-dTTBl

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/95aconscientiousobjectoralfredlester1915/s-6nlf5

96. Adventures of a Special Constable Part 1, Descriptive, Curry’s Cycle Company, Curry Gramophone Records, 329, 1423, Dated circa 1914

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/95aconscientiousobjectoralfredlester1915/s-6nlf5

97. Adventures of a Special Constable Part 2, Descriptive, Curry’s Cycle Company, Curry Gramophone Records, 329, 1424, Dated circa 1914

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/97adventuresofaspecialconstablepart2/s-PVe0

98. Stand To Your Post: In Remembrance to the “Titanic”, (B Scott) Ernest Gray, The Winner 2144, 289, Dated 1913

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/98standtoyourposternestgray1913winnermp3/s-i3jd


https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/99suffrageforwomenchristobelpankhurst1908/s-S27ED

100. The Man In The Ditch Part 1, An Edgar Wallace Thriller Told By The Author, Columbia, 5026, A7885, Dated 1928

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/100intheditchedgarwallacepartone1928/s-ykCep

101. The Man In The Ditch Part 2, An Edgar Wallace Thriller Told By The Author, Columbia, 5026, A7885, Dated 1928

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/101intheditchedgarwallaceparttwo1928/s-9DU1v
102. Derby Day, Part 1: Down by Road, Descriptive, Harrington, Scott, Regal 6929, 29499, Dated July 1915
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/102derbydaypart1downbyroadjuly1915/s-d0HIP

103. Derby Day, Part 2, On the Course, Descriptive, Harrington, Scott, Regal 6929, 29500, Dated July 1915
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/103derbydaypart2onthecoursejuly1915/s-9eDD2

104. Baby and the Silkworm Part 1, Mabel Constanduros, Radio Sketch, Edison Bell Electron 0205, 1135, Dated December 1927
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/104babyandthesilworkbugginspart1/s-Ha47D

105. Baby and the Silkworm Part 2, Mabel Constanduros, Radio Sketch, Edison Bell Electron 0205, 1136, Dated December 1927
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/105babyandthesilwormbugginspart2/s-GAyjz

106. The Buggins Family, Slices of Life, 1. Getting Ready for the Holidays, Mabel Constanduros & Co., Edison Bell, Winner Record, 4743, 11152, Dated 1928
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/106thebugginsfamilypart1gettingreadyfortheholidays/s-4GKvq

107. The Buggins Family, Slices of Life, 2. At The Station, Mabel Constanduros & Co., Edison Bell, Winner Record, 4743, 11153, Dated 1928
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/107thebugginsfamilypart2atthestation/s-m56Uf

108. Jazz Justice- Part 1 Beryl Orde (E Pola) Impersonations of Mabel Constanduros, ZaSu Pitts, Houston Sisters, His Master’s Voice, B.8104, 30-11569, Dated 1934
   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/108jazzjusticepart1berylorde/s-Ba5Ku

   https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/109jazzjusticepart2berylorde/s-98GVW

110. The Jerry Builder, (Frank Leo) Descriptive Sketch, By Miss Buena Bent & Frank Leo, Regal, G7359, 65393, Dated September 1916

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111. Wild Ducks, (Frank Leo) Descriptive Sketch, By Miss Buena Bent & Frank Leo, Regal G7359, 65394, Dated September 1916

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/110thejerrybuilderfrankleobuenabent/s-2O2Eb

112. The Sinking of the S.S. Kensington Court by a German Submarine and subsequent rescue by R.A.F. Flying Boats, A reconstruction of the Episode by Capt. J. Schofield and Company, Parlophone E10105, F1562, Dated 1939

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/114thesesinkingoftheskensingtoncourt1939/s-qGRVd

113. Wings Over The Navy (Mercer-Warren) Introducing short speech of thanks by Capt. J. Schofield played by the Organ, The Dance Band and Me, Parlophone E10106, F1561, Dated 1939

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/115wingsoverthenavy1939/s-ITEex

114. Casey’s Description Of His Fight, Talking by Michael Casey, Regal G7118, 29833, Dated March 1916

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/116caseysdescriptionofhisfightmarch1916/s-Q1Ac5

115. Casey’s Telephones, Talking by Michael Casey, Regal G7118, 29825, Dated March 1916


116. A Day’s Broadcasting, Clapham and Dwyer, Sides One and Two, Coliseum 4745, WA6796-1/6797-1, Also Track 3, CD The Wireless Nuisances, Clapham and Dwyer, WindyRidge Variety Series, WindyVar37, 2008, Original phonograph Dated January 1928

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/118adaysbroadcastingclaphamdwyer1928/s-jKO7r

117. Another Day’s Broadcasting, Clapham and Dwyer, Sides One and Two, Coliseum, FB1536, CA13303-1/13302-3, Also Track 14, CD The Wireless Nuisances, Clapham and
Dwyer, WindyRidge Variety Series, WindyVar37, 2008, Original phonograph Dated December 1932


118. Imitation of a Woman’s Rights Meeting, Arthur Lloyd (pseudonym of comic Burt Shepard), with Brass Quartette, Single-sided Zonophone 41003, 5973, Also Track 2, CD Votes For Women, WindyRidge, Windy Top7, 2018, Original phonograph Dated as recorded 19th January 1904, and released April 1904

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/120imitationofawomansrightsmeeting1904/s-PSNR7

119. If The World Were Ruled by Girls, Florrie Forde & Walter Miller (pseudonym of Stanley Kirkby), Zonophone X44063, 8953e, Also Track 3, CD Votes For Women, WindyRidge, Windy Top7, 2018, Original phonograph Dated as recorded 13th September 1906, and released January 1907

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/121iftheworldwereruledbygirls1906/s-eldDQ

120. A Trip to Brighton (Recorded on the Southern Railway) The Buggins Family, Mabel Constanduros and Michael Hogan, Sides One and Two, HMV C2436, 2B-2304/5, Also Track 13, CD Mabel Constanduros, The Buggins Family, WindyRidge Variety Series, WindyVAR46, 2009, Original phonograph Dated June 1932

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/122atriptobrightonrecordedonthesouthernrailway1932/s-A7VAH

121. Reilly As A Policeman (By “Charley Smith of New York City) believed to be by Russell Hunting, Track 10, CD, Actionable Offenses: Indecent Phonograph Recordings from the 1890s, Archeophone Records, 1007, 2007, Original cylinder Dated 1890s- probably 1895

https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/123reillyasapolicemanrussellhunting1890s/s-HyxlX

123. Casey Listening to the Phonograph, By Russell Hunting, Edison Bell 6584, wax cylinder, archive audio has been provided by the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society, Dated 1905
https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/125russellhuntingcaseysketchmp3/s-zQPQZ

124. Fire Alarm, Descriptive Sketch, Edison Bell 10068, wax cylinder, archive audio has been provided by the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society, Dated 1906
https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/126firealarmdescriptivesketch1905mp3/s-ongOD

125. The Plumber (Clifton) by Winifred Hare and Percy Clifton. Edison Bell, 13712, two-minute wax cylinder, archive audio has been provided by the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society, Dated April 1908

126. Departure of a Troopship by The London Regimental Band with Russell Hunting, International Zonophone Company X40063, Single sided phonograph disc, Descriptive, recorded 14th February 1905, released May, 1905
https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/128departureofatroopship1905zonophone/s-NDr0e

127. ‘Crisis In Spain’ composed by E.A. ‘Archie’ Harding and John Watt, originally broadcast by the BBC 11th June 1931, and re-produced by Harding for BBC Staff Training 25th March 1938. Copy donated to the author for academic research by Bennett Maxwell.
https://soundcloud.com/comparativemedialaw/crisisinspain1938remake/s-vL7mrfzFWSQ
Legal Rulings in Freedom of Information cases

Judge Peter Lane, Between Professor Tim Crook and Information Commissioner (1st Respondent) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2nd Respondent), Appeal Reference: EA/2015/0224 (London, Ruling of First-tier Tribunal General Regulatory Chamber Information Rights, 20th June 2016)

Application for Secret Intelligence Service files on Alexander Wilson and a report by The Security Service on the Egyptian Ambassador withheld from The National Archives file FO 1093/263.

Case currently stayed pending ruling of Judge Wright in Moss v Information Commissioner- General Regulatory Tribunal reference/Information Tribunal First Tier: EA/2019/0014; Professor Tim Crook vs Information Commissioner (1st Respondent) and Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (2nd Respondent). ICO Decision notice FS50788439 20th December 2018. Application for all Special Branch files relating to staff and students at University of London, Goldsmiths’ College prior to end of 1989.


Judge Alexander Marks, Between Professor Tim Crook and Information Commissioner (1st Respondent) and The Home Office (2nd Respondent), Appeal Reference: EA/2019/0073, (London, Ruling on application for permission to appeal from First-tier Tribunal General Regulatory Chamber Information Rights, 21st August 2019)

Judge Hazel Oliver, Between Professor Tim Crook and Information Commissioner, Appeal Reference: EA/2019/0282, (London: Ruling on application for permission to appeal from First-tier Tribunal General Regulatory Chamber Information Rights, 24th March 2020)

**Media**


Champion, Harry, comedian with orchestra, A little bit of cucumber, My old Iron Cross, London: Regal, catalogue no: G 6873 d.8/18, Regal War Supplement No. 6, April 1915.


Zonophone Records, 1909-11. (The nature of the branded labeling on the disc indicates this record would have been produced at any time during these three years.)


Kubeli\, Jan, ‘making a record by the old acoustic process,’ image facing page 204 Music on Record


**Newspapers, Periodicals & Theatre Programmes**


Brown, Ivor, “‘Machines” Mr. Reginald’s Berkeley’s Play,’ (The Manchester Guardian, Nov 7 1930) p. 8


The Nottingham Journal, ‘Machines by Reginald Berkeley (Author of the White Chateau.), Friday 13 January 1928, p. 3.


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Beck, Alan, The Invisible Play- History of Radio Drama in the UK; Radio Drama 1922-8, Staff Research published on C.D., University of Kent, 2000, and also online at http://www.savoyhill.co.uk/invisibleplay/ (accessed January 4th 2012)


http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/discography/search/search_simple (accessed February 1 2013)
‘Departure of a Troopship’, cylinder and disc recordings by G&T, Sterling and Nicole Records, uploaded to YouTube with urls:


‘Joan Maud LITTLEWOOD: British. LITTLEWOOD was thought to have communist sympathies during her early career in the theatre’ The National Archives Kew, KV 2/2757, (2008), http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C11439568 [accessed 10 September 2019]


NOW Pathe Pictorial presents - TWO MORE STARS of the Radio Firmament - Beryl Orde and Eddie Pola in "JAZZ JUSTICE". The scene is a mythical Police Court where many distinguished defendants (all impersonated by Beryl) are placed "on the spot'.


