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**Cultural Governance and the Formation of Public Service Broadcasting:  
the Early Years**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
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## Abstract

A defining characteristic of many previous broadcasting histories is their tendency to present a liberal interpretation of broadcasting. This is particularly so in relation to the BBC, which is commonly perceived as an exemplary public institution whose principal role is essentially a democratising one, contributing to the on-going cumulative empowerment of the people. A further aspect of this liberalist narrative is that broadcasting becomes increasingly free of state interference and politically independent, thus making government and politicians more accountable to the public. Whilst there is evidence to support this type of analysis, what it has resulted in is an overly-idealised historiography of public service broadcasting that is complicit with the ideological framework of a liberal democratic polity, and thus fails to recognise modern relations of culture and government, relations that are inextricably intertwined with the exercise of power.

Drawing on the work of Foucault, governmentalist studies, and extended analysis of BBC archives, I argue instead that the BBC and its public service ethos is better reconsidered as a civilising mission whose political rationality was to render the listening public more amenable to cultural governance. Understood thus, early broadcasting can be seen to function as a political technology that facilitated governance from a distance, thus overcoming the paradoxical concern of liberal governmentality, the danger of 'over-governing'. More specifically, I mean to demonstrate that the emergence and subsequent development of broadcasting can be understood as a response to the early twentieth century problems: of efficient state building, ensuring the nation's physical and moral well-being, and remedying the varying inter-war periods of crises in cultural hegemony. As such, early broadcasting was an amalgam of secular cultural governance, Christian pastoral pedagogy, and the exercise of what Foucault famously referred to as 'bio-power', particularly the bio-politics of welfare and social policy.

The emergence and subsequent development of broadcasting in the United Kingdom during the inter-war period has been extensively documented. Most cultural or social histories of early-twentieth century Britain make reference to the formation of broadcasting, if in passing only. In addition to these general historiographies are a considerable number of autobiographies of leading personalities with some bearing upon early broadcasting, and, more importantly, an ever increasing number of specialised and synthesising histories of broadcasting that, in their entirety, provide the reader with a detailed survey of the early years of broadcasting in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Among the many histories of early broadcasting, two merit special mention. Asa Briggs' majestic five volume history of broadcasting – of which the first two volumes (1961 & 1965) are specially concerned with the inter-war period – remains the most authoritative and instructive source for anybody wanting to undertake an historical study of the subject.<sup>2</sup> Even Scannell and Cardiff (1991: 381), whom I shall say more about in a short while, acknowledge that their 'history could not have been written without the prior existence of Briggs' accounts which relieve us, in countless instances, from having to describe and contextualise the larger institutional framework within which our study ... is situated'. Briggs' fastidious attention to detail, not to mention the pioneering use of what were then regarded to be unconventional historical sources and methods, is staggering. For example, though BBC official documents were the most important source, Briggs also made valuable use of oral and visual history; he even attempted to write, presumably in the style of the French *Annalistes*, what he then thought of as 'total history'; he was particularly interested in relating culture to social

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<sup>1</sup> Among the many autobiographies concerned with early broadcasting, the following are the most commonly cited: Burrows (1924), Eckersley (1946), Gorham (1948), Hibberd (1950), Lambert (1940), Lewis (1924), Lloyd-James (1935), Matheson (1933), Reith (1924), Siepmann (1950), Silvey (1977), Wood (1979), and Young (1933). Among the histories of early British broadcasting, apart from Briggs (1961 & 1965) and Scannell and Cardiff (1991), the following have proved particularly useful: Black (1972), Briggs (1981), Burns (1977), Crissell (1997), Curran and Seaton (2002), Frith (1983), Gorham (1952), Moores (1988), Paulu (1956, 1961 & 1981), Pegg (1983), Smith (1976), and Williams (1974).

<sup>2</sup> Briggs also published a single volume history of British broadcasting (1985) and another single volume dealing with the history of BBC governance (1979a). As well as citing new evidence, both volumes go some way to overcoming the limitations characterised by the five volume official history, viz. by concentrating more upon broadcasting's peripheries, not least the many controversies Briggs neglected to mention in his earlier work.

and economic history, thus contributing to the development of cultural history (see Briggs, 1980).

This commitment to new historical perspectives is made explicit in volume four, in which Briggs tells us that the relationship of broadcasting to society is never 'one of foreground to background'. Rather, 'broadcasting registered, though incompletely, what was happening, and through it structures and policies – and the conflicts which it engendered – it was also a revealing expression of economic, social, and cultural forces' (1979b: v). In other words, Briggs was just as much interested – or so he claims – in the wider history in which broadcasting was situated as he was in the internal specificities of broadcasting history. Briggs' *BBC* is all the more impressive considering that there were few general histories of broadcasting when he first started researching the subject in the late 1950s following an invitation by the then BBC Director-General, Ian Jacob, to write the history. Nor was there a catalogued BBC archive as there is now at Caversham (established in 1970). Consequently, Briggs had to do much of the sorting of official documents in the possession of the BBC himself. Indeed, Briggs notes (*ibid.*: 9) that, 'perhaps the most important by-product' of his historical research, 'has been that the BBC has begun to put its own archives into order and has appreciated their national as well as their institutional importance'. All things considered, Briggs' history is a sure display of a virtuoso historian in complete control of his subject and with the vision to push beyond the boundaries of his discipline.<sup>3</sup>

The other history that warrants individual attention is Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff's (1991) one volume social history of British broadcasting, also concerned with the 1920s and 1930s. Though written some thirty years after the first volume of Briggs' history, it is no less innovative in its approach to the historical study of broadcasting and equally distinguished in its academic rigour and originality, providing the reader with a abundance of previously unseen archival material and corresponding references.<sup>4</sup> Particularly impressive are their efforts to foreground and contextualise broadcasting's

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<sup>3</sup> One has to bear in mind that media history was still regarded by many historians as an historical source, not a subject worthy of research in its own right. Hence Briggs has noted how he, 'spent a great deal of my time and energy in writing the history of broadcasting ... sometimes to the express regret of several of my historian colleagues who have argued that I might have been better employed elsewhere' (cited in O'Malley, 2002: 165).

<sup>4</sup> Whilst the book contains some new material, much of its content was published previously in the form of journal articles, mainly in *Media, Culture & Society*, during the 1980s.



wider social and cultural history, making it, the most rounded and engaging broadcasting history of the inter-war period to date. What really distinguishes it from Briggs' history, however, is the greater attention accorded to programme output. Whereas Briggs tends to concentrate on specialist areas of programme-making (e.g. religion and education), Scannell and Cardiff focus their attention on general programme output aimed at general listeners (e.g. news, talks, variety, music). Of particular interest is the social relationship between broadcasters, programme content, and the listening public, between production and consumption. Scannell and Cardiff (1991: x) attempt to get beneath the 'seeming ordinariness' that characterises current broadcasting, so as to reveal the 'long and continuing effort by broadcasters to discover formats, styles and modes of address which ceaselessly reiterate effects of familiarity which give to daily output the same unquestioning routine character that daily life possesses'. In other words, they concentrate on the ways in which broadcasting both reflected but also facilitated the organisation of everyday reality in and through its programmes.

Broadcasting mediates a seemingly unmediated reality, but the world that is organised in programme output is not a reflection, a mirror of a reality that exists elsewhere. It is a unique totality, a social whole constituted in the range of output, a universe that exists nowhere else. That totality mediates the commonsense knowledge, the practical experience and the everyday pleasures of whole societies.

(Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: xi)

In addition to reviewing the above histories, I have also undertaken a great deal of primary historical research of my own: at the BBCs Written Archive Centre (WAC) in Caversham and, to a lesser extent, the Public Record Office, the Post Office Archives, the British Library and the British Library Newspaper Library in London. Collectively, these archives are indispensable sources for broadcasting history, indeed, social history generally. Having said that, the BBCs WAC is undoubtedly the most important. It includes all surviving working papers that pertain to the BBCs organisational history: internal memoranda, minutes of meetings, correspondence, financial and programme records, wireless publications (including *BBC Yearbooks*, *Radio Times*, and *The Listener*), press cuttings, committee reports, programme scripts, news bulletins, listener

research reports, etc (see Kavanagh, 1999).<sup>5</sup> Such sources are especially important when one bears in mind the ephemeral nature of early broadcasting: it was not until the mid-thirties that broadcasts were recorded; even then, many broadcasts continued to be transmitted live. If it were not for the Written Archives the character of early broadcasting might have well and truly disappeared into the ether, leaving barely a murmur to discern its past history. Whilst Briggs and the like are to be commended for doing much of the ground-breaking research with which one can get a feel for the BBCs WAC, their use of available archival material is by no means exhaustive; the scope for discovering new and original material is abundant. In short, the archives and the history they represent are far more important than any one historian, no matter how distinguished or rigorous they may be.

I mention the above not only as a formal acknowledgement of my indebtedness to certain sources, but also as a starting point with which to orientate and 'mark out' my own historical analysis of early broadcasting. For a start, most of the early histories of broadcasting tend to present a 'top-down' perspective from which the BBC is seen as a public service bequeathed to the population from 'the great and the good', for the benefit of the nation. In spite of his reputation as a historian for championing 'bottom-up' history (one need only think of his various contributions to the study of urban and labour history, especially working class radicalism), this tendency is most notably exemplified in Briggs' broadcasting history. For all its pioneering interdisciplinary richness, it remains an exemplary institutional history, written by a professional historian whose primary concern was to write a definitive history based on all the evidence available (see Briggs, 1980: 8).<sup>6</sup> Hence Briggs' attentiveness to objectivity, impersonal facts and chronological narrative. Not surprisingly, Briggs has since been criticised for his methodological focus on BBC officialdom. Stuart Hood complained that Briggs' second volume failed to provide 'any critical questioning of the BBCs actions and motives' (cited in Taylor, 1991: 586). Similarly, Scannell (1979: 391), criticised Briggs' handling of alternative forms of broadcasting during the inter-war

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<sup>5</sup> Scannell and Cardiff (1991: xiii) estimate that the Written Archives contain at least 200,000 files, dating from the early twenties through to the early sixties. Of these, about 50,000 or more files pertain to the inter-war period.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Briggs never used this term himself. In an article in which he outlines some of the problems he first encountered when writing broadcasting history, he says he was 'anxious to avoid the term official history', and would have preferred the five volumes 'to be called *A History of Broadcasting* rather than *The History*' (Briggs, 1980: 8; cf. 1995: xvi).

period, such as Radio Luxembourg, on the grounds that they 'are never given adequate treatment on their own account but are seen almost wholly from the BBCs point of view'. Though commenting on volume four of Briggs' history, Scannell (ibid.: 393) goes on to say that, in spite of Briggs' claim quoted above, 'the relationship between broadcasting and society remains one between foreground and background'. In other words, Briggs' level of analysis tends, for the most part, to be descriptive, making 'little effort to get behind and beneath, to the ways the programmes were made, and how and why'. Whilst praising the author's 'tenacity', 'encyclopaedic knowledge' and 'ecumenical outlook', Raphael Samuel (1998: 188-89), probably best summarises the corporate character of Briggs' method:

... Briggs' *BBC* is top-down history of a very old-fashioned sort ... So far as internal developments are concerned the focus is relentlessly on policy-making ... Not broadcasting but policy-making is the true subject of this work [i.e. volume five], and the unifying thread of the five volumes, leaving little or no space for the initiatives which welled up from below, or which flourished on the peripheries ... What seems to really arouse his intellectual passions is the exegesis of bureaucratic reports ... for all his democratic beliefs, [Briggs] has a very strong sense of hierarchy ... An enormous amount of importance is attached to the senior executives, not only the Director-General but also the Chairman and the Board of Governors ... [making this] a kind of BBC *Who's Who*.

One also has to bear in mind the limited nature of BBC sources. Though an invaluable historical resource, many of the written documents that pertain to the early years of the BBC were somewhat 'coloured' to say the least, for the simple fact that they were largely written from the perspective of BBC officials, politicians, and various 'cultivated elites' (i.e. celebrated novelists, poets, literary critics, academics, musicians, etc). The American communications historian, D. L. LeMahieu (1988: 181), notes that whereas actual audience opinions about the BBC during the inter-war period trickled through only in drips and drabs via letters to journals, periodicals, or the press, the BBC made certain that the initial 'child-like enthusiasm' with which some greeted wireless was 'preserved in more permanent form and widely disseminated by recruiting some articulate and powerful members of British society to write down their first reactions to wireless'. This was partly to do with the BBCs anxiety about needing to persuade such people of its cultural legitimacy, of which I shall say more in chapter two.

To counter this tendency I have tried, where possible, to make visible local, peripheral discourses and practices that stand either in opposition to, or as a correlative of, more

visible official discourses concerning early broadcasting. Hence it is not my intention, to quote Gareth Stedman Jones (1977: 163-70), 'to translate archival silence into historical passivity', nor to resort to 'a casual usage of social control' so as to conveniently by-pass the historical intricacies of early broadcasting. That said, the main purpose of this thesis is not to recover the bottom-up social history of early broadcasting. This is not what is sometimes referred to as 'people's history' or 'history from below' (cf. Samuel, 1981). Nor is it a populist interpretation of broadcasting history based on the belief that broadcasting eventually (usually associated with the advent of audience research in 1936 and the broadcasting of light entertainment programmes during the second world war) yielded to 'what the public wants' (see Curran, 2002: 14-23). On the few occasions that I do reference instances of popular discontent, it is intended as a gestural acknowledgement of the possibility that the listening public could and did resist much early public service broadcasting in an effort to make it a cultural form that was more recognisably their own.<sup>7</sup>

Another defining and related characteristic of many hitherto broadcasting histories is their tendency to present a liberal interpretation of broadcasting, the BBC in particular. One aspect of this narrative is that broadcasting, much like the press in the nineteenth century, becomes increasingly free of state interference and politically independent. James Curran (2002: 5) probably best summarises the way in which liberal histories of broadcasting have been woven together to illustrate the above: the lifting of the ban on broadcasting controversial issues in 1928; the consolidation of the BBCs status during the Second World War; the coming of commercial television in 1955; the abolition of the 'fourteen day rule' forbidding broadcast coverage of any issue which was due to be debated in parliament within the next fortnight; the BBCs refusal (unlike during the 1926 General Strike) to capitulate to government official policy during the Suez crisis and the Falklands conflict; through to the recent spat surrounding the war on Iraq and the controversial Hutton report. Though broadcasters have come under a good deal of pressure from governments in the past, and continue to do so, liberal historians argue that they have nearly always resisted such pressures, thus asserting their editorial

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<sup>7</sup> I agree with Hill (2002: 111) who suggests that it is difficult to comment on the exact nature of the relationship between the BBC and its audience given that there is still much work to be done in making visible a more bottom up history of early broadcasting, written from the perspective of the ordinary listener.

autonomy and commitment to impartiality and representing a diversity of competing social interests.<sup>8</sup>

A second theme of this liberal narrative is to hold up broadcasting as an exemplar for strengthening the democratic process by making government and politicians more accountable to the public (Curran, 2002: 5-6). The BBC's public service ethos, specially its commitment to educating and informing its listening public, is particularly important in this respect, not least because it filled the void created by an increasingly commercialised press. That this coincided with early twentieth century extensions of the franchise is of further importance for liberal historians; if representative democracy and parliamentary sovereignty were to function in a meaningful way, it was imperative that the newly enlarged electorate be politically informed and taught how to be responsible citizens. Furthermore, liberals argue that, as well as informing and educating, broadcasting has also helped facilitate communication between different social groups who might not otherwise have anything in common, thus mitigating any extreme antagonistic social relations. In short, liberal historians conceive broadcasting's principal role to be an essentially democratising one, contributing to the on-going cumulative empowerment of the people.

Such views are diametrically opposed to those held by Marxist media historians and sociologists (Hall, 1977 & 1986; GUMG, 1976, 1980 & 1982; Schlesinger, 1978; Thompson, 1990, among others). They argue that broadcasting, indeed the media generally, operates as an adjunct to a centralised nexus of power in the form of the state and a ruling political elite. As such, broadcasting's primary function is to reflect hegemonic interests and thus legitimise the status quo. Though the most functionalist (and least media knowledgeable) of these writers, this opinion is best summarised in the work of Ralph Miliband (1983: 198), who argued that the 'mass media in advanced capitalist societies are mainly intended to perform highly 'functional' role; they too are both the expression of a system of domination, and a means of reinforcing it'. In other words, the media are seen as crucial to maintaining the power base of the capitalist

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<sup>8</sup> In broader liberal pluralist terms, the media functions with a certain degree of autonomy and indifference, both from other social institutions and, more importantly, from the state. This is partly to do with the way in which pluralists conceive power, viz. they do not think there to be any one enduring source of power, much less a state leviathan. Instead, there are a multiplicity of power relationships that are forever changing and widely diffused among many competing groups of interests.

ruling class. One of the ways in which the media do this is by monopolising ‘the production and distribution of ideas’ (see Murdock and Golding, 1977), which nearly always coincide with the ideas of the ruling class since they tend to own the material means of media production, thus promoting false consciousness. Hence, whereas liberals might concede that broadcasting has been occasionally susceptible to external influences that encroach on its professional journalistic values and independence, Marxists argue that broadcasting’s rationale is precisely as an *a priori* ideological state apparatus. In short, and to quote Hall (1977), the media has an ‘ideological effect’. I shall say more about the radical tradition of media studies in later, particularly the altogether more subtle and influential Gramscian inspired account of cultural hegemony, not least because it has a direct bearing on my own theoretical arguments. For the moment, I want to continue by examining some examples of liberal broadcasting histories.

One of the most vehement liberalist rebuttals of this radical narrative is articulated in an essay by Paddy Scannell (1989). Drawing critically on the work of Jurgen Habermas, particularly his concepts of the public sphere and communicative rationality, Scannell sets out to counter arguments that regard broadcasting’s primary role as one ‘of social control, or of cultural standardisation or of ideological (mis)representation’ by arguing for broadcasting ‘as a public good that has unobtrusively contributed to the democratisation of everyday life, in public and private contexts, from its beginning through to today’ (ibid.: 136). The main rationale for Scannell’s argument is that public service broadcasting was founded upon the principles of universal availability and, though not as immediately, the representation of ordinary everyday life. For Scannell it is thus important ‘to acknowledge the ways in which radio and television have given voices to the voiceless and faces to the faceless, creating new communicative entitlements for excluded social groups’ (ibid.: 142). This was specially important in the inter-war period when Britain was making attempts to actualise a mass democracy in which everybody was entitled, in principle at least, to have their opinions heard and to hear those of others (ibid.: 144). Though critical of the ‘limits of representative democracy and of broadcasting’s representative public service role within it’ (ibid.: 163), essentially, Scannell argues that the communicative ethos of broadcasting forms a crucial part of the public domain in which ruling elites can be scrutinised and held accountable to public opinion.

It is for these reasons and Scannell's own extensive knowledge of broadcasting history why he is so critical of the 'ideological effect'. He is particularly hostile to the way in which ideology critique reduces the history of broadcasting to a 'one-dimensional' level of analysis, collapsing 'any difference or contradiction in the work of broadcasting'. Whilst there is a coherent logic to Scannell's argument, his train of thought becomes increasingly erratic and indiscriminate, prompting Curran (2002: 41) to argue that Scannell's analysis 'is typical of the way in which liberal media history routinely ignores or marginalizes evidence that challenges hallowed liberal themes'. In this particular instance, one might add a further complaint of 'misrepresentation'. For example, in an effort to discredit the analyses of Hall and the like, we are told that 'it is Theory (Althusser as the voice of ideology, Foucault of discourse) ... that systematically misunderstands and misrecognises its object' (Scannell, 1989: 158). He goes on to say that, to 'regard the media as ideological is to regard them as either anti-rational or irrational'. What Scannell fails to mention, however, is that these theorists, and the way in which their work has been subsequently developed, differ enormously in their theoretical suppositions. Foucault never thought regulatory institutions, such as the media, to be 'anti-rational or irrational'. Far from it. If anything, the media's rationality is inseparable from everyday social relations and practices. As such, they conceal nothing. I shall say more about this later. Further, I mean to demonstrate that a Foucauldian analysis is very sensitive to history, in fact, more so than a liberal analysis that, arguably, sees everything in terms of progress or anti-progress. In other words, it is Scannell who 'misunderstands' and 'misrecognises' his object of analysis.

Whilst Scannell's defence of public service broadcasting is emphatic, the most trenchant advocate of this liberal narrative, albeit with an emphasis on Fabian gradualism, is working class intellectual and cultural critic, Richard Hoggart. Though not an historian as such, Hoggart is the personification of the liberal intelligentsia and the liberal interpretation of the BBC and public service broadcasting. Apart from his own influence in broadcasting history, not least his part in the Pilkington committee and the Broadcasting Research Unit, Hoggart has written extensively on the social importance of broadcasting as a public service and the related issue of the need for maintaining cultural standards both as an *a posteriori* principle and as a bulwark against creeping commercialism and the decline in authority (for example, 1972, 1973, 1995, 2004).

Whilst his general argument may seem a little dated, sometimes patronising, and occasionally contemptuous, his criticisms against *inter alia* 'cultural dumbing down', 'levelling', 'relativism' and 'popularism', represent an extensive and entirely consistent engagement with the concept of public service broadcasting as a primary facilitator of democracy.

Of course, for the last statement to be valid, broadcasting itself must be 'democratic'. And this is the argument Hoggart (1973) broadly pursues when writing about the BBC and society that, despite its past and present shortcomings, the BBC represents the closest thing we have to a broadcasting institution that 'serves as wide a range as possible of diverse interests'.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, Hoggart (1972: 90) elaborates upon the basic criteria for democratic broadcasting by stipulating: 'that they [broadcasters] are in touch with their culture; that they have thought about the responsibilities of the medium as well as felt its interest, and that they come under regular scrutiny of the right kind'. More recently he laments 'that the arrival of broadcasting in the last century offered the greatest opportunity to create a clear democratic means of communication, one harnessed neither to the profit-making wagon or to political power' (2004: 34). Hence, the requirement that broadcasting have 'public service at its heart' (ibid.: 111), not least because 'broadcasting can be the biggest and best arena for exposing false democracy and welcoming its opposite' (ibid.: 138). Such convictions are premised upon Hoggart's firm-held belief in well-meaning paternalism, critical judgement, progress, and social democracy. The alternative is a world dominated by private and superficial interests, completely lacking in any communal values whatsoever. Hence his clarion call that we should 'never join the big battalions', but 'try to think for ourselves', and 'try to act like free citizens, not subjects or dupes' (ibid.: 81). Anything less would be a betrayal of all the democratic gains that have been hard fought for and won over the past two hundred years or so.

Yet another example of this liberal, social democratic narrative is to be found in much of Raymond Williams' early writings on communications and culture generally (viz.

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that, like Reith, Hoggart (2004: 114-31) is keen to stress the difference between 'the public interest' and 'what interests the public'. He sees the latter as a euphemism for sensationalism which ought not be given priority for the simple reason that 'there are better criteria' based on a deference to a notion of the 'best' and the notion that 'it should imply what I do not yet know, and might not like, but should know for its sake and ours'.



1966, 1975 & 1984). In a similar fashion, Williams also advocated a gradualist approach to the media based on a disinterested, romanticised notion of continuity and community. Though not concerned with broadcasting *per se*, this tendency is most evident in *Culture and Society* (1984) and its sequel *The Long Revolution* (1975). Here, Williams engages with what is essentially a liberal politics and the ideal of an enlightened, participatory democracy. The widening of access to education, the growth in mass literacy, the popular press, and standard English are all post-industrial historical processes that tend towards gradual democratic revolutions in our economic, political and cultural spheres of life. Collectively, these transformations are what move society towards realising what Williams famously referred to as a 'common culture'.

An analysis of such tendencies is carried forward into Williams' closely related publication on *Communications* (1966) in which he reiterates his theory on the gradualist nature of social change vis-à-vis a continuing process of growth, learning, and popular democratic culture. More than this, he envisaged a media that was truly democratic and autonomous from minority interests, whether they be authoritarian, paternal, or commercial. Like Habermas, Williams' believed that the media should function as a public sphere, in which people could freely exchange ideas and opinions openly and on equal terms, thus giving rise to universal cultural norms, values, and a sense of public purpose. One crucial difference, however, is that whereas Habermas sees free communication as an obligation that needs to be negotiated between would be interlocutors, Williams sees it in terms of *a priori* rights which merely need to be made available in order to be taken up by freely discoursing human beings (Stevenson, 2003: 23-4). In other words, there is no need for any kind of regulatory codes of conduct; for Williams, such codes are already embedded in human nature. Whilst my own analysis differs from a Habermasian one, it is interesting to note that a governmentalist study would also see public service broadcasting as an ethical obligation, the difference being that, for Habermas, that obligation is what gives rise to communicative rationality, whereas, for governmentalist, the obligation functions as a technology of subjectification.

There have been many criticisms of Williams' early work: probably the most well-known are those of Terry Eagleton (1976a & 1976b) and E. P. Thompson (1961a & 1961b). Whilst these two interlocutors differ significantly in terms of their analysis

(indeed Eagleton's critique was itself savagely critiqued by Thompson (1976 & 1995) for its Althusserian anti-humanist invective and its encouraging 'an elitism of Theory' that is no less bourgeois than the culture and society tradition that Williams was writing within himself) both attack Williams' conceptual framework on the grounds that it is largely based on a utopian, gradualist politics that neglects social relations of power and the ideological function of culture. For Thompson (1961b: 34), Williams' passage from 'a "way of conflict" to a "way of life" is to pass out of the main line of the socialist intellectual tradition'. Thus, Williams fails to sufficiently acknowledge the deeply-rooted historical processes of social conflict resulting in a form of cultural analysis that is complicit with bourgeois ideology. Further, Thompson berates Williams for according 'the process of communication' too much importance in determining the 'process of community', that is a socialist-inspired 'common culture' (ibid: 35). Williams naively assumed that the media of communication could mitigate social and cultural inequalities by virtue of them being available and accountable to the overwhelming majority of the populace. Thus if used purposively, the media could foster 'cultural growth' and a more democratic society. Again, what this overlooks are the dialectics of wider social relations and areas of experience that, to quote Thompson, are necessarily born out of and related to 'a dialogue – about power, communication, class and ideology' (ibid: 37). Finally, whereas Williams' emphasis throughout much of his earlier work is upon a 'way of life', Thompson's tone stresses the continuing importance of understanding life as a 'way of conflict', thus getting back to a more recognisably orthodox Marxist tradition of analysis. Similarly, Eagleton (1976a: 25) argues that by embracing Romantic populism and labour reformist ideologies, Williams ends up 'displacing political analysis' for 'a moralist and idealist critique' which at best urges the state to accept its paternal responsibilities and at worst encourages a complicitness with state-power. In other words, for Eagleton, Williams attempt to rethink the intellectual legacy of radical-conservatism results in a framework of analysis that reinforces the existing culture of bourgeois hegemony.

Whilst the above arguments hit their targets, their critical orientation is clearly limited to Marxist thought. More recent criticisms of Williams 'cultural idealism' have focused on the ways in which it assumes the possibility of reconciling the division between 'culture as art' and as 'a way of life', resulting in a more culturally and ethically complete humanity (for example, Bennett, 1998; Donald, 1992; Hunter, 1988).

Drawing on the work of Foucault, they characterise Williams' work, and British cultural studies generally, as belonging to a tradition of cultural criticism that is historically bound up with the disciplinary formation of English as a governmental technology (McGuigan, 1996: 13-15). Bennett is particularly aware of the way in which the cultural studies 'canon' (*Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution*, and *The Uses of Literacy*) was institutionalised as pedagogical texts to provide moral instruction for a new generation of 'English subjects' like himself; prompting him to argue that Williams' contribution 'was that of expanding the scope of the moral mission of English in giving it a new set of objects (culture as a whole way of life) to latch on to' (1998: 51). Rather than viewing the work of Williams as just belonging to the cultural and political logic of the radical New Left, Bennett reconsiders the ways in which 'culture as a whole way of life' has produced new objects of knowledge which have in turn facilitated new techniques of teaching with which to manage aspects of popular culture previously unknown. Finally, Donald (1992: 130) notes, that the 'emancipatory logic' of Williams' early work, particularly his ideal of common culture, fails to recognise how its appeal is 'more common to some people than others'. In other words, it still excludes all kinds of communities of people who have nothing in common with the culture and society tradition of literary criticism, no matter how much Williams attempted to radicalise and democratise it. Such communities have yet to be entered into the discourse of cultural studies, or if they have, they continue to survive on its peripheries, relatively unnoticed.

It is with the above in mind that one can reasonably claim that the history of early broadcasting and the associated idea of public service, which by implication means the history of early BBC culture, and their embedding within media studies, is predominantly liberal in character and has therefore sought to comment only on what is best and progressive about broadcasting's public service ethos, or how it might be improved and further democratised. Whilst there is something noble and humane about such convictions, in a utopian kind of way, what this results in, arguably, is an overly-idealised historiography of public service broadcasting that is complicit with the ideological framework of a liberal democratic polity. Consequently, such analyses tend to overlook modern relations of culture and government, relations that are inextricably intertwined with the exercise of power.

In other words, the history of broadcasting has a political dimension that is often overlooked by many liberal histories of early broadcasting (cf. Curran & Seaton, 2002: 107-125). This is not to say that these histories do not use overtly political sources – legislation, parliamentary inquiries and debates, and so forth. Rather, their analyses fail to make explicit that decisions and arguments about how broadcasting ought to be funded and organised were also decisions and arguments about how to best exercise power vis-à-vis how to best govern a population. Thus, whilst there is a great deal of historical rigour to these foregoing historical and theoretical analyses, the analysis I present here is one concerned with contextualising the emergence and subsequent development of early broadcasting as a civilising technology of cultural governance. Early public service broadcasting can be understood as one of many instruments whose function was to govern through processes detached from the formal apparatuses of political authority, thus overcoming the paradoxical concern of liberal governmentality, the danger of ‘over-governing’. As such this thesis represents an attempt to provide an articulation between the rich empiricism of the extant histories of broadcasting on the one hand and cultural theory on the other, in particular Foucauldian governmentality theory.

The significance of this synthetic undertaking, other than for the reasons already discussed above, is twofold. First, I have consciously avoided writing yet another media-centric history, a problem recently identified by James Curran (2002: 135), who argues that most media history tends to be too ‘narrowly focused on the content or organisation of the media’, and, consequently, ‘tends not to illuminate the links between media development and wider trends in society’. Second, I have attempted to overcome the tendency to treat media history (understood here as an essentially atheoretical and empirical discipline that draws principally on primary sources) and cultural theory (commonly understood as an essentially ahistorical and non-empirical discipline, largely reliant on secondary sources) as two distinct areas of study. This is largely an effect of a wider disciplinary schism within media studies between, broadly speaking, political economy on the one hand and cultural studies on the other (see Dahl, 1994; O’Malley, 2002; Scannell, 1980a). That is to say, certain media critics have preferred empirically focused research based on historically informed, radical political-economy analyses of the media (Curran, 2002; Garnham, 1990 & 2000; Golding and Murdock, 1991; Murdock, 1988; Murdock and Golding, 1977, among others). Cultural studies, on

the other hand, has been more engaged with debates centred on continental critical theory. Moreover, their research has tended to focus on the ideological effect of media representations (for example, Hall, 1977; Hall *et al*, 1978) or audience reception studies (for example, Ang, 1985; Hobson, 1982; Morley, 1980), paying little if any attention to the historicity or political-economy of media institutions. That said, the two approaches are not completely antithetical. Rather, it is the way in which the latter school of thought has been seen to have facilitated the importation of neo-Marxism and the so-called 'postmodern turn', giving rise to revisionist models of power and ideological representation in media and cultural studies (see Curran, 2002: 109-126; Hall, 1996a/b). Probably the most significant two interlocutors in this respect have been the paradigmatic 'turn to Gramsci' and the so-called 'Foucault Effect', the significance of which I shall explore in more detail in chapter one.

The upshot of this internal dispute is that, in spite of repeated urges for more interdisciplinarity between academics working in media and cultural studies, the tension between empirically centred and theoretically centred research remains especially marked with regard to broadcasting history (see Briggs, 1980; Collins, 1993; Scannell, 1980a). Those who have attempted some kind of theorised historical analysis of broadcasting tend to have done so in a cursory way only. They are usually concerned with a more general socio-historical analysis of mass communications, and, therefore, accord little attention to the specificities of broadcasting history (for example, Hall, 1986; LeMahieu, 1988; Williams, 1966 & 1974). Others, as we have already seen in the case of Scannell (1989), have historicised public service broadcasting, using Jurgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere and communicative rationality (for example, Collins, 1993; Garnham, 1983 & 1993). Whilst such authors acknowledge the shortcomings of Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and differ in their appropriation of his critical theory, they nevertheless continue to argue for its continuing relevance for the study of the relationship between the mass media and democratic politics. Often this is based upon a narrowly focused political economy analysis with varying emphases on constitutional democracy, jurisprudence, and the sovereignty of the state. Moreover, their work tends to be based on prescriptive, normative judgements about what constitutes a legitimate public sphere, and is often characterised by a list of reformist demands, some more utopian than others, resulting in

yet another overly idealised historical analysis, thus detracting from the actual historicity of public service broadcasting and its various political rationalities.

Hence my avoidance of making prescriptive judgements about the future historical trajectory of public service broadcasting based on some universal, transhistorical principle or other (e.g. cultural enlightenment, enlightened citizenship, a rational public sphere, communicative action, etc). To do so would, by necessity, mean also subscribing to some essentialist, transcendental philosophy of history, when I want to problematise public service broadcasting's cultural formation, so as to raise questions that have yet to be asked of public service broadcasting. This is not to say that I think the future ecology of broadcasting to be unimportant. Nor am I saying that in the place of public service broadcasting I would prefer a wholly commercialised system of broadcasting with little if any public service obligation. Rather, I am wanting to refuse a type of analysis that invariably gives rise to a kind of intellectual blackmail, whereby one has to be for or against public service broadcasting according to the prevailing state/market dualism that characterises much political economy analyses of broadcasting policy.<sup>10</sup>

Thus there are other questions that need to be asked and problems posed alongside the long running debate about broadcasting's political economy. What is it about the BBC and its embodiment of public service broadcasting that was, and still is, taken for granted? How have certain cultural practices associated with public service broadcasting been naturalised? How does the secondary literature typically historicise the BBC, and, possibly, contribute to this normative process? How were the listening public constructed as subjects? Were some subjectivities more desirable than others? To what extent were these subjectifying practices technologies of domination? Were they contested? If so, what are the limits of public service broadcasting as a technology of cultural governance? How might broadcasting policy be understood as a 'terminal effect' of wider historical relations? Finally, how does broadcasting policy either

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, there is nothing original about my wanting to by-pass such debates. Garnham's (1983) introduction of Habermas' work to British communication and media studies was an attempt to open up a conceptual space with which to develop a libertarian rationale for public service broadcasting. However, for reasons already explained, the appropriation of Habermas' work has resulted in an idealised quagmire in which one can all too easily get bogged-down with ahistorical, second-order judgements.

embody or reflect non-statutory technologies of governance, which in some way regulate our everyday practices?

In asking the above questions I hope to render the familiarity of public service broadcasting strange and to critically question its apparent political neutrality. I am wanting to propound a history of the present (see Dean, 1994: 23-42) that attempts to understand how we are constituted as subjects of certain historical cultural formations and practices, in this case public service broadcasting. In so doing I have heeded Foucault's challenge to 'refuse what we are' (1982: 216) by resisting taken for granted truisms, even if they do claim to serve the public interest. This thesis is thus posed in oppositional terms, as a critique of the historical constraints and limitations that have implications for the here-and-now.

Until now there has been little attempt at producing an historical account of broadcasting informed by Foucault's analytics of power. Those who have undertaken a Foucauldian analysis of broadcasting as a technology of cultural governance tend to be either wholly contemporary (Born, 2002) or theoretical (Simons, 2000 & 2002) in their focus. Others have undertaken an analysis of broadcasting systems of regulation, and cultural policy generally, but outside the United Kingdom (for example, Flew, 1996 & 1997; Ouellette, 1999). Likewise, governmentality literature has largely overlooked both the history and discourse of broadcasting. For example, in Rose's (1999) extensive research into governmentality in the twentieth-century, the civilising role of early public service broadcasting is allocated just two pages of analysis. Similarly, Barry (2001) glosses over the emergence of public service broadcasting and focuses instead upon the formation and discursive practices of the physical sciences vis-à-vis mass communications. To my knowledge, and at the time of my writing, only Donald (1992) and Thompson (1997a) consider the emergence of broadcasting and its civilising governmental role. But again, broadcasting is not the primary object of their analyses. In short, there has been no substantive analysis of the formation of public service broadcasting as a technology of governance. It is this gap in existing knowledge and understanding that I seek to address in what follows.

## Foucault and the Concept of Governance

This chapter is a review of primary and secondary Foucauldian literature in which I outline the various themes underpinning Foucault's concept of governmentality, whilst indicating to what extent, and with what kinds of reservations and modifications, this framework might be applied to the early development of broadcasting, and an analysis of culture and power generally.

The originality and relevance of Foucault's research into what he called 'governmentality' is its attempt to explain the emergence and subsequent development of a practical political rationality that concerns itself with the art of government, how to best govern a group of human beings constituted as a population, the basis of any modern state's wealth and power. Historically, this became especially important during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when most Western nation-states experienced extraordinary increases in the size of urban populations, a phenomenon that represented all kinds of new economic and socio-political probabilities and uncertainties. For Foucault, government is less to do with the government of a province or a territory, as proposed in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and more to do with the government of people, their relations with other things internal to the state, and how to best dispose of things for a plurality of ends that are politically and economically expedient at a given moment in time: how to increase a nation's wealth, how to maintain a healthy and prosperous populace, how to stimulate birth-rates, how to effect certain ways of behaving and thinking, and so on.

An analysis of government is thus concerned with the ways in which certain social relations and the conduct of populations come to be problematised and objectified as sites for political intervention. In particular, governmentalist attend to totalising and individualising techniques of governance that construct human beings as both political subjects to govern and regulate according to prevailing governmental rationalities and as self-governing, ethical individuals. Government is understood broadly as the 'conduct of conduct', the meeting point between government and the governed (see Dean, 1994: 176-77 & 209; Foucault, 1982: 220-21 & 1998a: 19). Hence government



consists of both private and public structures of social order which enact government of the self and government of others.

A further characteristic of modern government is how to introduce 'economy' into political practice, that is maximising the political and economic efficacy of government whilst reducing its cost (see Foucault, 1991b: 92).<sup>11</sup> Unlike traditional political theories of government, which tend to focus on juridical-state sovereignty, Foucault proposed an historical thesis whereby the rationality of 'government' is expanded beyond the traditional practices of the state to include an ensemble of voluntary, statutory, and professional agencies (e.g. the 'psy' disciplines, social welfare, education, medicine, religion, recreational organisations, etc.), the result of which is the growth of more complex discursive forms of power organised through multifarious non-coercive disciplinary social practices and bodies of knowledge. Rose and Miller (1992) argue this pluralisation of modern government, and the accompanying relativisation of the commonly attributed boundaries between state and civil society, becomes a form of 'acting at a distance'.<sup>12</sup> Government takes place as much in everyday practices as it does in and through state and quasi-state institutions. Understood thus, government does not simply refer to that sphere of political activity normally thought of as government in the constitutional sense, but as an activity that consists in governing human conduct by means of what Foucault called 'governmental technologies', the instruments and practices for actualising political rationalities.

An important implication of Foucault's conception of government is that the state does not have the essential unity, function, or importance commonly ascribed to it by traditional modes of analysis of the state in the political writings of theorists like Hobbes, Locke, and Mill, or by Marxist theories of the state (see Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Held, 1983; Miliband, 1983). There is no Leviathan, no totalising 'reason of state' (the development of productive forces, the reproduction of relations of production

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<sup>11</sup> Foucault particularly identifies this capacity to govern from a distance with laissez faire liberalism inasmuch as it was a means with which the state could economise both its fiscal expenditure and its exertion of socio-political governance.

<sup>12</sup> An aspect of what Foucault is describing here is analogous to the twentieth century socio-political phenomenon, 'corporatism' (see Keane, 1996: 107). Like governmentality, corporatism facilitates forms of indirect state intervention via private, non-state organisations that are entrusted to formulate and implement public policy. One of the effects of this blurring between the state and civil society is that, whilst the state extends its political reach into civil society, it also has to relinquish some of its power to representatives of civil society.

or a particular social order, etc), no dominant 'top-down' state ideology. Rather, the state's character and formation is more fragmentary and contradictory (see Dean, 1994: 141-73). The modern state is what it is today precisely because of governmentality. Its capacity to govern relies increasingly upon 'technologies of government' that simultaneously function both for the public good and as discrete regulatory agencies. It is governmentality, understood as the reciprocal and multifarious flows between technologies of governance and technologies of the self, that makes possible and defines the limits of the state. To quote Foucault (1991b: 103), 'governmentalisation of the state' makes possible 'the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not'. And it is in this sense that the art of government is inextricably intertwined with the emergence of *raison d'état*, that is 'reason of state' (see Foucault, 2002e: 313-17), though this ought not be understood as a logic or political practice which seeks to solely legitimise sovereign state rule. Once again, the state is best understood as comprising of an extensive network of agencies, power relations, social practices, and fields of knowledge, which collectively constitute the strength of the state. Their rationale is to facilitate positive forms of government, not impose the interests of state, thus perfecting the rational art of liberal government.

### **Government by Numbers**

The art of government, or reason of state, is intimately connected with the problem of what constitutes the reality of a state. Government is only possible when the strength and capacity of the state and the many social relations internal to a state's population are known (see Foucault, 1998b: 151; Pasquino, 1991: 114-15). Hence the state must know each and all of its population. Without this political knowledge, it is impossible for government to devise strategies that are able 'to govern effectively in a rational and conscious manner' (Foucault, 1991b: 100). Equally important is that the strength and capacity of rival states also be known, for security purposes. Government can thus be understood as the 'will to know', giving rise to what was for a time referred to as 'political arithmetic', and what is now more commonly known as 'statistics'.

The significance of this argument is best illustrated in relation to the political-historical context of declining laissez-faire economics and the rise of state interventionism (see

Hall, 1988a: 95-122).<sup>13</sup> Whereas much of the nineteenth century was characterised by much legislative social reform but with little commitment to public funding, what we see in the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century is a change of practice whereby the state begins to enlarge both its scale of activity and commitment to public expenditure, a rationality that culminates in Keynesian economics and the modern welfare state. In other words, we see a decline of the Victorian industrial spirit and the triumph of the professional ideal (see Perkin, 1990; Wiener, 1982), resulting in a more corporate society. Hall interprets this transition to new collectivist forms of state organisation and social regulation as a 'crisis of liberalism', by which he means both a short term crisis of the 'practical ideologies' of the ruling classes, the institutional apparatuses of the late Victorian and Edwardian liberal state (individualism, the family, constitution, and the nation), and a more general succession of crises (the emergence of mass democracy, new social movements such as socialism, the women's movement, jingoism, the war, etc) that threatened the hegemony of social order itself. The effect was a series of social and political disjunctures that radically altered many civic and political institutions, not least the classical free market model of laissez-faire.

For the state to maintain social order amidst these changing social relations, it was necessary for it to realise 'a new discourse of social regulation, in which there arose new objects and targets for intervention' (Hall, 1988a: 107). One such discursive practice was the statistical and sociological survey. The disciplinary apparatus for statistics begins to emerge in the early nineteenth-century in the United Kingdom, since when there has been a determined effort to accumulate considerable detail about specific social problems, making them more visible and, therefore, more governable as objects for state and voluntary agencies of intervention. The first British census was in 1801 and established in its modern form with the founding of the General Register Office in

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<sup>13</sup> Within this transition to collectivist forms of state organisation and regulation, Hall (1988a: 110-13) identifies three main political ideologies: imperialism, new liberalism, and Fabianism. The first of these, imperialism, is associated with Victorian Tory paternalism and the movement for national efficiency. New liberalism, on the other hand, was the rationality of a newly emerging professional middle class, who pursued social democracy and the discourse of universalism as a means of containing the threat of socialism and mass democracy, thus ensuring their own hegemony. Like the new liberals the Fabians were an eclectic mix of the new breed of middle-class intelligentsia, reformists, and administrators. However, whereas the new liberals advocated state intervention in the belief that it would ensure greater individual rights and liberties, the Fabians identified with socialism, that is state regulated collectivism as oppose to unregulated individualism. Setting aside any fundamental differences, insofar as all three believed the main agent for social change was the state, Hall argues that all three collectivist tendencies were authoritarian.

1841. The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science was established in 1857. The early pioneers of empirical sociology, produced a wide range of social enquiries, particularly during the early twentieth century (e.g. Freeman, 1919; Llewellyn-Smith, 1935; Rowntree, 1941 & 1951). However, unlike early nineteenth-century surveys which tended to undertake rather crude analyses that, more often than not, revolved around generalised notions of poverty and pauperism, from the 1880s sociological surveys were characterised by a marked resoluteness to get at the statistical facts, that is to understand the specificity of individual social problems (Perkin, 1989: 31-2). Charles Booth is widely acknowledged as the originator of this paradigmatic shift towards the empirical survey, from which specific forms of state intervention and policy could be pioneered. Mass Observation, an ethnographical movement founded by Tom Harrison and Charles Madge in the 1930s, is probably the best known of the independent fact-finding movements to emerge during the inter-war period. The 'need to know' about the everyday conduct of populations, particularly the culture of ordinary people, also influenced the development of the media, especially the documentary film movement and, more importantly, broadcasting.

Whilst the information generated by such activities gave rise to newly formed radical publics – indeed, many of the surveys from this period are commonly appraised as one of the earliest examples of pioneering, bottom-up ethnographical research – I am less interested in understanding the surveys in terms of the statistical information they provide, or their political bent, than I am in understanding them as part of the bureaucratic machinery of government. Drawing on the empirical work of Nikolas Rose (1999a: 197-232) and Ian Hacking (1991) we can see how the emergence of statistical technologies are inextricably linked with the art of government; there is a discernible relationship between government and numbers. The significance of the emergence and development of 'numericisation' is, to put it in very crude terms, to enable modern techniques of government to be both possible and quantifiable since numbers render social phenomena intelligible, measurable and visible. And whilst the aforementioned agents of numericisation employed different techniques and methods, they all sought to 'found an objective science of the people, to interpret the people to themselves and to the government of the day, to bridge the gap of ignorance that had opened up between class cultures, between rulers and ruled' (Bennett, 1981: 21). In other words, numbers constitute certain social domains as objects for government



scrutiny and intervention and have thus become indispensable to the disciplinary technologies in and through which government is exercised. Sociological surveys were indicative of the way in which the collection of statistics was concurrent with the need to know as much as possible about the cultural activities of the population and for that knowledge to be made visible, entered then into public discourse, whence it becomes an object of knowledge and government. Concomitant with this process of breaking down of social and economic conditions was a proliferation of discourses (e.g., unemployment, public health, education, sexual and juvenile delinquency, leisure, housing, etc), each producing new social subjects that were also put into discourse.

In many of the sociological enquiries during this period we see a process of inscribing both their object of study and the participating subjects with calculable subjectivities. Rather than just describing the cultural attributes of their subjects, they seek to render them as a representable statistic that has both qualitative and quantitative characteristics. A further and key characteristic of sociological surveys is the order of discourse they invariably give rise to as a result of them problematising certain social relations and valorising others. Statistics not only reveal regularities; they can also create regularities (Rose, 1999a: 225). Hence populations are deconstructed, divided and re-ordered according to normative judgements. In extreme cases, individuals are stigmatised, marginalised or even confined because of them posing a perceived threat to social norms.

Another characteristic common to such surveys was their use of confessional techniques. Many of the interviewees were actively encouraged to talk about themselves, to expose to figures of authority their cultural practices, and to tell the truth in order to know themselves and to be known (see Dreyfus *et al*, 1983: 173-80; Foucault, 1990a: 58-73). Of course, there is nothing coercive about this technique. Rather, the participants undertake a voluntary self-examination of their experiences and consciousness; in so doing they and the populace they are representative of become more amenable to government. In other words, the interviewee was not the final arbiter of their own discourse. The discourse is entered into a domain of specialist knowledge to be interpreted by experts and professionals so that it could be acted on and, more often than not, institutionalised. Just as there is a proliferation of discourse, so too is there an intensification of state activity and growth in state apparatuses, state

departments and ministries specifically formed so as to be administered by a newly emerging class of professional administrators and experts.

### **Power, Resistance & Freedom**

The preliminary sketch for Foucault's analytics of power first emerges in what many regard to be Foucault's seminal text, *Discipline and Punish*. Here, Foucault traces the birth of the modern prison from the late eighteenth century onwards and the gradual transition from punitive methods of punishment aimed solely at the body (torture, public executions, etc) to forms of non-coercive discipline aimed at using the body as an instrument with which to enact moral training, that is corrective techniques aimed at transforming the soul of the criminal. Foucault extrapolates from this an analytics of power that posits the body as itself a political technology, invested by power relations. It is in this context that Foucault (2002c: 137) demonstrates most clearly that, 'society's control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body'. Moreover, Foucault extends his analysis of disciplinary power to include the entire social body, or what he refers to as the 'body politic' (1991a: 28). The living body thus represents a political economy which is constantly bound up with a multiplicity of power relations and political rationalities that seek to train the body to carry out corporal tasks that are politically and economically expedient, ones that will neutralise any dangerous or illicit passions, and in so doing effect good conduct and behaviour. It is hoped that by subjecting the body to normalising practices, in time, the subject will take it upon him or herself to exact techniques of self-governance.

Consequently, from the mid nineteenth century onwards one sees a proliferation of new disciplines, discreet forms of surveillance, and professional 'technicians of behaviour' and 'engineers of conduct' (teachers, doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, etc.), charged with rendering particular groups of persons more knowable, in the hope that this knowledge can then be used to produce bodies and souls that are both docile and useful. It is in this respect, that one can begin to understand how taken for granted public service practices, particularly ones that seek to act on behalf of self-governing citizens, become problematic, not least because these practices are bound up with the production of politically expedient subjectivities and modes of conduct. The formation of good and moral citizens on the one hand, and the docile and useful subject on the other, amounts

to the same thing – there is an interdependence between citizenship rights and disciplinary power.

It is in light of the above that one frequently hears the objection that Foucault's analytics of power are all-encompassing: they describe a society in which nothing is exterior to relations of power, a society in which everything is tied down by an omnipresent subjugating power, with no scope for social change or human agency.<sup>14</sup> The oppressed have no means of any meaningful resistance, or realising a state of being in which they will experience individual freedom. This has prompted some critics, such as Gareth Stedman Jones (1996: 24), to argue that Foucault's theory is little more than 'a crude functionalist notion of social control'. Edward Said (1986: 151-54) also questioned Foucault's 'imagination of power' in 'trying to understand why he went as far as he did in imagining power to be so irresistible and unopposable'. Said was particularly critical of Foucault's failure to translate his theorisation of power and resistance into a 'project of formulating the discourse of liberation'. He preferred writers like Gramsci and Raymond Williams who 'place a quite different, altogether more positive emphasis upon the vulnerability of the present organisation of culture'. In a similar fashion, Stuart Hall (1996b: 135-6) argues that Foucault's notion of resistance is weak because he has not confronted 'questions about the constitution of dominance in ideology'. Hall thinks that, by abandoning ideology critique, 'Foucault has let himself off the hook of having to re-theorise it in a more radical way: he saves for himself "the political" with his insistence on power, but he denies himself *a politics* because he has no idea of the "relations of force"'. Probably the most trenchant criticism of Foucault's work, however, is Habermas' (1993) aligning of Foucault with 'neo-conservatism' and 'anti-rationalism'. The crux of Habermas' argument is that, whereas he is concerned with completing the project of modernity, Foucault, on the other hand, is indifferent to furthering the principles of enlightenment and universal human rights. Further, Habermas accuses Foucault of being an apolitical observer, politically suspect even, owing to his refusal to prescribe an emancipatory politics of resistance in an effort to remedy the worst social injustices that characterise modern

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<sup>14</sup> Such criticisms were particularly pronounced in Britain, where the reception of Foucault's work within the academy was situated within a wider polemic between an emerging New Left, and its embracing of French theory and neo-Marxism, and classical Marxists who remained unswerving in their attachment to economism, the primacy of base over superstructure and classical historical materialism (Gordon, 2001).



societies.<sup>15</sup> Hence Habermas' interpretation of Foucault's work as a force for conservatism.

So how are such criticisms to be addressed and what are the implications for utilising a Foucauldian framework of analysis? For a start, Foucault (1998a: 19) himself readily admitted to having 'insisted too much on the technology of domination and power', and becoming 'more and more interested' in the 'contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self'. By 'technologies of domination' Foucault had in mind those practices that determine the conduct of an individual person or group of persons, so as to render them more governable, as discussed above. 'Technologies of the self', on the other hand, though ultimately a contributing factor to governmentality via a complex of obligations and cultural activities aimed at an ethical cultivating of the self, are what enable human beings to act upon themselves, to effect by their own means a number of transformative operations in the hope they might become something else (see Foucault, 1990b, 1992 & 1998a). For example, self-improvement – known as 'lifelong learning' using contemporary parlance – is one of the most common modern instances of a technology of the self, with its emphasis upon learning as a way of life, that is as an internal and enduring pedagogical relationship with the self. In other words, taking care of the self is predicated upon knowing oneself, that is one's inner self.<sup>16</sup> It is only by knowing oneself by means of contemplation that one can improve oneself, that is one's character, one's outwardly demeanour. Crucially, this reflective process can be potentially empowering as much as it is a means of self-governance. It is what permits human beings to actively recognise themselves as individual and collective subjects with the capacity to refuse who they are and be someone/thing else.

Hence Foucault never postulated that power was absolute in the sense that it bears down upon its subjects with an almighty sovereignty. For Foucault (1991a: 26-7), 'power is exercised rather than possessed'; it is not the exclusive privilege or preserve of a dominant class or political institution (the King, the state, the church, the judiciary, the media, the people, the bourgeoisie, etc). Power is necessarily infinite in its forms and

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<sup>15</sup> See Ashenden & Owen (1999) and Fraser (1993a: 35-54) for a useful summary and elaboration of the Foucault/Habermas debate.

<sup>16</sup> In this sense, the self is not a material substance, that is a bodily phenomenon. Rather, techniques of the self are activities aimed at the soul; whilst the body is the principal instrument for effecting those techniques.



the locations from which it is exercised. Though power is everywhere, no single source of power is omnipotent. Furthermore, power relations are constantly being contested, giving rise to new fields of knowledge that can either reinforce or renegotiate existing power relations. From a governmentality point of view, and as noted by Gordon (1991: 5), 'the conduct of conduct' is thus inextricably intertwined with 'dissenting counter-conducts'. Hence Foucault (2000e: 298) defines power as constituting an endless 'game of strategy' between ruler and ruled. He was quite clear that 'power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free'.

If a subject were completely at another's disposal and became his thing, an object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there wouldn't be any relations of power. Thus in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides ... This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all ... if there are power relations in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere.

(Foucault, 2000e: 292)

So there is a constant interplay between the freedom of the subject and power, a relationship Foucault (1982: 222) famously referred to as an 'agonism', meaning 'a permanent' and 'reciprocal provocation'. Where there is domination, there is resistance. However, Foucault is not saying that acts of resistance are merely the underside of power. Rather, power takes the form of a kind of regulated freedom in which individuals are both subjects of and subject to various power relations. Hence power should not simply be understood as consent or violence, but rather as a 'mode of action upon the actions of others' (ibid.: 221). This is perhaps Foucault's clearest articulation of a sense that disciplinary power acts upon subjects that are already agents with the capacity to act freely. And it is for this reason one ought not take Foucault's hypothesising about a disciplinary society or the 'carceral' too literally.

There is undoubtedly an affinity between Foucault's analytics of power and Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Though critical of Foucault's antagonism to the Marxist tradition, this articulation was first acknowledged in an influential essay of Stuart Hall's (1980: 71), in which he argued that 'Foucault and Gramsci between them account for much of the most productive work on concrete analysis now being undertaken in the field' of cultural studies. For both writers, especially Gramsci, what is historically

distinctive about modern western democracies is the increasing importance accorded to the role of culture as a means of organising the conduct of the public. Hence the emergence of a whole nexus of related state and non-state cultural institutions and practices whose principal role is to educate and inculcate the people in useful cultural values. Crucially, neither Foucault or Gramsci saw cultural production as simply another superstructural effect of a society's mode of economic production, as hypothesised by vulgar Marxism.<sup>17</sup> Further, both focus upon the means with which government actively secure the popular and voluntary consent of the governed, as opposed to a functionalist notion of ruling through coercion or a dominant ideology. Finally, the exercise of power is conjunctural, contingent, historically specific, and forever changing according to emergent social relations and configurations of forces.

Given the similarities between the two writers, why, to quote Bennett (1998: 62), is Foucault better to 'think with' than Gramsci? The main reason is that, in the last instance, Gramsci still conceives of power in Marxist terms. For all its theoretical complexities, hegemony is situated within an analytical framework that still sees power in relation to economism, ideology and class conflict (Smart, 1986: 160-1). As such, hegemony can be understood as a game of two halves, a form of contestation between rulers and ruled, bourgeois and working class, power blocs and subordinates; power is something that can be seized and captured just as territory is in a battle between two opposing sides. Foucault, on the other hand, understood power relations to be multifarious in their objectives, serving no one particular social class or power bloc. The battlefield is awash with a plurality of competing interests, social relations, political rationalities, means and ends. Further, the battle is not for hearts and minds, as with the concept of ideology, but for a hierarchisation of knowledges that come to be designated as 'truth' and 'false' at the level of discourse and institutional practices, thus limiting what can be said and done. 'The problem', to quote Foucault (1980: 133), 'is not changing people's consciousness or what's in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth'. Thus what matters is not so much how media representations affect consciousness, but how cultural resources are deployed

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, Marx himself was to later revise many of his earlier statements on the nature of ideology. Engels was even more critical of the unidirectional relationship between the economic base and superstructure, insisting that the relationship was more interactive than initially suggested by Marx and himself (Harvey, 1978: 98-99).

through cultural programmes of policy and institutional fields of practice, effecting competing 'regimes of truth' and 'truth effects'. Having said this, there are some governmentalist (e.g. Simons, 2000) who still think ideology critique a useful analytical tool that can complement and extend a governmentalist framework of analysis. I shall return to this question later when reassessing Foucault in light of the empirical chapters that follow. Meanwhile, I want to continue by further examining Foucault's analytics of power, especially his theorising of different modes of power.

### **Welfarism, Pastoral Power & Bio-Politics**

Whilst the theme of governmentality is the defining feature in Foucault's work on power, it would be wrong to reduce the exercise of power to an analytics of government, that is the 'conduct of conduct'. As noted by Dean (2002: 121), 'Foucault's concepts of government were situated in a much more complex topography of rule', from which one can deduce sites of government 'traversed by zones of power relations'. In other words, government is but one aspect of power relations, particularly in advanced liberal societies, where the management of populations is more than just the direction of conduct.

So what are these heterogeneous power relations and of what relevance are they for an analysis of the formation and subsequent development of British broadcasting? For Foucault, the art of modern government is as much about ensuring the moral and physical well-being of populations as it is governing them. Hence, two of the fundamental forms of social government to emerge in the twentieth century were popular education and the welfare state. What unites these two institutions is their use and deployment of 'pastoral power' (see Dean, 1999: 74-97; Foucault 2002e: 298-311). Whilst both education and welfare are secular concerns, the techniques they deploy are modelled on the institutions of the Christian church. Just as the pastoral relationship in Christianity is between God, the pastor and the pastorate, one can trace a similar 'shepherd-flock' relationship in the provision of education and welfare (Dean, 1999: 74-5). Moreover, both of these institutional practices were of central importance for the BBC's own civilising mission, which also sought to act as the 'Good Shepherd' guiding and caring for its flock of listeners.



So how does pastoral power function, particularly when conceived in the form of this 'shepherd-flock game'? For Foucault (2002e: 301-10), its main constituents are as follows: (1) The shepherd gathers together dispersed individuals, guides, and leads them in the form of a flock; (2) The shepherd exercises power over a flock rather than over a land; (3) It is not enough for the shepherd to know the activities of the flock as a whole; the shepherd must be ever watchful and devoted to knowing each individual member's needs and activities in detail; (4) The shepherd's role is to ensure the salvation of his flock, to improve the lives of each and every one of them. In return, the flock voluntarily comply with the shepherd's will, that is to say, they pledge their obedience and not to stray from the path of righteousness.

In other words, government is inextricably entwined with the history of Christian morality and pedagogy, in the sense that one can only experience salvation if one chooses to subject oneself to a process of self-reproach, contrition, prayers and confession vis-à-vis the philosophical movement of Stoic asceticism, with its emphasis on self-mastery, meditation, obedience, and abstinence. In its secular form, pastoral power thus seeks to subject populations and individuals to a series of self-governing, ethical obligations which can be characterised as 'civil prudence' (Dean, 1999: 85-8). By the twentieth century citizenship becomes the principal disciplinary objective driving pastoral guidance. Civic duty is intertwined with the idea of religious salvation, requiring individuals to renounce any cultural practices that detract from the realisation of a political rationality best characterised by Weber (1976) as 'worldly asceticism'. The transformation of Christian pedagogy into a secular technique of governance is more fully explored by Ian Hunter (1994 & 2001) in the historical context of popular education and the emergence of the school. Following Hunter's example, what I mean to demonstrate in the remaining chapters is how the BBC operationalised pastoral power in an effort to create a public space for its own peculiar moral leadership, which was both religious and secular.

Dean (1999: 76) notes that the effects of pastoral power are both complemented and intensified by yet another form of power that Foucault famously referred to as bio-power. Broadly defined, bio-power can be literally understood as power over life, that is to say, a population's vitality. Foucault (1990a: 140) himself understood it in terms of 'the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life'. More

specifically, Foucault (2000c: 74) had in mind the social enterprise, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalise the problems presented to governmental practice by the anatomical and biological phenomena characteristic of the human body or a group of living human beings constituted as a population or sector of the population. In other words, a bipolar governmentality emerges that concerns itself with ways to regulate and optimise the body's utility and productive capabilities through an 'anatomo-politics of the body', whilst also focusing on the body's biological processes and its implications for population control through 'a bio-politics of the population' (Foucault, 1990a: 139). The significance of these bipolar techniques of bio-power is to enable the development of capitalism, inasmuch as they make possible 'the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes' (ibid.: 141). However, Foucault is not equating bio-power with the reproduction of the material conditions or relations of production. Rather, he is outlining the ways in which bio-power is concomitant with economic imperatives conducive to capitalism and the well-being of the state.

A defining characteristic of bio-power is the privileging of hygiene and medicine as an instance of social phenomena (Foucault, 2002b: 98-105). Social medicine assumes an increasingly important place in the machinery of government. In the UK this begins in the early nineteenth century in response to widespread poverty and disease, through the neo-hygienist strategies of the last Liberal Government, into the inter-war period, and culminating in the creation of the contemporary welfare state in the 1940s. Prior to direct state intervention in public health, historically, there had been a multiplicity of agencies of public health: parochial paternalism and voluntary charities, the poorhouse and hospitals for the destitute, and the working-class friendly societies and other insurance schemes that provided financial assistance for many industrial workers during periods of unemployment and sickness. This ensemble of multiple regulations and institutions can be better understood as a 'policing' of hygiene and health. In fact, the health and physical well-being of populations increasingly figures alongside the policing of social order and economic activities as a political objective. This political development is generally associated with the emergence of *Medizinpolizei*, literally meaning 'medical police', in many eighteenth-century German states (Pickstone, 1996: 311).

In the case of English social medicine, state responsibility for public health emerges in the early nineteenth century in an effort to manage the conditions and consequences of a newly evolving urban industrial economy. Hence a multitude of inter-dependent environmental, biological, and pathological phenomena are scrutinised and objectified by government: public health, welfare, sanitation, standards of public-housing, sexuality, birth-rate, infant-mortality, longevity, epidemic and endemic disease, dietetics, nutrition, drunkenness, vice, squalor, increasing crime rates, the lack of religiosity; all become objects of governmental sanitary reforms. More than this, both the individual corporal body and whole social body become objects and subjects of political power. Private health becomes a matter of public health. An individual's salvation is no longer their own responsibility. Rather the state assumes a responsibility for the salvation of each and every one (Foucault, 2000b: 68). This is especially so in the twentieth-century as social medicine, and technologies of public health generally, become integral to the social and political apparatus of industrialised societies.

This apparent contradiction between *laissez-faire* liberalism and social reform is also an important consideration in understanding the emergence and development of non-totalising techniques of government during this period. Public health interventions, during the Victorian period and twentieth century inter-war period, were less an attempt to create a centralised bureaucracy or a totalising 'state medicine' than a response to the need to know more about population differentiation and its natural regularities. Understood thus, sanitary reforms – such as the provision of sewers, drains, privies and clean water supply – were intrinsically 'organic' in the sense that they were tied directly to 'the vital economy of the body' (Osborne, 2001: 114). They literally connect the political rationality of public hygiene with the sanctity of the private home, yet without recourse to direct government intervention. The utility of sanitary reform from a governmentality point of view is that it afforded a strategy of indirect government, a non-disciplinary means of regulating conduct. It is in relation to bio-politics that we see most clearly the pertinence of Foucault's (2000c: 73-4) methodological undertaking of wanting to better understand 'liberalism' not as a theory, or an ideology, but as a practice, as a method for rationalising the exercise of government as 'a way of doing things'.



## **Culture, Policy and Governance**

I would now like to return to the subject of government, or, and perhaps more importantly, cultural governance. Cultural governance can be best understood according to what has been called the 'circuit of culture' (see Thompson, 1997b: 2-3). Intended as a model with which to analyse cultural phenomena, the circuit comprises five key interrelated cultural processes: 'representation', 'identity', 'production', 'consumption' and 'regulation'. Of these moments, cultural regulation is especially concerned with the relations between culture, government and power, how cultural resources are managed, either by the state or by other technologies of government for reasons of state. On one level, cultural governance is thus about the management of culture through the formulation of cultural policy. On another level, it has been argued that how cultural resources are managed has socio-political implications, as signified by the etymological association between 'policy' and 'policing' (McGuigan, 1996: 6), raising questions of how cultural institutions and discourses regulate our conduct, morality, identity, and subjectivity, and in so doing, reproduce and normalise hegemonic ideas and social practices. This is not to say, to quote Hall (1997a: 225), that 'everything is culture', in the sense that every social practice is reducible to culture. Rather, what theorists of cultural governance propose is that every social practice has a cultural dimension; most social practices have a collective meaning. Hence cultural governance and social regulation are inextricably intertwined.

The historicity of modern cultural governance can be traced back to the emergence of Victorian rational recreation, at a time when anxiety over the quality of British culture and civic life became increasingly centred on the use of leisure. The problem of leisure centred on the wider debate about the nationalisation of culture, which was itself part of a discursive nexus that included questions of public education, national efficiency and democracy, and concepts such as taste, refinement, civilisation and morality (see Minihan, 1977). Though it is widely acknowledged that the late Victorian rational recreation movement failed in its civilising mission to significantly change working-class culture and their uses of leisure (see Bailey, 1978; Cunningham, 1980), this is not to say that the historicity of rational recreation, not to mention its political rationality, is no longer an area of study worthy of attention. When one considers that its cultural form bridged two centuries, clearly rational recreation was an important and enduring concern for government. During the inter-war period especially, leisure increasingly

became the locus for political discussion and struggle (see Jones, 1986). Thus, whilst one can question the efficacy of rational recreation, this does not mean one ought simply dismiss its importance, as a social and political phenomenon, with the convenient benefit of historical hindsight. It has even been argued (see Bennett, 1995) that there are still discernible residues of rational recreation in many contemporary forms of official and popular culture: the basic assumption still being that the good manners and cultural values of the middle-classes will rub off on the less civilised, thus elevating both their minds and their deportment.

The concept of cultural governance thus provides a highly pertinent point of reference with which to illustrate a broader historical argument whose concern is to explain the way in which culture enters into discourse not so much as an idea, as in the culture and society tradition within cultural studies (see Williams, 1984), or as an 'ideological effect' (see Hall, 1977), but rather as a new governmental technology whose rationality sought to effect, along with other governmental techniques, a governmental programme aimed at social management and, when expedient to do so, social reform.

Culture is more cogently conceived ... when thought of as a historically specific set of institutionally embedded relations of government in which the forms of thought and conduct of extended populations are targeted for transformation – in part via the extension through the social body of the forms, techniques, and regimens of aesthetic and intellectual culture.

(Bennett, 1992b: 26)

There is nothing inherently insidious about culture as a means of effecting social reforms. There are many examples of cultural programmes that have undoubtedly been positive and immensely beneficial for their constituent users, particularly in the case of users who were previously disempowered. Once again, my purpose in writing this thesis is not to dismiss outright all forms of cultural governance, of which public service broadcasting is arguably the early-twentieth century example *par excellence*, on the grounds that there is a deeper or more independent alternative cultural form capable of stimulating the masses into resisting hegemonic cultural forms. Rather, my rationale is to point to the ways in which culture, of which broadcasting is a principal outlet, is embroiled in the wider nexus of culture and government.



An analytics of cultural governance is thus posed, not in terms of 'a choice between freedom and constraint, but between different modes of regulation, each of which represents a combination of freedoms and constraints' (Hall, 1997a: 230). Moreover, these combinations can sometimes be contradictory, involving the simultaneous re-regulation of some social, political, and economic spheres, and the de-regulation of others. Regulation is rarely organised around one all-encompassing discourse or practice. A further aspect to the analysis of cultural governance is the incorporation and foregrounding of so-called 'cultural policy studies' (see Barnett, 1999; Bennett, 1992a, 1992b & 1998; Flew, 1997; McGuigan, 1996; O'Regan, 1992). Unlike the more theoretical and/or rhetorical abstractions of cultural studies, cultural policy studies is committed to a 'reformist vocation' within the socio-political apparatuses of social democracy, and thus attends to the strategic nature of policy discourse and the allocation of cultural resources. While such developments have been criticised by some on the left as 'selling out', 'papering over the cracks', and an advocacy for pragmatism rather than an oppositional cultural politics, such criticisms are often founded on political ideals which look increasingly unlikely to manifest themselves in a pragmatic, realisable political form. Moreover, the position of outright opposition to all state apparatuses is, in any case, an overly-determined position, and provides little understanding of how civil society might work productively with state bureaucracies and other regulatory agencies.

The importance of the above is the engagement with contemporary debates about cultural citizenship in terms of the formulation of cultural and communications policy, of which broadcasting regulation is a substantial facet. The analysis of institutions and policy has itself become increasingly marginalised in the present intellectual climate prevalent within the disciplines of cultural studies and media studies, where much recent research and academic interest tends to focus upon the analysis of texts, according little if any attention to either regulatory processes or the materiality of one's object of analysis. Thus it is my hope that the thesis will in some way contribute to a wider process whereby media/cultural policy studies is recovered as a positive and interesting academic activity, rather than a negative and mundane one.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to highlight some of the key methodological concepts used by Foucault and governmentalist, especially in relation to cultural governance and regulation. What I now mean to demonstrate in the remaining chapters is how this framework might be applied to the formation of public service broadcasting under the aegis of the BBC. In particular, I am interested in understanding the BBC as a conjunction of multiple modes of regulation: over the practice of broadcasting itself, over leisure and education, over religion and the household. Hence the reason for dividing the remaining thesis into five key chapters, each helping to characterise the BBC, not only in terms of its broadcasting content, but also in terms of its relationship with other cultural institutions and practices whose primary function were also to render the public more amenable to cultural governance. Each chapter ought not be regarded as being mutually exclusive. Rather, I have attempted to illustrate the points of conjuncture and articulation where certain cultural, historical, and political relations interweave to form a broader discursive complex from which we see the emergence of the BBC and its public service ethos.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, each chapter is sub-divided into key themes, to illustrate the longer history out of which the BBC and public service broadcasting emerges, as well as its historical specificities. In other words, whilst each chapter focuses on the synchronic particularities of certain early broadcasting practices, I have found it necessary to advance to a more general diachronic level of analysis which accounts for these practices in their multiplicity of relations. I mention this so that the reader might know that I have not limited my analysis to a history of broadcasting. Instead, I have attempted to understand the formation of British broadcasting as an effect of many seemingly irrelevant and disparate structural and historical relations.

Ernesto Laclau's (1977) re-working of Althusser's work on ideological state apparatus and subject interpellation has been specially useful in respect to the above, particularly his analyses of how different types of 'interpellative structures' (political, religious, familial, etc) can 'coexist whilst being articulated within an ideological discourse in a

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<sup>18</sup> Hoggart (2004: 121) best summarises the wider significance of the BBC as an historical and cultural phenomenon: 'The history of the BBC is more complex than that of most large institutions. It is an integral part of the country's cultural (in the wide sense) history, of what has been happily called its 'quarrels with itself' and of its moments at peace with itself. It can reveal the adequacy or inadequacy of those quarrels with itself, our reactions to social changes and political pressures'.



relative way' vis-à-vis the way in which one interpellation 'becomes the main organiser of all the others' (ibid.: 102-4). Laclau's point is that people can experience contradictory discursive interpellations without them being necessarily incompatible. This is especially so during periods of social stability, when social formations can more easily displace any apparent interpellative contradictions. I shall say more about this later.

Finally, I am less interested in Foucault's earlier work and its concern with an abstracted analysis of discursive regularities in the formation of knowledge (e.g. Foucault, 1981, 2000a & 2002a), than I am in his later work in which he extends his analysis of discursive formations towards a more politically focused genealogical understanding of their situatedness within specific institutional practices and power relations (e.g. Foucault, 1990a & 1991a), and later still, toward the relation of such practices to ones concerning technologies of government vis-à-vis technologies of the self (e.g. Foucault, 1982, 1991b & 1998a). I want to use that aspect of Foucault's work that focuses on the regimes of practices, regulation of bodies, the government of conduct, and the formation of the self. Hence the concern of this thesis with actual social behaviour and with actual social institutions, often overlooked by much post-Foucauldian literature (see Barker, 1993; Deleuze, 1988; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Simons, 1995, among others), which tends to be philosophical analysis. The imperative is thus not to develop yet more theoretical complexity but to move from the abstract towards the concrete, as indeed Foucault does in much of his later work.

Chapter two will look at the birth of broadcasting and how the concept of public service broadcasting was shaped by the BBCs civilising mission or what might be defined broadly as 'BBC Culture'. In particular, the chapter will focus on Reith's part in shaping the policy of the BBC, especially his insistence on unified control and the BBCs exclusive right to broadcasting; the missionary zeal that lay behind the standardising of what has come to be known as 'BBC English'; and the practice of encouraging attentive as oppose to passive listening. It will be argued that, though the BBC attempted to prescribe in highly moralistic-cultural terms the way the listening public used radio in order to unite the nation around a hierarchy of cultural values and practices, and thereby counterpoising the perceived excesses and degenerative effects of

mass culture, it was faced with a constant struggle about how to harness the potentialities of this new medium.

Chapter three will consider the relationship between the emergence of public service broadcasting and other uses of leisure, particularly those uses of leisure that were institutionalised and politicised, gambling and the enforced leisure of the unemployed. The chapter will focus on the way in which leisure was acted upon by a host of middle-class intellectuals and social reformers whose express purpose was to embrace leisure as a means of social management, and how this technique was taken up by the BBC and its employees. It will be argued that BBC culture was characteristic of much Victorian rational recreation. If the BBC was to uplift the cultural tastes and practices of the wider public it had, like Victorian recreationalists before it, to address the problem of leisure as it existed in the early-twentieth century, because how people spent their leisure time almost certainly affected their cultural sensibilities and, perhaps more importantly, moral conduct.

Chapter Four will concentrate on the development of adult education broadcasting vis-à-vis the history of adult education up until the early twentieth century. The chapter will illustrate the extent to which the discourse of 'educative-recreation' prevailed throughout a plethora of cultural institutions and practices which had some bearing upon broadcast adult education. It will be argued that broadcast adult education was less concerned with educating adult men and women, particularly working-class adults, than it was with endowing adult listeners with a capacity for effecting techniques of self-regulation, and enabling a disciplinary apparatus of discreet surveillance, both of which were necessary for securing cultural governance from a distance. As such, group listeners were impelled into undertaking an ethical self-labour so that they might better fulfil their civic responsibilities.

Chapter Five will focus on the development of public service broadcasting as an adjunct of Christian morality. Broadcast religion was a public service broadcasting activity to which the BBC, and Reith particularly, attached special importance. The degree to which broadcast religion became regarded as an authoritative ecclesiastical practice was confirmed in the often used reference to 'BBC Religion'. In spite of overwhelming criticism from the listening public and secular public opinion, the BBC was unswerving

in its commitment to the centrality of Christianity in the national culture. The chapter will also demonstrate how there was a direct link between religion and morality on the one hand, and culture and self-improvement on the other. Religious broadcasting provided an articulation between religious morality and the secular morality espoused by advocates of rational recreation and secular education. There were clearly discernible inter-relations between religion and education during this period, not least their utilisation of techniques of pastoral power.

The recovery of traditional family moral values was dependent, to a large extent, on the part women would have to play in transmitting the cultural values of public service broadcasting into the *sanctum sanatorium* of the home. Radio, like the broader project of homemaking, needed a feminine touch. Hence Chapter Six will demonstrate how broadcasting committed itself to a project of maintaining or redefining feminine subjectivities for the good of the nation's moral and physical well being. Indeed, early broadcasting was concomitant with a plethora of other governmental strategies that sought to regulate the organisation of family life by simultaneously domesticating and gendering certain cultural practices, reinforcing demarcations between the spheres of public and private, and thereby establishing the home as a site for cultural governance. The domestication of cultural governance was to have important structural implications for the way in which radio addressed its women listeners who were interpellated by gendered broadcasting discourses as housewives and mothers with civic responsibilities: keeping the husband out of the pub, ensuring the physical and moral well-being of the family, the rearing and moral education of children, among others. Understood thus, I mean to demonstrate that public service broadcasting was one of many terminal effects of a governmental bio-power whose rationale was to regulate and direct a population's behaviour, conduct and hence physical well-being.

## The Birth of Broadcasting

The BBC started life not as a public corporation but as a private company. Formed in 1922, the early BBC operated as a cartel, consisting of several wireless manufacturers. Though to all intents and purposes a private enterprise, broadcasting was characterised by a significant peculiarity: unlike the press, licence to broadcast was regulated by the state. The government official responsible for broadcasting matters, the Postmaster General, was already responsible for licensing transmitters and receivers of wireless signals, under the Wireless Telegraphy Act (1904). Moreover, just as broadcasters required permission to broadcast, so too were the listening public required to obtain an official licence for listening-in. Whilst this conferred certain economic benefits upon the consortium of wireless manufactures, not least an exclusive monopoly to broadcast and an entitlement to half of the ten shilling licence fee, the industry was subject to what was then an unusual degree of public control and officialdom by comparison with other media. Indeed, broadcasting was a constant subject of parliamentary debate and no less than four parliamentary committee reports (HMSO, 1923b; 1925; 1935; 1936) during the inter-war period. In short, the state had no intentions of relinquishing control over broadcasting.

The transformation of the BBC into a public corporation was signalled by the Crawford parliamentary committee (HMSO, 1925), called into being to specifically consider the future of broadcasting.<sup>19</sup> Of the many recommendations, the most significant proposal was that 'broadcasting be conducted by a public corporation acting as a Trustee for the national interest, and that its status and duties should correspond with those of a public service' (ibid.: 14). Hence it came to be on 1 January 1927 the BBC was effectively nationalised under Royal Charter, and as such became one of the earliest examples of a national public utility.<sup>20</sup> However, it is important to note that the BBC was not an

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that, even in its original state of being a limited private company the BBC still conceived its function to be those of a public utility service (see WAC R51/482).

<sup>20</sup> The charter stated, among other things, that, 'in view of the widespread interest which is thereby shown to be taken by Our People in the Broadcasting Service and of the great value of the Service as a means of education and entertainment, We deem it desirable that the Service should be developed and exploited to the best advantage and in the national interest...AND WHEREAS We believe that it would greatly promote these objects and be for the public benefit if a corporation charged with these duties were created by the exercise of Our Royal Prerogative' (HMSO, 1926: 2).



overtly state controlled public body. Rather, it was and remains a quasi autonomous public body effectively run by a state-appointed executive Board of Governors. Appointed by the Postmaster General, governor appointees were predominantly middle-aged, middle-class and impeccably conservative in their cultural and political dispositions (see Briggs, 1961: 358-9). In spite of this formal independence from the state, it has been suggested that the BBC is nevertheless subject to subtle forms of state control. One form of indirect control is the licence fee, which, though now index-linked to the rate of inflation, still has to be approved by parliament, which effectively means the political party with the largest majority. Whilst no government has abused its position as pay-master, the threat to do so is always a possibility and cause for anxiety at times when the two institutions are at loggerheads. Historically, there is also the uncertainty of the BBC's royal charter being renewed. Again, whilst this has never been an issue in actual fact, the fear is that an approaching charter renewal could be used as a political lever. Indeed, there have been major controversies over specific programmes, during which there has been a fine line between direct and indirect state control of the BBC (see Hood, 1997: 54-60; Smith, 1973: 140-54). More often than not, this has resulted in the BBC having to walk a kind of tightrope, which, to quote Krishan Kumar (1977: 237-8), lies somewhere in 'between the drop on the one side into utter governmental dependence and that on the other into suicidal opposition to it'.

This was especially so during the early years of the BBC when it had to weather a number of national crises, during which it was expected by the Government of the day to represent the national interest, taken to be synonymous with the Government's aims and objectives. In fact, the BBC was obliged to broadcast official Government announcements and, in times of emergency, the state had the power to commandeer broadcasting stations. For example, though the BBC was not actually commandeered during the General Strike, there is overwhelming evidence (see Curran & Seaton, 1981: 135-158; Muggeridge, 1967: 53-55) to suggest that the BBC's efforts to contain political unrest were in accordance with state policy. Indeed, Reith himself had rationalised the BBC's role during the General Strike by arguing that 'since the BBC was a national institution, and since the Government in the crisis were acting for the people ... the BBC was for the Government in the crisis too' (cited in Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 100-101). Reith was not alone in his deference to reasons of state. Hilda Matheson (1933:

211), then Head of Talks, reflected upon the relationship between the two institutions thus:

We have already seen the value which broadcasting may have for the State in the 'projection' of national plans, departmental reports and orders, public health instructions and other administrative measures. All 'service' aspects of broadcasting strengthen the links with the State.

Not surprisingly, many on the political left thought the BBC politically biased and hostile to working-class ideals and aspirations. Indeed, there are many more instances where the BBC appeared unsympathetic to Labour politics and working-class culture, as will be shown in the remaining chapters.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst the above illustrates how broadcasting has in the past acted in accordance with the political wishes of the state, such actions ought not lead to the conclusion that early broadcasting was, to quote Althusser, an ideological state apparatus. An example of this kind of reasoning is evident in Scannell & Cardiff (1991: 101-102) who conclude their analysis of the relationship between broadcasting and politics by stating unequivocally that, 'for over thirty years, throughout the era of the BBCs monopoly, political broadcasting was structured in deference to the state'. Whilst there is much truth in this, what their analysis does not consider is what lies beyond the formal relations between broadcasting and the state. My own analysis is concerned less with the ideological content of broadcasting vis-à-vis public opinion and its formal relations with the state, and more with the extended techniques and political rationalities of cultural governance within and without state apparatuses. Hence, whilst the independence of the BBC from the state is questionable, this does not make the BBC an *a priori* state apparatus. Rather, its rationality was as a technology of governance in the broadest sense of the word. It epitomised the contradictory tendencies in a shift to collectivist public services whilst maintaining a element of *laissez faire* in terms of being quasi-autonomous. In other words, new forms of governance were being created, neither state nor commercially run but what we now call quangos. Thus though the BBC has come to be regarded as unique in its actual constitution, the institutional form was quite compatible

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<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the BBC also came under fire from the political right for being too radical in its programming, that is devoting too much time 'to the expression of new ideas and the advocacy of change in social and other spheres, than to the defence of orthodoxy and stability' (see HMSO, 1935: § 89).



with what was happening elsewhere, whereby the aims and objectives of the state were enacted from a distance by a non-state agency.

### **The Spectre of Reith**

Whilst this thesis is essentially concerned with broadcasting's structural relations with other cultural institutions, particularly ones which also have as their political rationality the aim of penetrating the cultural and social body, no history of the early BBC would be complete without mention of John Reith, the first General-Manager and Director-General of the BBC. To quote Briggs (1961: 4), 'Reith did not make broadcasting, but he did make the BBC'.<sup>22</sup> Born a Scotsman, and a lifelong devout Christian, Reith's part in shaping the policy of the BBC, or what might be more broadly referred to as BBC culture, not least its public service ethos, was distinct. He more than anybody championed the BBCs civilising mission.

The sense in which one can reasonably talk about the spectre of Reith vis-à-vis the BBCs embodiment of his ethos is provided by Wynford Vaughan Thomas, a BBC employee during the inter-war period:

The spirit of Reith brooded over Broadcasting House in those days. It was a strange experience to walk for the first time into that hall, with its inscriptions. It was like entering a temple: no doubt about it. You moved about the corridors with awe and reverence, and you felt as if you had been admitted into a High Church, and you were taking Holy Orders.

(Cited in Robinson, 1982: 69-70)

The relevance of the above passage, as I mean to demonstrate in chapter five, is that there was a direct link between the BBCs secular civilising mission on the one hand, and religion, that is Christian morality and piety, on the other. Reith's influence here was unequivocal, particularly his insistence upon a strict Sabbath policy, one that, in spite of the blatant and overwhelming unpopularity of religious broadcasting, was to endure for much of the inter-war period. Hence Reith's intolerance for populism and what he saw as its encouragement of impropriety in cultural and moral matters. In other words, Reith was not a natural social democrat. His reputation for being a tyrant and bully is well-known. For example, during a parliamentary debate in July 1936, George

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<sup>22</sup> Arguably, the BBC and broadcasting generally was still standing on the shoulders of Reith until the publication of the momentous Annan Report in 1977, which *inter alia* favoured a more pluralist concept of public service (see Curran & Seaton, 1981: 310-22).

Lansbury, founder and editor of the *Daily Herald*, and leader of the Labour Party during the early 1930s, said of Reith:

I myself have always felt, when speaking to Sir John on the one or two or three occasions on which I have met him, that he would have made a very excellent Hitler in this country, because he seemed to have a great scorn for people like myself, though he never expressed it.

(Cited in Minihan, 1977: 213)

Whilst Lansbury's remark may have been somewhat exaggerated, Reith's legacy as one of the great visionaries of the twentieth-century was further damaged with the publication of his diaries shortly after his death (Stuart, 1975; see Boyle, 1972). They reveal a man who was at odds with himself and many of his contemporaries, regardless of their social class. Ridden with a deep-rooted contempt for anything that detracted from his own political and religious beliefs, Reith was specially incapable of empathising with the listening public (see Muggeridge, 1967: 46-62). Indeed, his cultural values were borne out of a conservatism that was contemptuous of both popular culture and avant-garde movements such as the Bloomsbury. And while he was in many ways typical of the outlook of his class, Reith embodied its values in particularly powerful style. Had this not been the case, the story of the early BBC might have been significantly different.

### **The BBC, Culture, and Entertainment**

One of the clearest articulations of the idealisation of public service broadcasting is contained in Reith's book *Broadcast Over Britain*. Published in the autumn of 1924, the book was the first substantive attempt to provide 'an exposition of the ideals which animate the policy of the British Broadcasting Company'. Reith's concern for a particular vision of public service broadcasting was unmistakable, not least his emphatic belief that, 'to have exploited so great a scientific invention for the purpose and pursuit of 'entertainment' alone would have been a prostitution of [broadcasting's] powers and an insult to the character and intelligence of the people' (1924: 17).<sup>23</sup> For Reith, the ordinarily accepted meaning of the word 'entertainment', that is simply to 'occupy agreeably', was 'incomplete' in the sense that it amounted to a mere 'passing of the time, and therefore of wasting it'. If there was to be entertainment, it should be 'part of

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<sup>23</sup> Boyle (1972: 151) adds to this that, for Reith to offer the public what they wanted 'would have turned the BBC into a spiritual whore-house', and 'himself into a cultural pimp'.

a systematic and sustained endeavour to re-create, to build up knowledge, experience and character...'. Like rational recreationists before him, what was important was to show the public 'how time may be occupied not only agreeably, but well'.<sup>24</sup>

Not surprisingly, Reith was not at all prepared for the BBC to be content with 'mediocrity' nor for it to engage in any activity that detracted from 'high moral standard'. However, Reith's disdain for popular culture was not the contempt espoused by many of his contemporaries. Their dislike of mass culture was in defence of their own minority culture and its elitist exclusivity (see Carey, 1992), discussed in more detail later. Reith, on the other hand, was a progressive. He genuinely wanted to make available as widely as possible the best that has ever been thought, said, or written. 'As we conceive it, our responsibility is to carry into the greatest number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be, hurtful' (Reith, 1924: 34). Reith's overwhelming belief that the responsibility of the BBC was to nurture the greater populace into appreciating that which is best and good in culture was the most characteristic, and, infamous, feature of his vision of public service. Like many of his middle-class contemporaries who had a deeply-rooted sense of civic duty, Reith feared that the ever increasing massification of popular culture would detract from the pursuit of cultural enlightenment. Reith (1924: 217) was in no doubt whatsoever that 'broadcasting is a servant of culture' and that culture was 'the study of perfection'. In other words, culture was first and foremost about self-improvement and self-discipline.

Much of Reith's idealism was very clearly attributable to the thinking of Arnold and other prominent Victorian thinkers (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 9-10). Indeed, Reith himself acknowledged an indebtedness to the 'noble writers', such as Ruskin and Arnold (1924: 183 & 207-8). Much of Arnold's work was characterised by an aversion to the social effects of industrial capitalism, to the discourse of laissez-faire liberalism, and to the potential unrest of the proletariat (see Williams, 1984: 120-36). Like so

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<sup>24</sup> An even more telling account of Reith's puritanical belief in the need for rational recreation is conveyed by LeMahieu (1988: 143-4) who tells of the occasion when Reith told students at Gresham's School in 1922 that the personality 'is made up of two distinct and often warring elements – one conscious and the other sub-conscious... We surely want to wipe out as much as we can of the barbarian in case it may get control over us, in a weak moment, with results of a disastrous kind'. The students were thus advised to 'sublimate' their baser instincts 'so that the energies which are now wrongly used may be diverted into useful channels'.

many Victorian social reformers, Arnold was in favour of a benevolent autocracy. Moreover, inasmuch as Arnold concretely identified and named the purposefulness of culture as a social idea, the tradition of idealising 'culture' comes to maturity. 'Culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us ... to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society' (Arnold, 1981: 11). There is a deontology at work here whereby everybody has a responsibility not only to cultivate one's self, but more importantly, to cultivate others for the good of the whole. Arnold sees cultural perfection as more than just moral civility. Rather it is a process which entails the 'pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world ...' (ibid.: 6).

However, and more crucially, Reith did not trust the public to reach out for the 'sweetness and light' he and Arnold so desired. His lofty idealism and high-mindedness bore all the hallmarks of nineteenth-century conservative paternalism. The discourse of 'conservative paternalism' is epitomised by Disraeli's notion of 'Tory Democracy'. Though Disraeli actively supported the privilege and tradition of elites such as the Church, the aristocracy, and the monarchy, he also believed such institutions were duty-bound to provide a service for the greater good of the nation as a whole. Just as the august father-figure cared and provided for his family in Victorian times, Disraeli set about introducing social reforms that would take into consideration the welfare of the national populace – rich and poor alike. However, just as the Victorian father's benevolence was rewarded with unquestioning respect, so too does the rationality of conservative paternalism seek to assume a similar authority over its subjects. Of course, the relation is not one of outright domination-subordination; conservative paternalism was a reaction to the realisation that social unrest was best averted by forging alliances between the nation's elites and the masses.<sup>25</sup> Disraeli himself astutely observed that 'the Palace is unsafe if the cottage is unhappy' (cited in Lowe, 1984: 188). The nation was an 'organism' and its well-being depended on an equilibrium between the preservation of what was best and the regulation of what was popular.

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<sup>25</sup> Indeed, paternalism automatically requires – and demands – deference. Without deference it has no meaning.



Reith's own inflection of conservative paternalism is best encapsulated in what is undoubtedly his most famous remark on broadcasting's public duty: 'It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need - and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need ...' (1924: 34).<sup>26</sup> Scannell & Cardiff suggest that the brute force of monopoly so vigorously defended by Reith 'was not merely a monopoly in a business sense, but a cultural dictatorship with the BBC as arbiter of tastes and definer of standards' (1982: 163). In other words, the BBC's *raison d'être* was as custodian of the moral and cultural well-being of the nation's citizenry.

Whilst Reith's opinions and prejudices were very much of his time and had much in common with many of Britain's early-twentieth century cultivated elites, his authoritarian vision of public service broadcasting ought not be conflated with the cultural pessimism of early-twentieth century English aestheticism or literary criticism, of which the Bloomsbury and Vorticism movements, I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, were among the leading luminaries.<sup>27</sup> Rather, Reith was a 'cultural physician', who sought to uplift cultural tastes by employing practical remedies. LeMahieu (1988: 142-54) thinks Reith to be the most influential progressive of the inter-war period in the sense that he was altogether optimistic about the emergence of new technologies of mass communication, if managed properly (cf. Donald, 1992: 73-87; Frith, 1983). Reith saw broadcasting as a solution to a potential crisis in liberal democracy, particularly the problem of an uninformed electorate, something he thought to be 'a serious menace to the country' (1924: 113). Thus he believed that that 'an extension of the scope of broadcasting will mean a more intelligent and enlightened electorate' (ibid.). Broadcasting could also act as a possible corrective to the irrational tendencies of longstanding and innovative forms of popular recreation. The answer to the problems of both democracy and a constructive use of leisure was to create and maintain a national citizenship unified around a corporate national culture comprised of traditional English cultural values. The paradox at the

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<sup>26</sup> Reith expressed this belief even more candidly in a speech at Cambridge in July 1930: 'The best way to give the public what it wants is to reject the express policy of giving the public what it wants' (cited in LeMahieu, 1988: 145).

<sup>27</sup> For an in-depth and contrasting analysis of the way in which the BBC synthesised aspects of a national culture whose components first begin to converge in the late-nineteenth century vis-à-vis the reactions of the cultivated elites to mass culture, see the following: Carey (1992); Frith (1983); LeMahieu (1988); Lepenies (1992); Peppis (2000); Rose (2002); Wiener (1982); and Williams (1984).

heart of the BBC was that it was operating a mass and implicitly democratic medium with policies guided by explicitly elitist principles.

### **Uniting the Nation: Broadcasting & Monopoly**

The BBC's institutional base, particularly its exclusive right to broadcasting, was crucial to the BBC's civilising mission.<sup>28</sup> Reith thought unity of control essential on both technical grounds and also to maintain high standards (1924: 69-71). Without the 'brute force of monopoly', a phrase he was to use later when writing his autobiography, Reith doubted whether a public service broadcasting ethos would have even been possible.<sup>29</sup>

Almost everything might have been different. The BBC might have had to play for safety; prosecute the obviously popular lines; count its clients; study and meet their reactions; curry favour; subordinate itself to the vote. *Might* have had to; probably would not; but its road would have been far harder .

(Reith 1949: 100)

An earlier articulation of this argument was expressed by Reith whilst giving evidence before the Sykes Committee (PO Archives, Post 89/21), where he made abundantly clear the advantages of maintaining broadcasting under unified control. Apart from 'there being a very good economy in having one Broadcasting authority', Reith was even more emphatic about the 'very great advantage in having one uniform policy of what can or cannot be done in broadcasting', with all regional broadcasting stations and their Directors 'under a very definite continuous control'. The policy would be guaranteed by recruiting only those of the very highest calibre to a newly emerging class of managerial professionals headed by Reith and based in Head Office (see Reith, 1924: 71-2; Scannell & Cardiff, 1982: 166-7) and by a network of advisory committees providing expert guidance from outside (see Briggs, 1961: 240-50). According to Tom Burns (1977: 42), what Reith did was to deliberately enlarge the BBC

... into a kind of domestic diplomatic service, representing the British – or what he saw as the best of the British – to the British. BBC culture, like BBC standard English, was not peculiar to itself but an intellectual ambience composed out of the values, standards

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<sup>28</sup> The BBC's institutional base and Reith's belief in the efficacy of administrative planning was also symptomatic of the wider social experimentation in public ownership and control such as the Central Electricity Board and the London Passenger Transport Board (see Briggs, 1961: 237; Gordon, 1938; O'Brien, 1937; Robson, 1937).

<sup>29</sup> Briggs (1961: 182) astutely notes that this aspect of Reith's bold commitment to the 'brute force of monopoly' was far 'more telling than any of the technical arguments cited by engineers'.



Unlike the capitalist bourgeois or the landed aristocracy, the organising principle of the professional-managerial class was one which prioritised social reform for the good of the whole. Henceforth, the entrepreneurial excesses of Victorian *laissez-faire* liberalism were replaced by 'the professionals' ideal of how society should be organised and of the ideal citizen to organise it (see Perkin, 1989). More than this, the emergence of modern professions was integral to governmentality: their institutionalisation of expert knowledge was integral to the emergence and survival of the modern welfare state, not least because professional expertise was a means with which the apparatus of government could rationalise its objectives (see Johnson, 1993: 140).

Reith's vision of the nation and its people as an organic whole greatly influenced the way in which the BBC constructed and addressed its audience. For example, the 1933 *BBC Yearbook* (37) also defined the listening public as a 'national community', and insisted that 'the general needs of the community come before the sectional'. The underlying principle was 'that broadcasting should be operated on a national scale, for national service and by a single national authority' (ibid.: 14). Hence the priority given to centring policy-making and production on London and to favouring the National Programme over local and regional broadcasting.<sup>31</sup> The way in which Reith and head office sought to control the regions from the centre was – and continues to be – a subject of much debate (see Briggs, 1965: 293-339; Harvey & Robins, 1993 & 1994; Scannell & Cardiff, 1982 & 1991: 277-332). And whilst I do not wish to rehearse in

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kumar's (1977: 245) comment on the cultural politics of the BBC during this period: 'There was never any real question of whose culture it was that was to be diffused throughout the population by the new medium of broadcasting. It was the culture of the upper and upper-middle English classes. Reith believed firmly in 'high culture' (and 'high morality', although this did not square so easily with the behaviour of the upper classes). His professional staff, therefore, whether or not they actually derived from the upper-middle class, were expected to embody and to convey the best of the culture of that class. Their accent, their style at the microphone, the attitudes they conveyed, while in one sense being distinctively 'BBC', in another sense did not clash with the general cultural assumption of the English ruling classes. There was a congruence between the broadcaster role as Reith had moulded it, and the expectations of the groups and institutions that the BBC has most to worry about – the church, parliament, the Oxbridge academic establishment'.

<sup>31</sup> On occasions, the BBC regions became a 'scrapping yard' for maverick staff. Two of the best known instances of prominent members of staff being 'put out to grass' were A. E. Harding's departure to Manchester as Programme Director, North Region, and Charles's Siepmann's appointment as Director of Regional Relations. Reith was reputed to have told Harding he thought him 'a dangerous man' and that he'd 'be better up North where you can't do as much damage' (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 140 & 159-60).

any detail what has been said about this particular aspect of broadcasting history, suffice to say that Reith's vision to serve and galvanise the national interest around a standardised conception of culture greatly undermined local variety and class differences (see Rawnsley, 2000: 15).<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it more or less negated provincial amateur efforts to pioneer early wireless technology and programmes that encouraged genuine audience participation.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Spectre of Americanisation**

Reith's insistence on unified control was not only aimed at managing provincial cultural differences. An even more interesting feature of the discourse about the BBC's monopoly was that it nearly always invoked the American experience of broadcasting regulation, whose chaos of the ether and excessive commercialism was often held up as an inferior alternative to the highly regulated public service model adopted by the BBC (see Briggs, 1961: 58-68; Camporesi, 1990 & 1994; LeMahieu, 1988: 188-9; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 289-98). The prevailing opinion among many BBC staff and British politicians was that the values embodied by the BBC were vastly superior. Indeed, the

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<sup>32</sup> In 1936, Charles Siepmann, by now Director of Regional Radio, published the first comprehensive *Report on Regions*, in which he concluded that 'centralisation represents a short sighted policy', not least its effecting of 'a uniform pattern of thought' and 'standardising of taste and values'. So concerned was Siepmann for securing a better position for the provinces, he suggested 'some sort of charter of rights for the regions' be considered (see Harvey & Robins, 1994: 42).

<sup>33</sup> A good example of the way in which local broadcasting was subordinated to the dominant cultural preferences of Reith and the officialdom of the BBC, is demonstrable with reference to Sheffield. Sheffield's little known place in broadcasting history is its citizens' protestations about having to take its broadcasting programmes from Manchester from the mid-1920s, and the eventual closing of the city's radio station 6FL in 1928 (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 305, 319-20 & 335). What is less well known, however, is Sheffield's contribution to the technical development of wireless. Much of what follows is taken from a series of wireless reminiscences by Frederic Lloyd, Sheffield's most prominent early wireless pioneer and enthusiast, published in the *Yorkshire Telegraph & Star* (see Sheffield City Library; PO Archives, POST 89/23, Paper Nos. 16 & 54). Though Sheffield had a wireless society from as early as 1921, a radio station from November 1923, and did much to stimulate both local and national interest in the new science of telephony, what is apparent from Lloyd's reminiscences is, to use his words, 'the strenuous fight that was necessary for Sheffield to obtain even a small place in the sun, when a national broadcasting scheme was planned'. Lloyd tells of the occasion he received an invitation from Reith to discuss the proposed restructuring of regional broadcasting, during which Reith remarked 'that he was fighting for his company', and to which Lloyd replied, 'I am fighting for Sheffield'. Speaking on behalf of Sheffield wireless enthusiasts, Lloyd thought 'the irksome and grossly unfair provision of the threatened monopoly of the BBC' even more unjust for the fact that Sheffield had the distinction of transmitting the first public speech by wireless, and, moreover, had been the first city to successfully re-broadcast a programme broadcast from London, an experiment that proved crucial for the future development of relay-stations. The latter achievement was remarked upon by P. P. Eckersley, then Chief Engineer of the BBC, who was reputed to have said whilst giving a public talk in Sheffield that, 'it would mean that Sheffield's name will go down in history as the birthplace of a very great scientific achievement in wireless broadcasting'. However, Eckersley's tribute was not to be. Rather, Sheffield's place in the history of broadcasting was subsumed by BBC officialdom and its valorising of hegemonic English cultural values.



BBC went out its way to diffuse an image of itself that was distinctly un-American. The British and American broadcasting systems, were, to quote Briggs (1961: 59), 'to be so completely different – one based on a concept of 'public service', the other fully integrated into the business system – that in all controversies about the place of radio in society they were to be taken as the two chief contrasting types'. That said, the juxtaposing of American and British broadcasting was not so pronounced in the very early days of wireless. Briggs (1961: 26), for example, notes that 'the inventive process in wireless history' was one of 'internationalism', and a 'necessary prelude to the nationalism' which eventually 'expressed itself in the creation of broadcasting institutions' after the end of the war. In other words, the national character of radio was not inherent in the medium *per se*; rather, it had to be constructed. And, as with all forms of nationalism, it had to construct what it was not, as well as what it was. 'Few other institutions reveal more clearly the differences between national traditions, national ways of life, and national policies' (Briggs, 1961: 26). If the British nation provided a positive definition of the BBC's purpose, America provided a negative definition.

Briggs (1961: 67) notes elsewhere that the 'American experience served as a warning' and was abundantly 'apparent in almost all the writings on radio on this side of the Atlantic'. For example, Arthur Burrows (1924: 56), first Director of Programmes and later the first secretary of the International Broadcasting Union, thought the American experience 'an ill wind that blows no one any good' that 'showed the dangers which might result in a diversely populated county of a small area like our own if the go-as-you-please methods of the United States were copied'. C. A. Lewis (1924: 8), then Deputy-Director of Programmes, shared Burrows' caution, though with a slightly more stated belief in the superiority of the British way:

Let others rush at new inventions, and do the experimenting, spend the money, get the hardknocks, and buy their experience at a high price. We British sit tight and look before we leap ... We may often be behind in the early stages of a new science, but once under way, we soon catch up and generally lead the field before long.

The Crawford Committee (1925: 5) recommended that 'the United States system of free and uncontrolled transmission and reception, is unsuited to this country, and that Broadcasting must accordingly remain a monopoly – in other words that the whole

organisation must be controlled by a single authority'.<sup>34</sup> F. J. Brown, then an assistant secretary at the Post Office, closely observed the organisation of American broadcasting on a visit in the winter of 1921-2, and duly returned to Britain with a wealth of advice for his superiors, not least the Postmaster-General (see Briggs, 1961: 67-8). Brown gave evidence to and was a member of the Sykes Broadcasting Committee (see PO Archives, Post 89/18).<sup>35</sup> Asked whether the control of the ether had been attempted in any country, Brown duly replied, 'I understand the want of control in America leads to confusion'. Brown was then asked more specifically why the Post Office had decided 'to adopt an entirely different system from the American one' and 'whether it was because of the failure...of the American system'. Brown's reply was unequivocal: 'Yes, it was. The American system was leading to chaos'. However, under questioning from Dr. W. H. Eccles, Brown admitted that the content he had heard 'was fairly good and was not interrupted' and conceded that the alleged chaos of the American radio 'may have been exaggerated'. Chaos may here have been a disguise for a more general aversion to the perceived characteristics of American culture as a whole, especially its populism which was inimical to the elitist conception of public service broadcasting in Britain.

Hence Camporesi (1990: 269) warns that the degree of opposition to American broadcasting 'materialised in, and lived on, a discourse on America which should be handled cautiously', since US broadcasting was falsely conceptualised 'as a synecdoche of American society', exaggerating the polarity between American commercialism and British public service. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the commercialisation of American broadcasting was not the inevitable, natural process as is often assumed.

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<sup>34</sup> Apart from Reith, who was undoubtedly the chief spokesperson for stating the case for unified control, by far the most significant contributions to the debate on monopoly were made by the Crawford Committee in 1925, by which time the overwhelming majority of public opinion, or rather, instruments of public opinion, viz. the press and parliament, were also in favour of unified control, a sure sign that laissez-faire liberalism had been usurped by statist intervention as the prevalent political philosophy (see Briggs, 1961: 329-30). One of the most significant influences upon the aforementioned recommendations was the Post Office, who supplied the Committee with an 'Historical Summary of the Broadcasting Service in Great Britain', in which it was again made clear why the American experience was not suitable for the organisation of broadcasting in Britain: 'The genesis of broadcasting in Great Britain dates back to the Summer of 1922 when, inspired by the popularity which it had attained in the United States, some of the principal British Manufacturers of wireless apparatus approached the Post Office for permission to open services in Great Britain. It was evident, not only on a priori grounds but from the reports of American experience, that to avoid mutual interference the number of transmitting stations would have to be strictly limited and subject to effective safeguards against abuse; and a monopoly in efficient hands seemed likely to provide the most successful service' (1925: 18).

<sup>35</sup> See also PO Archives, POST 89/23, Paper Nos. 12, 22, 28, 45 & 67.

Rather, the eventual use of advertising to fund American broadcasting was the result of much uncertainty and resistance on the part of the broadcasters, advertisers, and listeners (see Smulyan, 1993). Elsewhere, Camporesi (1994) argues that the BBC's repeated claims as custodian for Britain's national heritage were irreconcilable with the fact that, from the late 1930s, the popularisation of BBC programmes was as a direct result of the BBC's tacit acknowledgement of America's irrepressible cultural and economic influence. That said, though the BBC increasingly came to accept American hegemony, it endlessly sought to adapt American entertainment methods and techniques in an effort to maintain an outward display of Britishness.

Similarly, Cardiff's (1983) analysis of the influence of programme costs on the development of BBC cultural policy during the inter-war period provides 'a corrective to over-simple notions of public service broadcasting', specially in regard to the dichotomising of British and American broadcasting. Even in the Reithian era, Cardiff (1983: 374 & 380) argues that 'the BBC was forced to modify its policies in response to commercial pressures', not least 'a shift of resources in the direction of more popular programmes'. This shift was partly in response to complaints from the public that the BBC did not broadcast enough light entertainment, a criticism testified by the popularity of the continental commercial stations and the BBC's own Listener Research findings in the late thirties. A memorandum written in 1929 by Gerald Cock, then Director of Outside Broadcasting, entitled 'American Control of the Entertainment Industry', expressed alarm at 'the degree to which the BBC may be affected by the USA control of world entertainment', otherwise referred to as 'the Transatlantic Octopus' (cited in Cardiff, 1983: 383; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 292). Cock feared the possibility that American companies were in a position to control the UK entertainment market, thus undermining both the national character and the BBC's own attempts to penetrate the entertainment industry for both cultural and economic reasons. In light of these external pressures Cardiff (1983: 388) suggests that in the late thirties 'the BBC was increasingly adopting programme ideas from the USA and the continental commercial stations, especially audience participation shows, amateur discovery shows, quizzes, panel games and the like, which were exceptionally cheap to produce'.

Notwithstanding this gradual change in the BBC's attitude towards American populism, for most of the inter-war period, the BBC actively promoted a negative view of



American culture. The *Radio Times* in particular reminded its readers of the cultural superiority of the British model. In 1931 Basil Maine condescendingly asked readers to consider if, 'The American invasion of the entertainment world is responsible ... for changes in taste, for the blurring of dialect ... for new manners of thinking, for higher pressure of living, for discontent among normally contented people, for big ideas and for "Oh yeah!"' (*Radio Times*, 3 July 1931). The BBC even claimed to represent the 'natural tastes and preferences' of the British audience (*The Listener*, 31 January 1934). In short, the BBC's mission was to unify the nation, not just around what was best, but, and perhaps more importantly, around the best of British.

For Reith, American popularism was both exploitative and immoral, an opinion held by many of his contemporaries.<sup>36</sup> American civilisation failed to inspire confidence amongst Britain's cultivated elites, particularly its crass democratic appeal and valorising of egalitarian values. Many British critics during this period were of the opinion that effective political leadership could not be expected of the newly enfranchised public. America's advocacy of rule for and by the people had resulted in a dictatorship of the masses.<sup>37</sup> Others objected to the way in which American populism played upon the common, baser instincts. They particularly loathed America's commodifying of culture and the consequent undermining of their own cultural ascendancy.<sup>38</sup> Fears that American influences would usurp traditional British cultural and social values was perhaps the defining characteristic of early-twentieth century cultural pessimism. Many critics feared that the dictates of the market-place and

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<sup>36</sup> Reith's disdain for American populism was symptomatic of a deeply-rooted anti-American sentiment among Britain's cultivated elites that dates back to the nineteenth-century. For example, Matthew Arnold (1981: 19-20; Nevins, 1968: 309 & 358-373) thought America 'culturally uninteresting', 'undistinguished in its history and matters of beauty', and, consequently, 'a nation of Philistines' and a 'Herbraising middle-class people'.

<sup>37</sup> In 1926 Douglas Woodruff, an editorial member of *The Times*, proclaimed the Americans 'the least free of all people of the earth'. The tyrant cited as the cause of this undemocratic phenomenon was 'public opinion, or the opinion of the majority, the offspring of propaganda'. C. H. Bretherton concurred with Woodruff and accused America of replacing the 'tyranny of Kings with the very real tyranny of the 51 percent' (cited in Knoles, 1955: 92-93). Similarly, E. A. Mowrer (1928: 27-28) criticised America's 'usurpation of qualitative by quantitative standards'.

<sup>38</sup> In 1927 C. E. M. Joad likened America to a *Babbitt Warren*, where the worship of machinery and material wealth was mistaken as an end rather than as a means. Consequently, America's institutions lacked the civilised virtues of 'truth, goodness, beauty and happiness'. C. K. Chesterton thought the Americans had no other object of desire but money; money had become the ultimate measurement of life itself. In 1926 Colonel J. F. C. Fuller declared that, 'Beauty, proportion, relaxation, especially intellectual, and the many virtues which are ethical measurements in Europe mean nothing to the average American, who must have acreage, mileage, tonnage and, above all, dollarage as his standards'. C. H. Bretherton 'chastised' American civilisation for being 'fat and materially overstuffed, intellectually and spiritually undernourished' (cited in Knoles, 1955: 31-35 & 59; Rapson, 1971: 172 & 219).

commercial interests would bring about a cultural hierarchy that prioritised economic values, thus undermining traditional cultural values and activities.

The commercial mass media was thought by many amongst cultivated elites to be the main instrument of Americanisation.<sup>39</sup> Popular daily newspapers began copying American tabloid techniques; mass-advertising became a ubiquitous art-form; respectable British popular music was usurped by ragtime and jazz. The mass media in Britain were becoming increasingly subject to American investment and cultural influences. Moreover, American culture was increasingly popular with the British working-classes<sup>40</sup> (see LeMahieu, 1988: 90-98; Richards, 1980). However, America's domination of Britain's film industry was probably the cause for most alarm. Fears of American domination of British film resulted in the British government inaugurating protectionist policies in an attempt to stem the flow of American films.<sup>41</sup> Some American films were even censored, on the grounds that they were either immoral or politically controversial.<sup>42</sup>

### **BBC English**

The BBCs civilising mission and idealisation of cultural enlightenment not only pertained to the dissemination of the right ideas and knowledge, but also to wider cultural practices, such as pronunciation, for example. In this cultural struggle, the preservation of the English language took centre stage. Reith explained the missionary

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<sup>39</sup> Camporesi (1994: 625) notes that of the many American products that became a feature of daily life throughout Britain, American cultural commodities 'were among the most visible indicators of a peaceful invasion of goods and ideas from the other side of the Atlantic'.

<sup>40</sup> Scannell & Cardiff (1991: 298-9) suggest that the reason that working people in Britain enjoyed and consumed American entertainment during this period was 'because it did not treat them as second-class citizens'.

<sup>41</sup> It should also be noted that the spectre of Americanisation and the response of Britain's elites was not just a cultural or moral issue. Similar protectionist measures were adopted throughout a number of British industries in an effort to discourage public demand for American goods generally. Economic considerations also had a part to play in the hostility towards American culture. Following the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1918, Britain was increasingly dependent upon American financial support. This dependency was further exasperated by the crippling effects of the post-war depression. Though Perkins (1969) suggests that Britain came to accept American industrial leadership with less and less animosity, many British critics still watched on with alarm as American imports increasingly penetrated the British home market whilst British exports disproportionately decreased in sales. Camporesi (1990: 263) notes that this intensification of economic competition between Britain and America was one of the reasons for British claims to preserving the supposedly higher quality of British goods.

<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the political relationship between the cinema and state, and the convergence between cinema and broadcasting during this period, see: Aldgate (1983); Caughie (1986); Dickinson & Street (1985); Hartog (1983); Kuhn (1988); Murphy (1986); National Council of Public Morals (1917); Petley (1986); Pronay (1981); Pronay & Croft (1983); Pronay & Spring (1982); Richards (1981, 1983 & 1984); and Stead (1981 & 1989).

zeal that lay behind the standardising of what has come to be known as 'BBC English'. Extolling the virtues of 'King's English', Reith (1924: 161) thought that 'broadcasting may be of immense assistance' in correcting 'the most appalling travesties of vowel pronunciation'. This idea was affirmed in the practice 'to secure ... men who, in the presentation of programme items, the reading of news bulletins and so on, can be relied upon to employ the correct pronunciation of the English tongue' (ibid.). Hence Reith instructed Station Directors to think of announcers as 'men of culture, experience and knowledge'.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, much on-air debate and discussion was restricted to people of suitable calibre and decorum.

The Talks Department was largely responsible for the development and dissemination of BBC English. Formed in January 1927, the Department soon established itself as the hub of broadcasting activity. The Department's place in broadcasting history is all the more extraordinary for the fact that the first appointed Director of Talks was a female, Hilda Matheson (see Briggs, 1965: 124-7; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 153-78). Matheson immediately concerned herself as much with the art of the spoken word and its ideal broadcast form as she did with the actual content of talks. She felt that the then available models of talk – 'the sermon, lecture or political speech' – were all unsuitable for broadcasting purposes. Talk broadcasts ought to treat its audience not as a crowd but as individuals.<sup>44</sup> Matheson thus sought to pioneer a mode of address and intonation that was familiar and intimate.

Though speakers were encouraged to speak in a more personal manner, it was important that they still speak with an air of authority. To achieve this balance, talks were formally scripted and rehearsed before being broadcast, a practice that was continued until 1935, when impromptu debates before live audiences were permitted for the first time (Briggs, 1965: 126; Cardiff, 1980: 39). The scripting of talks soon proved to be a controversial and unpopular editorial policy, seen by some as a instrument of

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<sup>43</sup> This opinion was expressed more fully in a memorandum from Reith to Regional Station Directors in March 1934: 'In some stations I see periodically men down to speak whose status, either professionally or socially, and whose qualifications to speak, seem doubtful. It should be an honour in every sense of the words for a man to speak from any broadcasting station, and only those who have a claim to be heard above their fellows on any particular subject in the locality should be put on the programme' (cited in Briggs, 1961: 256).

<sup>44</sup> Cardiff (1980: 31) suggests that the cultivating of the spoken word was 'a means of domesticating the public utterance, as an attempt to soften and naturalise the intrusion of national figures into the fireside world of the family', something I shall look at in more detail in chapter four.



censorship. Mary Adams, a BBC 'talks assistant' during the 1930s, thought that scripting resulted in many speakers effectively censoring themselves, and, as a result, 'endangered the freedom of the microphone' (cited in Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 168). The scripting of talks was inextricably linked with regulating what was broadcast and, consequently, what the listening public heard.

Probably the most notorious example of BBC censorship was the William Ferrie controversy. Ferrie was a representative of the National Union of Vehicle Builders, and had been invited to put the 'man-in-the-streets' point of view across in the Talk series, *The National Character*, broadcast in 1933 (see WAC, R14/124). However, much of what Ferrie wanted to say was 'blue-pencilled' by BBC officials, to which Ferrie had, apparently, agreed. On the night of the broadcast, instead of reading from his script, Ferrie protested about the treatment of his proposed script and left the studio,<sup>45</sup> the consequence being an embarrassing twenty minute silence. The BBC justified its decision to censor Ferrie on the grounds that much of what he had wanted to say was irrelevant to the series of talks and overtly polemic<sup>46</sup> (Cardiff, 1980: 42-3; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 290-91). Nevertheless, the incident caused a public furore and was widely reported in the press, in particular the *Daily Herald* (6 March 1934) and the *Daily Worker*<sup>47</sup> (7 March 1934). Both papers published the original text of Ferries' talk

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<sup>45</sup> The actual broadcast - albeit brief - was reported by the *Daily Herald* (6 March 1934) thus: "I have been asked", the man told listeners, "to give a talk in answer to Sir Herbert Austin". Here he paused for a few seconds; then came his passionate outburst: "But my talk has been so cut about and censored by the BBC that it is a travesty of what I intended to say ... I cannot give it". A few words more, then silence - and an announcer stating that Mr. William Ferrie's talk would not take place'.

<sup>46</sup> The talk itself was a damning critique of Sir Herbert Austin, an industrialist who had spoken the week previously on the character of the British working man. As well as discussing 'the bitter absurdities of the present economic situation' overlooked in Austin's speech, of greater interest are Ferrie's disparaging remarks with regards to leisure. He thought the very word 'leisure' was hypocritical, not least because 'the average worker does not have the facilities for any form of relaxation or culture'. Ferrie was especially critical of the suggestion that 'every working's man's home is his castle', when, in fact, most working people's home are 'not the sort of place where one wants to spend one's leisure' (1934: 12-13). Hence the reason for most workers going 'round to the corner pub' or 'to the cinema'. More importantly, Ferrie suggests that, whilst working people enjoy listening to the wireless and the various BBC broadcasts, he goes on to say that 'among my mates there is growing enthusiasm for the Moscow broadcasts because they deal with life and problems which they understand and because they come from a county where the workers are in power' (ibid.: 13). Indeed, Ferrie concludes his speech by saying that 'the dissatisfaction of the workers with their lot is growing', and how 'they feel that what is called the Moscow Road is the working-class road and they know that they will have nothing to look forward to until they take that road' (ibid.: 15).

<sup>47</sup> The paper reported how the censored broadcast had 'ripped through the screen of capitalist censorship control over the radio in striking fashion and exploded the hypocritical capitalist contention that the British Broadcasting Corporation was nothing other than an instrument rigidly exercised solely for the propaganda of the British capitalist class'.



in full. It was also published as a pamphlet by the Workers Bookshop, with an introduction by the author, in which he tells how the BBC had censored his speech 'beyond recognition' (1934: 2). Ferrie was particularly annoyed 'at their demand that I should put across that the slogan "workers of the World, Unite!" is not a revolutionary slogan'. Ferrie also tells how he 'refused to drop my "h's" and to speak as they imagine a worker does'. In doing so, he hoped he had 'proved that the character of the working class cannot be suppressed even by the BBC' (ibid.). The BBC's efforts to portray the character of the British working classes as part of an ordered whole had been momentarily undermined.

The Talks Department was assisted in its mission to disseminate standard English by the Advisory Committee on Spoken English, formed in April 1926. Its body of eminent persons included: A. Lloyd James, Professor of Phonetics at London University, the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges,<sup>48</sup> George Bernard Shaw, Logan Pearsall-Smith, and Rudyard Kipling. The Committee was responsible for making decisions on how best to pronounce 'debatable words'. One such word was 'broadcast', which is derived from the conjugation of the verb 'to cast'; hence the past tense 'broadcast' and not 'broadcasted' (Briggs, 1961: 242; Reith, 1924: 162). The Committee endorsed the BBC's general policy of only employing announcers who spoke standard English. Lloyd James was insistent that broadcasters be 'educated' and maintain 'high standards of clarity and intelligibility', since broadcasters 'are in the process of determining the future form of our spoken language as surely as the printer and type designer determined the form of our printed language' (1935: 27). Even 'a school for announcers' was suggested, though never actually formally realised in practice. Announcers were subject to rigorous preliminary tests, in addition to regular instruction in the technique of broadcasting the spoken word, and had to be free of regional dialect

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<sup>48</sup> Bridges was one of the first to realise the direct bearing of broadcasting upon culture and the English language in his epic poem *The Testament of Beauty*: 'Well might we ask what Beauty ever could live or thrive in our crowded democracy under governance of such politic fancy as a farmer would show who cultivated weeds in hope of good harvest: and yet hath modern culture enrich'd a wasting soil; Science comforting man's animal poverty and leisuring his toil, hath humanised manners and social temper, and now above her globe-spredd net of speeded intercourse hath outrun all magic, and disclosing the secrecy of the reticent air hath woven a seamless web of invisible strands spiriting the dumb inane with the quick matter of life; Now music's prison'd rapture and the drown'd voice of truth, mantled in light's velocity, over land and sea are omnipresent, speaking aloud to every ear, into every heart and home their unhinder'd message, the body and soul of Universal Brotherhood ...' (1930, Book I, Lines 717-733).

and personal idiom (ibid.: 22).<sup>49</sup> Between 1928 and 1934 a series of pamphlets on *Broadcast English* were published and circulated both to BBC staff and the general public (ibid.: 34-5). All these practices were, to quote Briggs (1965: 468), indications of the committee's power 'to put its decisions into effect, and thereby to influence popular habits'.

Underlying this insistence that all broadcasters, announcers in particular, speak standard English was a deep-rooted concern that spoken English was disintegrating into 'a series of mutually unintelligible dialects', which, in Lloyd James' opinion (1935: 27), were 'fed by local prejudice, parochial patriotism, and petty nationalisms'; 'a menace not only to the unity of the language but to the unity of the English-speaking peoples'. Broadcasting's dissemination of the spoken word was thus a means of arresting these disintegrating influences. For example, Matheson (1933: 64) thought broadcasting had arrived 'on the scene at a moment when a new Tower of Babel might conceivably arise in the English-speaking world itself. It supplies a standardisation agency at a time when some degree of standardisation may be essential to the using of the language'. Elsewhere she optimistically states that broadcasting

... has made several million people conscious, if not of their own speech, at least of the speech of others ... From becoming increasingly aware of the way in which other people speak, it is only a step to becoming more conscious of how one speaks oneself.

(Matheson, 1933: 61)

Senior BBC personnel were especially on guard against Americanisms. For example, Cecil Graves, then Controller of Programmes, despaired at hearing one Outside Broadcast that he thought to be 'another example of trying to introduce American methods and American phraseology into our broadcasting'. He saw 'absolutely no reason why we should introduce American jargon into our commentaries and announcements ...' (cited in Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 293). Yet again, we can see how the BBC was an instrument with which to unite the nation around a universal, common standard. It is with this in mind that Hall (1986: 43-4) notes that the fundamental task facing the BBC was how to reconcile the many regional – but

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<sup>49</sup> Though the use of regional speakers became increasingly popular in the mid-thirties, with the BBC responding to increasingly vociferous protests about 'elitism', unpopular 'intellectualism', and 'metropolis-centrism', the preference for authoritative speakers for serious and complex talks was never entirely negated.

nonetheless English – voices into its ‘Voice’; a voice which was in turn reflected back to the nation as the ‘Standard Voice’. Anything that detracted from this unity, in this case divergent pronunciations, were thought to be yet another aberration, that may tend towards chaos. Many BBC employees thought that the improvement of the English language would facilitate the general uplift of the English nation. Standard English was thought to be the language of the educated and cultured. Thus, if the state and its functionaries wanted to inculcate high ideals and standards of social behaviour, it was also necessary to disseminate standard English. In short, Englishness was defined by the primacy of correct English.

For Lloyd James, correct pronunciation was inextricably linked with social behaviour, that is proper conduct. ‘You cannot raise social standards without raising the speech standard, and since speech has come to be regarded as an aspect of social behaviour, it must be treated as such’ (1935: 143). Speech was the ultimate arbiter of social judgement.

A man may be known by the company he keeps, the clothes he wears, the sort of house he lives in, the profession he follows, by his table manners, the books he reads, the car, motor-bicycle, or push-bike he runs, the appearance of teeth and finger-nails, by the mass of details in his reaction to social stimuli. In fact, you may learn more from his speech.

(Lloyd-James, 1935: 110)

On yet another occasion he is even more specific about the importance of speech and its relationship with dress:

A man’s way of speaking, his pronunciation – call it you will – is as much an aspect of his social behaviour as his fashion of dressing or his manners in eating and drinking. The analogy of dress is interesting, for next to speech it is probably the most significant aspect of our social behaviour.

(Lloyd-James, 1935: 159)

The analogy of dressing is indeed interesting when one bears in mind that from 1925 announcers were instructed to wear dinner jackets when broadcasting, as a sign of their officialdom and respectability (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 316). Moreover, Lloyd James’ prioritising of speech in the general order of things and social practices, and his obsession for effecting a state of universal cultural enlightenment, becomes a prescription for the standardised citizen:



When we have turned out standard citizens, all on one plan, all of one character and temperament, all educated along the same lines, brought up in standard homes by standard parents, and when we have furnished them all with standardised opportunities for the acquisition of a standardised culture, and the attainment of a standardised career, then we shall have a standardised speech, for speech is the reflection of all those things.

(Lloyd James, 1935: 109)

Such standardisation was the key-stone for ensuring cultural citizenship, the measure of anything and everything of socio-cultural significance, and the quintessence of middle-class respectability.

However, in spite of the BBCs efforts and optimistic appraisal of the potential effects of broadcasting upon the spoken word, there is much evidence to suggest that dialects remained just as rich and varied as ever. For example, after conducting a survey of Bristol as part of a larger study of the social effects of broadcasting in 1939, Hilda Jennings (1939: 19) remarked that, 'Syntax remains unaffected, and in ordinary conversations in the home, especially among older people, the local colloquial mode of speech with its native raciness holds its own'. In 1934 George Bernard Shaw was resigned to admitting that the

... new Committee so far is a ghastly failure. It should be reconstituted with an age limit of 30 and a few taxi-drivers on it. The young people WONT [sic] pronounce like the old dons ... are we to dictate to the mob or allow the mob to dictate to us? I give up.

(Cited in Briggs, 1965: 469)

Scannell and Cardiff (1991: 171) also note the difficulties the Talks Department experienced with working class listeners. The BBC was subject to a barrage of charges from an increasingly vociferous and dissatisfied working-class listening public who thought the BBC too middle class. For example, Campbell Stephen, the Independent Labour MP for Glasgow, launched a tirade of criticism against the BBCs aloofness during a parliamentary debate in April 1936:

When listening to a British Broadcasting Corporation programme the impression produced on me is that I am in some slum dwelling and listening to some highly superior slum visitor anxious to do something for the improvement of poor people in the slums. There is far too much of that from highly superior people who are so anxious to improve everybody else ... The whole concern appears to be run as though it were an instrument of the well-to-do ... It is run very largely by people ... who do not know the working-

class, do not understand the working-class point of view, but are seeking, evidently, to mould the working-class.

(Cited in Minihan, 1977: 212-3)

Another vehement criticism came from a listening group leader based in the Sheffield Training College about the second series of *Men Talking*, broadcast in Autumn 1938. He was reported as saying to the Education Officer for Leeds that his group had intended to follow the series of talks but, owing to 'uselessly academic' intonation of the speakers and subject-matter, had decided to make up their own subjects, '... subjects that move us, not technical and superficial topics couched in trivial language by drawling and affected speakers' (WAC R51/319). Interestingly, there is a note written in biro at the foot of the corresponding internal memorandum by an unidentifiable BBC employee who thought that, whilst the person in question had 'let his pen run away with him', nevertheless agreed that 'the essential criticism is evidently widespread'.

Another report from N. G. Luker, the producer of the series, dated 11 October 1937, noted that some of the criticisms on the *Men Talking* series 'are so frequent and so clear I think we should take action on them' (WAC, R51/319). Luker even conceded 'that a voice definitely recognisable as working-class should be used'. That said, Luker goes onto say that, 'in attacking this we must take care not to pander to a regrettable feeling that shows itself here and there in the replies that, because the speakers do not have an Cockney or a Lancashire accent, they are in some way bogus or unreal'. Luker's report prompted a no less interesting response from the then Secretary of the Central Committee for Group Listening who, in reply to the suggestion that the BBC adjust its middle-class bias by 'bringing to the microphone people with uneducated voices', thought it would not help 'to put in other people who may be equally class-conscious from a different angle'. Instead he would prefer 'people who do not give that impression from whatever class they come' (WAC, R51/319).

D. G. Bridson (1971: 51-2), a Manchester based poet and writer, widely credited with pioneering a more distinctive brand of regional broadcasting in the 1930s, probably best sums up the BBC's reticence over broadening access to the microphone:

That the man in the street should have anything vital to contribute to broadcasting was an idea slow to gain acceptance. That he should actually use broadcasting to express his own opinions in his own unvarnished words was regarded as almost the end of all good order.



Similarly, Frith (1983: 103 & 121) notes that the BBC 'had no real interest in developing or articulating 'authentic' popular culture in working class terms'. Furthermore, access to the airwaves was only available via a mediated authority; listening 'was a matter of knowing one's place'.

### **The Art Of Listening**

Yet another defining characteristic of BBC culture and its mission to raise standards and taste was the practice of encouraging 'attentive' as opposed to 'passive' listening (see Percy, 1933: 20; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 370-2). BBC radio critic, Filson Young, wrote endless articles instructing listeners how to 'cultivate the art of listening'. For example, in the 1928 *BBC Handbook* (349-51), Young informed listeners that there was 'a right way and a wrong way to use broadcasting'. The wrong way was for listeners to listen to broadcasting as though it were 'on tap, to be turned on like gas or water in their homes'. This just encouraged careless, habitual listening. Instead, Young urged listeners to exercise 'restraint' in their use of broadcasting; 'to discriminate in what they listen to, and to listen with their mind as well as their ears'; 'to be an epicure and not a glutton'. Only then can 'the immense care and trouble that are taken in compiling and presenting the programmes achieve their true direction and effect'. Similarly, the 1930 *BBC Yearbook* (61) offered listeners further advice on how to acquire the habit of good listening:

Listen as carefully at home as you do in a theatre or concert hall. You can't get the best out of a programme if your mind is wandering, or if you are playing bridge or reading. Give it your full attention. Try turning out the lights so that your eye is not caught by familiar objects in the room. Your imagination will be twice as vivid.

As a final piece of advice, listeners were asked to 'Think of your favourite occupation. Don't you like a change sometimes? Give the wireless a rest now and then'.

One technique used to encourage active listening was for the BBC to deliberately mix its programming, so that listeners were just as likely to listen to a classical drama or concert performance as they were sport or dance music. With the exception of the nightly news bulletins, fixed scheduling was deliberately rejected (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 372). The only way of knowing what was on one week to the next was to buy a copy of the *Radio Times*, which listed programmes a week in advance. Hence

for much of the inter-war period broadcasting did not discriminate between highbrow or lowbrow listeners. Rather, the listening public was treated as one and the same. If anything, listeners were idealised as being middlebrow, that is to say, rounded and able to move between differing levels of cultural competency (see Frith, 1983: 106 & 120). The BBC constantly urged its listeners to be tolerant and intellectually curious. For example, the 1931 *BBC Yearbook* (215-17) positively encouraged listeners not to worry 'about our brows', but to 'learn to substitute for intolerance a genial curiosity for men and things beyond our immediate ken'; for in doing so, 'we shall find our brows more flexible than we had dared believe'.

The concern with whether or not listeners were discriminating in their listening habits was reflected in a survey carried out by Rowntree (1941: 406-12 & 530) as part of his wider second social survey of York. With the co-operation of teachers and school children between the ages 13 and 16 years of age, Rowntree designed a survey that required further particulars about the use of the wireless in the children's homes in a typical week, excluding weekends. In total 556 surveys were filled in, of which 62 reported that the household had no wireless set, 106 were deemed unhelpful, leaving 388 from which 'to assess the degree to which discrimination is used in the choice of programmes and how far wireless provides merely a background of sound in the house'. Of the 388 households, and in terms of total listening time during the week of the investigation, 72 per cent of listening time was spent listening to light and dance music, variety, and the children's hour, all of which Rowntree regarded as 'purely recreational'; 22 per cent listened to news, plays, classical music and talks, and other programmes Rowntree deemed to be 'educational'; whilst only 6 per cent listened to religious broadcasts (1941: 408 & 530).

Further data was obtained from the Relay Company licensed to operate in York (1941: 409-11) as an alternative broadcasting service to which listeners subscribed to at a cost of 1s 6d per week. At the time of the inquiry (1936) there were 3000 subscribers to the relay service, of which the majority were working class. Whilst the programmes were varied, the Relay Company was mindful of what the listeners wanted and discerned this by measuring the loads taken on the receiving lines and taking note of correspondence. This receptiveness to listener demands was a stark contrast to the more paternalistic beliefs of the BBC. Moreover, the listening public knew exactly what it wanted: by far

the most popular programme, with a 100 per cent load, was Littlewood's Pool Programme broadcast from Luxembourg on Sundays at 1.30pm, closely followed by variety and sports programmes. The Company was also reported to have found that there were few all-day listeners, and that most were selective 'in a negative way', switching off the radio 'when there was something on that they did not like' (1941: 410). Though it is not clear, one can only presume that the reason for Rowntree interpreting this type of behaviour as 'negative' was because the listening public were more likely to turn off their wireless sets for the types of programmes that were thought to be edifying. With both surveys in mind, Rowntree (1941: 411) was of the general impression 'that the chief uses of wireless in the homes scheduled are to provide light entertainment and to keep people informed of what is happening in the world'.

### Conclusions

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter is how one might understand the formation of public service broadcasting and the subsequent development of BBC culture as a technology of social governance whose *raison d'être* was to construct the nation around a hierarchy of inter-related and useful cultural values and discursive practices: 'cultural citizenship', 'cultural enlightenment', 'enlightened democracy', 'wholesome entertainment', 'intellectual and moral happiness', 'public service', 'stewardship', 'professional expertise', 'unity of control', 'national service', 'national community', 'national interest', 'common culture', 'standard citizens' with 'one character and temperament', among others. Whilst this vision of the nation drew on old and new ideas about culture and democracy, more crucially, it allowed the BBC to construct itself as the central cultural legislator and moral regulator for the nation. This resulted in the exclusion of any cultural practices that were neither national nor centralised. This is immediately evident in its practices around BBC English. Of course, this was a fundamental paradox for the BBC: in seeking to 'include' all in what is a narrow version of the nation it must perforce exclude those who do not 'belong' in its version. The exclusionary nature of public service broadcasting is something I shall concentrate more fully on in chapter three, particularly in relation to gamblers and the unemployed who were in the nation but not of it.

The BBC also attempted to prescribe in highly moralistic-cultural terms (e.g. nothing good comes without intellectual effort) the way the listening public used radio. The

problem for the BBC was that the national character it had attributed radio was not inherent in the medium itself. Not only had radio (as opposed to telegraphy which was still largely used by the military) grown out of amateurish provincial efforts to pioneer the technology, moreover, its growth and scope soon exceeded national boundaries, as we will see in chapter five. The BBC was thus faced with a constant struggle about how to harness the potentialities of this new medium, whilst suppressing others, in order to realise its own national project. However, the way people used the medium was quite different from what the BBC broadcasters intended, diminishing the effect but not the cultural significance of the effort.

Finally, BBC culture was characteristic of much Victorian rational recreation. Just as other national cultural institutions had been mobilized and invoked to unite the nation around a hierarchy of cultural values and practices from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, so too were the technical capabilities of broadcasting harnessed to counterpoise the perceived excesses and degenerative effects of mass culture. If the BBC was to uplift the cultural tastes and practices of the wider public it had, like Victorian recreationalists before it, to address the problem of leisure as it existed in the early-twentieth century. Because how people spent their leisure time almost certainly affected their cultural sensibilities and, perhaps more importantly, moral conduct.



## The Regulation of Leisure

The importance of leisure is almost impossible to ignore when considering any social processes which have come to be described as 'cultural'. Hence, the use of leisure was an integral component in the relationship between culture and the configurations of power in the early-twentieth century. This was especially so in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s, which, like most industrial nations during this period, was experiencing varying degrees of social unrest and economic depression, prompting widespread fears among political and cultural elites that the moral and intellectual leadership once exercised over the popular masses had greatly diminished. For example, Rowntree (1941: 329) argued that, 'the way in which communities spend their leisure is a criterion of the national character'. A whole volume of Llewellyn-Smith's (1935: 6) survey of *London Life and Labour* was dedicated to the question of leisure and the distinction between 'cultural and non-cultural pursuits', that is 'those which aim at definite self-improvement and those which minister to evanescent enjoyment'. How people spent their leisure was thought to affect the nation's well-being. Consequently, the problem of leisure was a problem for the nation, and, more importantly, a problem to which the BBC, by now the conscience of the nation, must respond.

The etymology of the word 'leisure' derives from the Latin word *licere* meaning to be allowed or lawful, thus connoting something that is morally approved. Alternatively, something that is licensed is often deemed to be in need of regulation as it is likely to give rise to unlawful or immoral conduct (Wilson, 1988: 11-12 & 21). In more recent times, leisure has been commonly defined as that which is 'non-work'. Leisure as non-work first enters into public discourse during the mid-nineteenth century, since when the average working week has decreased significantly, following a series of Parliamentary Acts aimed at improving working-conditions for the labouring-classes. Many workers also experienced an increase in disposable income, owing to demands from organised labour for paid holidays and better pay, thus affording many people both more time and money with which to enjoy recreational activities. It is with this in mind that one can begin to better appreciate the long history in Britain of the problematising of leisure, particular popular recreation, by the state and its various functionaries, not least the BBC in the early-twentieth century.



The willingness among political and cultural elites to intervene against the customary practices of popular recreation dates back to the mid-eighteenth century, since when there have been endless attempts by government and pseudo-official bodies to control the space and time in which popular leisure activities take place, specially popular recreations thought to be licentious, morally corrupting and, therefore, a threat to public order (see Malcolmson, 1982). Up to the mid-nineteenth century, popular recreation, in particular ones that encouraged largely plebeian public assembly – such as blood sports, pleasure fairs, and wakes – were often regulated by factory employers and, following the reform of the metropolitan police in 1829, the new police force. However, such overtly regulatory efforts were interpreted by the working-classes as an attack upon both their communities and their way of life, and were therefore strongly resisted, often resulting in skirmishes and occasionally riots (Bailey, 1978: 17-26).

This background of popular and illicit recreation, and capacity for working-class resistance and renewal, prompted mid-Victorian and subsequent social reformers to rethink the problem of leisure, shifting away from repressive policing to non-coercive regulation of leisure. Henceforth, attempts to regulate popular recreation were centred around a more general campaign for the establishment of state funded cultural and recreational amenities such as public parks, libraries, museums, art galleries, and swimming baths.<sup>50</sup> Aimed at countering the attraction of commercial popular recreations, these public institutions were better known as ‘rational recreations’, ‘useful recreations’, ‘harmless public amusements’, ‘innocent amusements’, and so on (see Bailey, 1978; Cunningham, 1980).<sup>51</sup> In short, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards

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<sup>50</sup> Public museums and libraries are perhaps the best example of public recreations whose political rationality is located in the emergence of the Victorian rational recreation movement. Public museums were first legislated for with the Museums Act of 1845, which enabled councils with a population of 10,000 to erect and maintain buildings for museums of art and science (see Bennett, 1995; Cunningham, 1980: 105). Similarly, the provision of public libraries was hailed as yet another valuable practical remedy. Indeed, one anonymous supporter of the 1850 Libraries Act described libraries as ‘the cheapest police that could possibly be established’ (cited in Bailey, 1978: 39). In this context, the subtext for rational recreation was clearly predicated upon an urban fear of the uncivilised urban masses.

<sup>51</sup> Rational recreation was not the only means of civilising the popular masses. Many attempts were made to abridge popular recreations, sports especially, and incorporate them into the public school games ethos in an attempt to inculcate the virtues of Christian manliness, patriotism, tradition, sportsmanship, and moral leadership – all of which were thought to be good for character building, both of the individual and of the nation. Hence the often quoted remark: ‘the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton’; or ‘it isn’t cricket’ (see Bailey, 1978: 124-46; Hargreaves, 1987; Hill 2002: 53; Rowntree, 1941: 391; Walvin, 1978: 83-96, among others).

we see a plethora of statist – central and local government – attempts to ground leisure in the everyday public domain.<sup>52</sup>

Concomitant with the emergence of more public and accessible forms of leisure is the emergence of a cultural apparatus that was aimed at rendering the working classes more visible and, it was supposed, more governable by making them subjects of civilising influences previously available to the social elites only.<sup>53</sup> Leisure was appropriated by ‘physicians of culture’ (see Rose, 1999: 57-8) as a practical remedy for effecting social reform, an instrument with which to inculcate the popular masses, in particular the male working classes, in the arts of civility and good conduct. Hence the assimilation of rational recreation with the various institutionalised movements for temperance, educational reform and other reformist organisations whose core rationale was the general drive for social and moral improvement.<sup>54</sup>

Of course, rational recreation was not a deliberate invention by the middle-classes to control the working-classes (see Cunningham, 1980: 90). Rationality, understood as the exercise of order, discipline, specially of mind over body, was something the middle

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<sup>52</sup> For example: Public Baths and Workhouses Act, 1846; Museums Act, 1845 & 1849; Public Libraries Act, 1850 & 1855; Recreation Grounds Act, 1852; Public Health Act, 1907; Street Betting Act, 1906; Physical Training and Recreation Act, 1937. During the inter-war period, we also see the founding of voluntary organisations like the British Workers' Sports Federation, 1923, the National Workers' Sports Association, 1930, the National Playing Fields Association, 1925, and the Central Council of Physical Recreation, 1935 (see Hill, 2002: 151-2, 164 & 178; Thompson, 1997: 22).

<sup>53</sup> Prior to this, much ‘approved’ leisure was privatised and limited to the so-called ‘leisured classes’. During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, much public space was commandeered by the rich for their own private and exclusive use. The few public recreations set aside for the working-classes were normally provided by religious bodies. The rationale for having such clearly defined space for the rich and poor had been an attempt to keep apart the respectable from the unruly. However, some of the middle classes, social reformers in particular, began to realise that keeping social classes apart only succeeding in further alienating one from the other. Much better if the unruly masses, or the more respectable working-classes at least, be incorporated into middle class society, thus preventing the feared polarisation of society and popular uprising. Hence the working-classes was to be admitted to the habitat of bourgeois culture and learning under the supervision of recreational experts.

<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that the regulation of leisure was not just a moral issue. If the transition to a mature industrialised economy was to be fully realised from the nineteenth century onwards, it was important that a radical restructuring of working habits be effected: arguably the increases in the availability of leisure time and space was one of the many new incentives aimed at inculcating the labouring masses in the virtues of social economy, not least time-management and its associated disciplines (Wilson, 1988: 22). Hence economic considerations had a major part to play in the regulating of leisure in the sense that leisure was expenditure of time and therefore represented an opportunity cost for both employers and employees. To quote Thompson (1967: 61 & 83), ‘time is now currency: it is not passed but spent’. Spare time is of secondary importance to the Protestant ethic and the primacy it accords to the discipline of work. However, attempts to exact greater synchronisation of labour and leisure time were fraught with individual and collective acts of resistance; also, from the late-nineteenth century onwards, many workers simply adjusted to the ‘rules of the game’ and learned to regard their labour as a commodity to be sold (see Hobsbawm, 1979: 344-51).

classes desperately sought for themselves in the late eighteenth century, in a self-conscious attempt to establish a code of conduct that would distinguish them from both the decadent aristocracy and the lowly masses. However, the invitation to partake in the world of leisure contravened the priorities of work and Christian duty that many of the middle-classes deemed to embody and legitimise their claims to respectability. In this sense, the genteel middle-classes were just as much subjects of the political rationality of rational recreation as were the urban working-classes they sought to reform (see Bailey, 1978: 40, 64-5 & 74). Hence rational recreation was initially a movement of and for the middle-classes: it was a means of legitimating their own use of leisure by alleviating concerns about leisure as a debased social activity void of any cultural worth or moral integrity. It was only later, once it was felt that leisure had been gentrified, that is to say made respectable, that some of the more conscientious middle-classes, guilty at their own aloofness began to inject rational recreation with missionary zeal.

The problematising of leisure in the early-twentieth century, though reconstructed differently, was essentially a re-articulation of the problem as perceived by Victorian rational recreationalists. Leisure was still perceived by Rowntree (1941: 447-8 & 477-8) and the like as 'the temptation to seek fullness of life by indulging too largely in forms of recreation which make no demands on physical, mental or spiritual powers'. This in turn had implications for the 'mental and spiritual life of the whole nation', upon which depends 'the lasting greatness of the State'. And whilst Rowntree was of no definite opinion as to whether the character of the working-classes had changed for better or worse, like many of his predecessors, he lamented the weakening of the church influence, slackened parental control, and, perhaps more significantly, the continuing development of popular forms of leisure that 'make absolutely no contribution to physical, mental, or spiritual development' thus giving rise to 'a new social problem ... which urgently calls for solution'. Like Victorian recreationalists, Rowntree (1941: 447-8) advocated a solution that offered people 'ways of spending their leisure which both contribute to the development of strong characters and are at the same time so attractive that they will adopt them of their own free will'. He envisaged a cadre of 'skilful physicians' who would organise and superintend the uses of leisure needed to inculcate the popular masses, particularly the young, in the arts of self-management. One major difference was the lesson learnt regarding the degree of control: for Rowntree was all too aware of the past failings of recreational recreation and thus urged



that those entrusted with the task of policing leisure should avoid imposing any 'rigid rules of management'. The problem was not to be remedied by restrictive measures.<sup>55</sup>

Having said that, the positive role assigned to rational recreations as a civilising influence was carried through into the early-twentieth century. There was increasing pressure upon the state to extend its activities and take on even greater responsibilities for the provision of leisure. However, though the provision of public recreation by both central and municipal authorities increased significantly during the inter-war period<sup>56</sup> (see Minihan, 1977: 173-96), it was dwarfed by the extraordinary proliferation in commercial forms of recreation. These newly emerging cultural industries were thought to have a corrupting effect on the popular masses and to be responsible for the change in social mores during the early twentieth century, not least because they invariably gave the public what they wanted.<sup>57</sup> It was to these newer forms of popular cultural recreation and the older forms of 'irrational' recreation, which still held sway amongst the popular masses, that BBC culture was diametrically opposed.

### **(Ab)uses of Leisure: Drink & Gambling**

Of the many popular recreations drinking and gambling were regarded above all others as the major obstacles to improving the lot of the working-classes. In spite of numerous attempts to temper working-class expenditure on drink, not least recreationalists efforts to insert their own cultural institutions between the working-classes and the pub, many

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<sup>55</sup> There were nevertheless instances of direct State regulatory interventions during the inter-war period. Perhaps the most audacious attempt to control the liquor industry and the consumption of alcohol was the nationalisation of pubs in strategic areas of military importance during the war (see Jones, 1986: 101-4; Rowntree, 1951: 182-5). Though the scheme was abandoned shortly after the war, the demand for State control of the alcohol industry continued. For example, the educationalist and social reformer, Arnold Freeman (1919: 23), sought to fundamentally alter public house practices, so that they be 'run as social and educational centres'. He thought the best way of accomplishing this end was for 'suitable' publicans to be installed and 'the sale of alcoholic drink [be] obscured by emphasizing other forms of refreshment, as well as by giving prominence to games, music, reading, discussion, etc' (ibid: 23). In short, Freeman sought to sanitise and inoculate the public-house, indeed, any space used for public recreation. In a minority of instances, even breweries introduced cultural attractions into their houses in an effort to 'improve the material standard of licensed premises, and to raise the tone'. For example: the Committee for Verse and Prose Recitation, more commonly known as 'Poetry in Pubs', and a performing group known as 'The Taverners', began performing poetry and plays in public houses from the late 1930s onwards (see Rowntree, 1951: 180 & 469-471).

<sup>56</sup> In fact the principle of municipal involvement in the spheres of recreation and culture was so firmly established, many historians (see Hill, 2002: 171; Stevenson, 1984: 307-9; Walton, 1983: 160-85) have suggested the later Victorian period and the early twentieth century ought to be thought of as the golden age in municipal leisure endeavour.

<sup>57</sup> This is not to say that commercial leisure was necessarily a bad thing; on the contrary, the working classes derived real improvement in their leisure from commercial expansion, from the seemingly insignificant patronage of the publican to the excitement of the music hall, and later still, the cinema.

early twentieth century social surveys and biographical histories reveal that drink was still a widely enjoyed popular recreation, and the pub the definitive focal point for working-class communities.<sup>58</sup> Unlike the middle classes who preferred domesticated culture and leisure, the working classes had developed forms of leisure that were decidedly more public and collective. For their clubs and societies, more often than not, the meeting venue was the public house, arguably the most popular and enduring of working-class institutions. Especially for working-class males, the pub provided not only inebriation but also an occasion for fellowship and camaraderie.<sup>59</sup>

Drinking was castigated for a number of reasons. Like sex it was regarded as a sensual pleasure likely to debase resulting cognitive capacity. The most commonly discussed subject in pubs were sport and gambling, a fact confirmed by Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 252-3), who also added that politics and religion were the least popular subjects of conversation. Rowntree (1941: 365-7) claimed that, 'those who spend enough time in public houses to be influenced by their tone or atmosphere...are less seriously-minded than the rest of citizens'. Drinking also represented a problem insofar as it took place behind closed doors in the sanctum of a public house or the privacy of one's home, making it difficult to supervise or to know what type of behaviour drinking elicited, much less how to inculcate good habits of conduct.

Drink was also thought to be one of the main causes of poverty, representing a constant threat for some working class families and their solvency.<sup>60</sup> Excessive drinking also

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<sup>58</sup> Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 257) described public houses as 'the community centres, where everyone meets, [and] arranges most of his [sic] common activities...'. According to the *Mass Observation* study of pub life in Bolton, '...more people spend more time in public houses than they do in any other buildings except private houses and work-places' (1943: 17). A further testimony to the popularity of drink among working males in particular is Robert Roberts' classic early twentieth century account of Edwardian life in the Salford slums: 'To the great mass of manual workers the local public house spelled paradise. After the squalor from which so many men came there dwelt within a tavern all one could crave for – warmth, bright lights, music, song, comradeship ... But above all, men went for the ale that brought a slow, fuddled joy. Beer was indeed the shortest way out of the city. Then, driven at nearly midnight into the street, their temple shuttered and barred, the company lingered on, maudlin, in little groups, loath to face a grim reality again' (Roberts, 1980: 120).

<sup>59</sup> Whilst excessive drinking was predominant among working-class males it was not by any means a wholly male phenomenon. Working-class women were also known to drink heavily. For example, Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 250) tells how it was 'not unusual for women drinking on Monday nights to pawn clothing and household articles for the purpose'. Similarly, Jones (1986: 78) argues that, by the 1930s, more women were frequenting pubs than ever before.

<sup>60</sup> For example, Rowntree (1901: 140) claimed that the main cause of secondary poverty was due to unwise expenditure on alcohol. Similarly, Roberts (1980: 121 & 123) describes at length the 'misery' in working-class homes caused by drunkenness and the resulting 'drift down through poverty into total



resulted in loss of labour: it was not uncommon for a minority of manual labourers to be continually unfit for work owing to binge drinking.<sup>61</sup> Whilst actual *per capita* expenditure on drink did not diminish, there is evidence to suggest that, by the 1930s there was less binge drinking (see Llewellyn-Smith, 1935: 29; Mowatt, 1964: 250; Rowntree, 1941: 369-73). Of the many reasons given for this transformation, the increasing attractiveness of the home as a recreational space was significant, something I shall discuss in more detail in chapter six. For example, an editorial for *The Listener* (30 October 1935) suggested that 'the centre of leisure in working-class society has moved from the beer-pot to the loudspeaker', so that wireless had 'triumphed over beer as an essential enjoyment of life'. G. M. Trevelyan (1977: 583) was also of the opinion that 'drink has found fresh enemies in ... the wireless at home'. Other significant 'counter-attractions' included reading, the cinema, the theatre, and the music hall.<sup>62</sup>

Whilst the drink question remained a central concern for many social reformers and government during much of the inter-war period, their attention became increasingly focused upon another time-honoured 'irrational' recreation: gambling. Like drinking, gambling has a long history. McKibbin (1979) suggests that the scale and character of the modern gambling industry dates from 1880 onwards, since when the working-classes propensity for gambling has been subject to various regulatory efforts, parliamentary committees of enquiry and other official surveys.<sup>63</sup>

Many of the working classes resented what they regarded as hypocritical and unfair discrimination between social classes. In spite of attempts to legislate against off-course betting, illegal or not, betting was widespread among working-class communities

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want'. This was especially problematic for working-class families whose men were still accustomed to spending large amounts of time and money in public houses.

<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the most infamous and widely celebrated of working-class drinking customs that defied the work discipline of industrial capitalism was 'Saint Monday'. Such was the popularity of this working-class tradition that even the institution of the Saturday half-holiday did little to abate the celebration of Saint Monday as the preferred day of leisure, especially in London, the West Midlands and Sheffield (see Cunningham, 1980: 146-7; Roberts, 1980: 123; Thompson, 1967: 74-5).

<sup>62</sup> Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 272) argued that such recreations had formed 'the spearhead of attack' in 'the war against drink'.

<sup>63</sup> The Lotteries and Betting Act (1853) was one of the first statutory attempts to suppress off-course betting, that is betting shops and the promotion of betting lists in public houses. Course credit betting, on the other hand, a popular recreation among the gentry, remained permissible. Those who could afford it were even permitted to use the telegraph or postal services (see Bailey, 1978: 23 & 134; Rowntree, 1941: 400). This singling out of working-class gambling was repeated again with the Street Betting Act (1906), making it illegal to 'frequent or loiter in a street or other public places for the purpose of making or settling bets' (see Llewellyn-Smith, 1935: 280).

and, as noted by the Select Committee on Betting Duty (1923), a common feature of the everyday urban landscape:

Work in our mills and factories is stopped and damaged by the amount of time given to the discussion and thought about betting ... A class of persons of many thousands has grown up which lives entirely by giving tips and information ... The streets of our towns are perambulated by bookmakers or their betting agents inviting persons to bet with them ... Houses or shops exist in large numbers in all towns where ... the real business is the receipt and collection of betting slips for some bookmaker...

(Cited in McKibbin, 1979: 160)

The industry grew at a phenomenal rate, so that the number of persons professionally employed as bookmakers, not to mention the vast number of persons illicitly employed as runners, rose from 2,897 in 1921 to 9,447 in 1931. Annual expenditure on gambling was between £300 and £400 million by the 1930s, making gambling the second largest industry in the country (see Jones, 1986: 38-43; McKibbin, 1979: 152; Rowntree, 1941: 400 & 474; Walvin, 1978: 140). Hence, Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 271) thought that the 'place which drunkenness occupied in the category of vices and the minds of the moralists during the last century has today largely been surrendered to gambling'. Similarly, Rowntree (1941: 399) suggested that gambling had become so widespread during the inter-war period 'that many police officials, magistrates, and social workers regard it as *Public Enemy Number 1*'.

As well as statist attempts to regulate gambling, the main currents of opposition to gambling came from the Protestant Church, the professional middle-classes, and the leadership of the Labour movement. Whilst there were differences of interest, the three groups were united in their belief that gambling represented a threat to social discipline. For example, Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 282) opined that 'the gravamen of the charge that gambling has to meet', in the early-twentieth century, 'is the habit conduces to dishonesty, carelessness of responsibility, unreliability, conflict in the family, all culminating in an insidious corruption of the individual which spreads through the community to which he or she belongs to'. However, as much as the state wanted to suppress gambling, it was reluctant to exact any overt disciplinary measures. Rather, it relied on the police, the local authorities and voluntary organisations to intervene where gambling was known to operate, in the hope that the problem could be regulated from a distance. On the few occasions that an arrest was made, it was often the runner who

carried the can, thus allowing the bookmaker to carry on business as normal. In other words, it was virtually impossible to police effectively. Indeed, McKibbin (1979: 177) notes that the police openly confessed to being reluctant law-enforcers in the face of so much popular hostility. The failure of attempts to legislate against working-class gambling was duly noted, prompting Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 281) to argue that if gambling was to be properly regulated it required 'a change in the law which will enlist on its side the moral sense of the community'. What was needed was a technology of government capable of tempering the working-classes propensity for gambling, without having to resort to direct interference.

### **The BBC and Gambling**

The BBC was very sensitive to the gambling problem, on which there was a surprising amount of correspondence, programme talks, and policy documents (WAC, R51/194 & R34/404/1). Reith was especially concerned that the BBC should do all it could to discourage gambling. A lengthy written correspondence between Reith and the then Archbishop of York, William Temple, illustrates the extent to which the BBC deferred to the Church over the perceived gambling problem (WAC, R34/404/1). The first letter (dated 20 February 1931) is from Temple expressing 'regret' over the BBC's decision to permit broadcasts of lottery results organised by the *Daily Herald*, even though the lottery profits would go to hospitals. Temple was firmly of the opinion that gambling 'is probably the greatest source of social evil in the country'. In reply to Temple's letter (dated 24 February 1931), Reith concurred with much of what the Archbishop had said and added that he too abhorred gambling and thought it 'a greater curse than drink'. However, Reith did defend the BBC's decision to broadcast the lottery results on the grounds that money would be raised for charity. Reith finishes by asking the Archbishop to reply if he still has any objections to the BBC's association with the ballot, adding a pencilled note, 'I am sure you will realise how loath we should be to doing that of which you disapprove'. The Archbishop duly replied (dated 25 February 1931) stating that, though he did not think 'a total abstinence campaign, like the temperance campaign of the middle-nineteenth century, would be likely to produce much effect', he still objected to gambling on principle, viz. 'because it is the distribution of wealth on a basis of chance which seems to be an indefensible social principle'. Reith's subsequent reply (dated 26 February 1931) was both prompt and decisive: he informed Temple that, after showing the Archbishop's last letter to Lord

Gainford, Chair of the Board of Governors, 'we have issued instructions that the BBC is not to co-operate in any more ballots or other things in which the gambling element is introduced'.

Hereafter BBC policy was decidedly against gambling of any description. E. Rosslyn Mitchell, a member of the Anti-Gambling League claimed (*The Listener*, 10 February 1937) that, 'the priceless possessions of a clean body, a keen mind and a serene spirit, are deprecated by trusting to luck instead of to brain and industry'. Like Reith, Mitchell was a Scottish Puritan whose upbringing and temperament did not look favourably upon such frivolities as gambling. Furthermore, there was also something of the imperialist rationality to Mitchell's argument who thought that the 'excitable, feverish, neurotic instability of the gambler's mind' to be 'poor material for administering the affairs of a great Empire'. In short, gambling had a generally negative effect upon one's character, not least 'a deteriorating effect on the mind', and the breeding of a 'contempt for the earning of money by the slow process of hard work'. Mitchell could not 'imagine a gambler as an ideal citizen of an ideal State'. Indeed, he regarded the gambler 'as an obstacle to the realisation of the ideal State' and those who entice people to gamble 'as enemies of the ideal State'. For Mitchell and the like, gambling was profoundly irrational, and thus represented an abandonment of reason, the very quality from which social, political, economic and cultural progress proceeds. Like Victorian recreationalists, the assumption was that only rational recreation fosters the use and advancement of reason.

What this presupposition failed to realise, however, specifically in the case of gambling, is that betting was highly rational inasmuch people would invest significant amounts of time working on systems of probability, perusing relevant statistics and information, and rationalising their expenditure vis-à-vis their winnings, thus making it a quasi-intellectual activity that was not dissimilar to more respectable hobbies (see McKibbin, 1979: 165-8). Furthermore, like drinking, gambling also provided an occasion for socialising and cultural fellowship. This was especially so for the unemployed who, under conditions not of their own making, were forced to give up many of their previous leisure interests for lack of money. This in turn had the effect of many unemployed being marginalised from their own communities. The one social activity that did not diminish in popularity, however, was gambling (ibid.: 169-71). The



unemployed continued to gamble what little money they had in the hope that they might win. It provided a social focus and means of mental stimulation for what must have been an otherwise mundane and impoverished daily existence.

The BBC dedicated much time and effort to a short series of talks on betting and gambling, broadcast in January 1937 (WAC, R51/194). These were first suggested in an internal memorandum written by Melville Dinwiddie (dated 7 October 1936), then Scottish Regional Director of the BBC (WAC, R51/568). A devout Christian, Dinwiddie thought gambling to be 'one of the biggest problems of today', that is, an essentially 'moral and religious problem'. He proposed that the talks be held on a Sunday, 'a day when the biggest audience can hear it'. In a letter (dated November 1936) addressed to one of the proposed speakers, Mrs J. L. Stocks, it was stated that, 'It is not the intention of the Corporation to be entirely impartial in the matter, for while they want the gambler to be well represented, they hope that the intellectual and social analysis will not be without effect in discouraging gambling' (WAC, R51/194).

On the other hand, Dinwiddie was well aware that the BBC had to be seen to be impartial, if only so as not to alienate the gambling public. This viewpoint was expressed in a further internal memorandum (WAC, R51/194). Marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the Director of Religion, Dinwiddie was critical of the speakers initially suggested as 'too academic and one-sided for such a controversial subject, which affects so many people in every class and walk of life'. Though clearly a series of talks that emphasised 'the moral aspects of the [gambling] problem', he added, '... the whole good effect of this series would be neutralised if the gambling public felt that we were biased from the start'. He especially felt that the use of clergy as speakers was unwise since regular gamblers 'feel that parsons simply cannot know either the attraction or the thrill of this form of amusement'. In other words, what was needed was a pseudo-debate. Simple moralising would not work (hence the avoidance of parsons and the like). It would be more effective to appear to give the opportunity for debate but actually structure it so that only one side would come out on top. What we see then is a kind of moral pedagogy: debate is allowed but only if it comes up with the correct answer!

The first talk was given by John Hilton who related his personal experiences showing why men and women bet. Hilton had already given a series of broadcasts on gambling the previous year (see *The Listener*, 4, 11 and 18 March 1936), about the football pools in particular, from which he subsequently published a selection of comments from letters which, to quote Briggs (1965: 69), 'provide fascinating sociological evidence'. For the most part, Hilton's broadcasts focussed on 'the fortunes and misfortunes of Tom, Dick and Harry' (*The Listener*, 13 January 1937). This interest was borne out of Hilton's observation that the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Lotteries on Betting (1932-3) was obtained from predominantly official sources, who were 'nearly all ... representatives of something or other' (*The Listener*, 18 March 1936). Hilton realised that the written responses to his broadcasts were 'the only collection of such letters in existence'. Hence his opinion that, 'the thoughts set down should be taken into account in determining what ought to be done or ought not be done about betting in general'. Alongside the sociological surveys of Rowntree and Llewellyn-Smith, Hilton's broadcasts represented one of the first attempts to elicit a wider public opinion, one that did not necessarily conform to the moral viewpoint advocated by government officials and middle-class reformers.

Hilton was not prepared to criticise people for gambling outright. Rather, he adopted a more tactful approach, one that proffered sympathy and counsel in equal measure.<sup>64</sup> Before attempting to further 'suppress gambling' or 'to keep it subject to even those repressive laws at present in force', it was necessary to 'know what this love of gambling really is, what it springs from, and what it means'. Only then does Hilton propose that one seeks to ask: 'How can we alter things so as to satisfy the urge to bet in more beneficial ways. How can we turn this gambling spirit to account' (*The Listener*, 4 March 1936). His method of enquiry was more in keeping with the new sociological survey, whereby public opinion is ascertained, and then presented back to the public as a self-imperative, one which they feel obliged to act upon. In other words, the attempt

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<sup>64</sup> This was exemplified in one of Hilton's articles (*The Listener*, 18 March 1936) in which he states: 'I still believe in Tom, Dick and Harry. But I'll add a word to that. I discover now that I also believe in Jack and Jill, who, you remember, went up the hill to fetch a pail of water -out of the pool, you- but Jack fell down, lost half-a-crown, and Jill came tumbling after. Yes, I believe in Jack and Jill. I think it's a silly thing, mind you, to go up hill for water; but if they want to, who should stop them? I wouldn't stop them; but if I could give them a tip, on the quiet, where to find a real pool, of living water, and how to get a good supply of it in a bucket that hasn't got too many holes, and how not to slip as they carry it home ... why that's the stuff'.

to exact rules of prohibition is done so not as a judicial-discourse that seeks to dominate the social domain in question, but as a technology of the self (see Foucault, 1988). Hilton says as much when he suggests, in a précis of a broadcast on the lure of the football pool (*The Listener*, 11 March 1936), ‘What I think is likely to be bad is that too many people should pin their faith too much on good luck instead of on good management’. The rationality can be broadly understood as one that sought to instil a technology of the self within and among ‘Tom, Dick and Harry’. Hence the reason for many of his talks using a mode of address that sought to alert listeners to other recreational possibilities, as opposed to castigating them for gambling: ‘What bothers me is not so much the waste of money as the waste of time and opportunity. Think what these men and women might be doing for themselves, for others, what they might be making, learning, enjoying, in those coupon-filling hours’ (*The Listener*, 4 March 1936). Again, what we see here is the persistent idea that time and energy ought to be used constructively, whereas popular recreation was regarded literally as a ‘waste’ of time.

The next in the series of talks was given by Mrs J. L. Stocks (commonly known as Mary Stocks), a member of the recent Royal Commission on Betting and Gambling. She thought ‘the trouble about gambling is that so much of it goes on quietly - round the corner so to speak’ (*The Listener*, 20 January 1937), often resulting in a game of cat and mouse between street bookmakers, their agents, and the police. She was especially critical of the press for publishing betting news and thus helping the betting industry. The third talk was an opportunity for those who exploited the gambling propensity to state their case. George Picken, a bookmaker, argued that there was a genuine ‘widespread demand for betting facilities, and, so long as that demand exists, the bookmakers are perfectly justified in supplying it’ (*The Listener*, 3 February 1937). John Moores, a football pools promoter, argued that the reason for the growth of the football pools industry was because ‘millions of people find in it an ideal entertainment’. Indeed, ten million people regularly returned football pool coupons by the late 1930s, when the take up of wireless licences was just over nine million (see Briggs, 1965: 450). Moores even suggested that the football pools had ‘proved a real safety-valve during the very trying years through which we have been passing’. An anonymous tote-better argued that, whilst the tote had ‘started in England in a storm of

criticism', 'even its most vigorous opponents must now admit that it is satisfying the demand of a very large -and growing- section of the public'.

Despite limited evidence critics continued to claim that gambling was a corrupting influence and the cause of poverty and crime (see McKibbin, 1979: 157). Gambling was a national problem that required a national remedy. Hence the part played by the BBC. What is so interesting about the way in which the BBC framed and represented the problem of gambling is not so much the factual accuracy of the argument being made for or against gambling, but rather the way in which the gambling problem became increasingly visible in the public domain. Whereas public debate was previously restricted to government officials and the like, by the 1930s the gambling industry and punters were allowed to have their say. Their opinion is actively sought whenever and wherever possible. In so doing, attempts to regulate gambling activities were in a better position to 'see round the corner' that had for so long obstructed their attempts to temper the propensity to gamble. It was also recognised that simple prohibition would not work; reform had to come from the inside: those involved had to be persuaded to desist. This was done by a series of pseudo debates constructed so as not to appear biased but having a clear regulatory rationale overall.

### **The Problem of Unemployment as Enforced Leisure**

Of course, not all non-work can be defined as leisure in the sense that it is a voluntary expression of one's spare time. For many people during the early-twentieth century, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, 'leisure' was not a voluntary undertaking, but rather a consequence of mass, long-term unemployment caused by a global economic recession. In the context of the British labour market, from 1921 until the outbreak of war in 1939, the scale of unemployment was unprecedented, with never less than a million people out of work. The worst years for unemployment were during the early 1930s, with unemployment peaking at three million, approximately 22.1 per-cent of the insured workforce (see Bourke, 1994: 108-09; Jones, 1986: 109; Stevenson, 1984: 266-95). Having said that, some recent social and economic histories have challenged the widely held assumption that the 1920s and 1930s was beset by mass unemployment and industrial stagnation; and concentrate, instead, on the way in which there were regional disparities in economic development, between the affluent South and Midlands on the one hand, and the more depressed regions of South Wales, the North of England, and



Central Scotland (see Jones, 1986: 4-5). Notwithstanding these regional differences, the problem of unemployment was widely perceived to represent a significant threat to social order during the inter-war period, since those most affected were working class males. For these people, the advancements in disposable income, leisure and social facilities, and living standards, were of little relevance, in that they were forced to spend much of their time on the periphery of what were for most people everyday social activities. In other words, millions of workers in the 1920s and 1930s were the hapless casualties of 'enforced leisure'.

The importance of unemployment *qua* enforced leisure, specially in terms of the effect it was to have on governmental strategies to usefully occupy what was a staggering proportion of the adult labour force, cannot be overstated. Indeed, Hill (2002: 8) considers unemployment, 'as enforced leisure', to be 'one of the great uncharted territories of the social historian'. Moreover, the problematising of unemployment, and the ensuing question of how to regulate enforced leisure, featured in much inter-war broadcasting policy. Briggs (1965: 41-42) notes that, 'there were number of radio talks and programmes which genuinely sought to explain the plight of the unemployed', and that 'the BBC was far more anxious than many of its critics genuinely to probe the condition of England during the divided 1930s'. Scannell & Cardiff (1991: 57-71) dedicate a whole chapter to recapturing broadcasting's involvement with unemployment.<sup>65</sup> However, whereas Briggs sees broadcasting's attempts to explain the plight of the unemployed as the BBC fulfilling its public service remit, and Scannell & Cardiff as an occasion to correct the prevalent misconception of Reith and the BBC steering clear of political controversy (see Curran & Seaton, 1981: 135-158), I am more concerned with the way in which the BBC sought to police the problem of enforced leisure by co-operating with a number of other functionaries of the newly emerging welfare state. I want to argue that the BBC's efforts to make visible and remedy the condition of unemployment can be better understood as a broader object of an elaborate programme of government, whose rationality was to train and reform the unemployed as docile but efficient citizens so as to reincorporate them into whole of the populace.

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<sup>65</sup> The chapter is essentially a reworking of an earlier journal article published by Scannell (1980) entitled, 'Broadcasting and the Politics of Unemployment, 1930-1935'.

Before commenting further on the way in which broadcasting problematised and sought to remedy unemployment during the inter-war period, it is necessary to note some of the defining characteristics of the cultural politics of enforced leisure. As well as having an excess of spare time, many unemployed were excluded from social activities they had previously participated in. Consequently, many unemployed were socially displaced, spending their days staying in bed late, loitering on street corners, participating in the black economy, queuing at labour exchanges, or just idly passing time. Such images were especially common in the thirties, otherwise known as the 'devil's decade', a reference to the puritanical belief that 'the devil makes work for idle hands'. Many unemployed also took to gambling what little money they had out of desperation and boredom, or spending it on luxuries such as fish and chips, tinned salmon, chocolate, and the cinema<sup>66</sup> (see Jones, 1986: 118). In short, the leisure of the unemployed was quite a different problem from those in work.

Leisure is yet again identified as one of the main loci for governmental intervention,<sup>67</sup> with an extraordinary intensification of political programmes aimed at increasing the provision of recreational facilities specifically for unemployed workers.<sup>68</sup> In terms of early-twentieth century welfarism, both the labour movement and liberal intelligentsia began to rethink political rationalities that valorised the 'right to work' and focused instead upon 'the right to life and leisure' (see Jones, 1986: 128-31). This change in

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<sup>66</sup> This conspicuous consumption of cheap luxuries was problematic insofar as it was antithetical to the civilising mission of rational recreation with its emphasis on quality and standards.

<sup>67</sup> Just to reiterate what I have already said in the above, my use of the word 'governmental' ought not be equated with the 'government of the state'. Indeed, some historians have noted how the State was reluctant to intervene. For example, Stevenson (1977: 55) notes that one of the defining characteristics of central government during this period was that it 'made no serious attempt to investigate the social consequences of unemployment'. Similarly, Hayburn (1971: 157) notes that 'successive governments did little more for the unemployed than pay what was due to them in unemployment benefits and allowances'. Even then, financial aid was minimal and of secondary importance to the State's wider concern for economy, as demonstrated by the introduction of the 'Means Test' and a ten per-cent cut in unemployment benefit in September 1931. Whilst there is no doubt an element of truth in the above observations, this does not in any way undermine my own claim that there is an intensification of governmental programmes and practices in relation to unemployment. Indeed, the main thrust to assist the unemployed was provided by a multiplicity of quasi-public bodies and voluntary agencies. Also, what these histories overlook is the way in which the unemployment crisis prompted the state to rethink its responsibility for providing welfare vis-à-vis practices of citizenship.

<sup>68</sup> For example: the Sheffield Social Survey Committee thought that, of the many schemes for the unemployed in Sheffield, 'the prevention of personal deterioration by providing for the social and educational welfare of unemployed workers' was a priority (Owen, 1932: 36). By far the most popular recreational activity in Sheffield was the Sheffield Allotments for the Unemployed Scheme, a scheme whereby the city council provided unemployed men with plots of land 'for the purposes of cultivation' (ibid.: 53-6). Almost every region had an allotment society that was linked to a local occupational centre group.

political rationality was no doubt borne out of the way in which unemployment *qua* enforced leisure undermined the conventional work ethic. The previous discipline of the wage and labour relation no longer ensured the regulation of conduct because the regularity of employment was no longer the norm. The regulative ideal of full-time, lifelong employment that had hitherto functioned as a dividing practice between employment and unemployment was no longer purposeful in the sense that many unemployed were not unemployed of their own choosing. Thus, whilst the unemployed were still singled out for special treatment and objectified as 'other', they were no longer stigmatised by the state as isolated deviants, paupers, or delinquents, existing outside of society, as was the case during the Victorian period. Instead, the moral and social effects of unemployed are identified as the problem and in need of remedying.

Unemployment is thus conceptualised as a phenomenon to be governed both at the socio-economic level and at the level of the individual who is unemployed through acting on the conduct of both the employed and unemployed (see Rose, 1999: 156-62). This construction of unemployment as a social problem was a characteristic of the newly emerging governmental rationality of welfare statism which, unlike laissez-faire liberalism, was based upon practices of citizenship and social inclusivity aimed at regulating both private and public conduct. This social contract between the state, the public, and the private individual, can be better understood as a complex *quid pro quo* whereby, in return for certain political, social and economic rights or entitlements, the state expected both the employed and unemployed to fulfil obligations of responsibility and civic duty by conducting themselves in a certain manner (see Dean 1999: 160-1; Rose 1999: 253-5). In the case of the unemployed in the inter-war period, unemployment welfare was constituted by a social and moral contract whereby the state and other unemployment regulatory agencies (e.g., the National Council of Social Service, the Carnegie Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, the British Institute of Adult Education, the Workers Educational Association and, indeed, the BBC) provided benefits and voluntary relief on the understanding that the unemployed occupy their spare time usefully, that is by partaking in rational recreations and other politico-cultural programmes whose rationality was to regulate the unemployed's conduct. The employed, for their part, were actively encouraged to embody the idea of public service, a political rationality whose origins can be traced back to Victorian middle-class paternalism (see Williams, 1984: 312-17).



Of the various quasi-public bodies involved in the effort to remedy the unemployment problem, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) was invited to act as the central co-ordinator for voluntary provision. The main aims and objectives of the NCSS, and nearly all the aforementioned voluntary organisations, was to provide occupation, recreation, and education. By 1933 there were 729 occupation centres, 636 recreation centres and 157 centres providing educational facilities under the auspices of the NCSS, thus signifying the beginnings of what has collectively been described as the voluntary occupational centre movement (see Hayburn, 1971).<sup>69</sup> The success of the voluntary occupational movement varied across geographical regions: much depended on the goodwill of the local authorities, the community, and the response of the unemployed themselves.<sup>70</sup> The most popular clubs were the ones that permitted the unemployed to actively participate in the day-to-day running of the centre and its development. Clubs requiring members to contribute towards the upkeep of the club's building and facilities provided its members with work of a kind, thus preventing its members feeling that they were getting 'something for nothing' (ibid.: 161). One of the reasons why the voluntary occupational centre movement was not as successful as it might have been was precisely because the unemployed did not want to be seen to be depending on charity. This was especially so among young males, who saw the centres as an affront on their respectability.

Other unemployment schemes were overtly disciplinarian. Probably the most infamous were the Transfer Instructional Centres, otherwise known as 'labour camps', set up by the Ministry of Labour in 1928 (see Colledge & Field, 1983). The camps were extremely unpopular among the unemployed, not least because attendance was compulsory up until 1932. Refusal to attend could result in withdrawal of

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<sup>69</sup> Not all unemployment clubs co-operated with the NCSS. By 1938 there were a significant number of TUC inspired Unemployment Associations catering for about 400,000 unemployed workers. Similarly, the communist inspired National Unemployed Workers Movement also provided clubs and facilities for the unemployed in reaction to what it saw as, to quote Jones (1986: 126), 'charity mongering'.

<sup>70</sup> In Sheffield, clubs were established as early as 1922 following requests from the unemployed and the volunteering of vestry halls at Meersbrook, Crookesmoor, Burngreave and Attercliffe (Owen, 1932: 54). A committee was appointed for each hall, and it agreed that the cleaning was to be done by the men themselves. The use of the halls was conditional: no gambling and no political speeches to be permitted in the halls during their use by the unemployed. Interestingly, it was this ruling that proved unworkable, resulting in the closure of all four halls shortly after they opened in 1922. Only three of them were subsequently reopened following the agreement of new regulations (the men at Meersbrook Centre refused to bide by the new regulations and so the centre was not reopened). Even then, the new arrangement was unsuccessful and resulted in the closure of the centres once again the following year.



unemployment benefit. Insofar as the camps were designed to absorb large numbers of the long-term unemployed, especially those from the most distressed areas, the rationale was a re-articulation of the 'labour colony' idea espoused by social reformers in the late nineteenth century. Even the early Independent Labour Party leadership supported the camps as an effective means of removing surplus labour from the market. The camp's core rationale, however, was less to do with economics than it was to do with disciplining the long-term unemployed. Many of the camps enforced a policy whereby long-term unemployed men (and in some cases, women) were subjected to a three month period of physical and moral 'reconditioning', the basis of which comprised of regular, hard manual labour (much of the work was for the Forestry Commission). After deductions from their unemployment benefits, the men were allowed 4s. (later reduced to 3s. in 1932) weekly 'pocket money'. This inculcating of the work ethic was combined with a military-like obsession with discipline and routine: reports of campers having to be up early in the morning, line up for roll calls, salute the union jack in the morning and evening, and so on, were not uncommon. Indeed, many of the camp officers were ex-military personnel.<sup>71</sup>

This brief outline of some of the key aspects of the governmental programmes and technologies that sought to act upon the conduct of the unemployed, gives an idea of the characteristic ways in which enforced leisure was problematised and, conversely, how unemployment called into question the way in which leisure, since the emergence of Victorian rational recreation, had hitherto functioned as a means of social governance. Moreover, in order to appreciate how and why the BBC framed unemployment we have to understand the dimensions of the problem and official responses to it, since it is in relation to them that the BBC had to 'position' itself. It is with this in mind that I would now like to consider more properly broadcasting's involvement in unemployment, particularly its attempts to police enforced leisure.

### **The BBC, Unemployment, and Leisure**

It was recognised early on that the BBC had a vital role to play in remedying the problem of enforced leisure. As with other major issues of the time, the BBC had to decide on its role, in relation to both the effort to discipline the leisure of the

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<sup>71</sup> It is also interesting to note that many of the camps were subsequently used by the Armed Forces during the Second World War, some as Prisoner of War camps.

unemployed and a more general understanding of the causes, effects and remedies of the unemployment problem. The BBC acknowledged the magnitude of the problem and the need for a co-ordinated strategic programme of action. In one internal memorandum (dated 13<sup>th</sup> October 1931), Hilda Matheson, then Director Of Adult Education Talks, went as far as to assert that unemployment represented a 'national crisis' and required 'a service which the BBC and the BBC alone can render' (WAC R14/84/1). The BBC could not simply ignore the problem because as the conscience of the nation it had to confront national crises, especially those which posed moral questions.

The Corporation's earliest involvement with unemployment was concerning the provision of wireless sets to occupational centres. The wireless scheme was first suggested by Philip Noel Baker, M.P. In a letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> January 1929, he suggested that a good deal could be done to relieve the distressed areas in South Wales and North East coast if wireless sets were provided (WAC R14/145/1). Hereafter, the matter of the wireless relief scheme in distressed areas became the subject of much debate in the BBC's internal policy making (see WAC R14/120/1, 2, 3 & 4). The issue was further touched upon in an editorial for *The Listener* (27 March 1929) which recognised that 'one of the ways in which provision of [recreational] amenities can be most easily made for large populations accustomed to social gatherings and group association is by means of wireless'. Moreover, and as pointed out in an internal BBC memorandum (WAC R14/84/1), group listening was a means of rendering the unemployment more knowable, that is to say, 'for the unemployed to be collected and their needs to be easily discovered'.

Just a month or two later, the NCSS took part in the scheme and secured funds for the purchase of sets with the assistance of the Radio Manufacturer's Association. Money was also provided by the Carnegie Trust to help purchase radio sets for unemployed listening groups in Lanarkshire, Yorkshire, the West Midlands and Kent (Pegg, 1983: 166). Like the adult education broadcasts, discussed in chapter four, it was hoped that loaned sets in distressed areas would produce structured listening groups. The loan of sets was made conditional upon unemployment clubs and occupational centres fulfilling certain conditions, one of which was that 'a responsible person undertakes the organisation of group listening and a selective use of broadcast programmes for the purpose of discussion ...' (WAC R14/120/1).

In spite of this regulatory proviso, there is much evidence to suggest that loaned sets were not always used as the BBC would have liked them to be. Judging by the various Executive Committee papers for the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education between Winter 1929 and Spring 1931 (WAC, R120/120/1 & 2) it would seem that much attention was particularly given to supervising the use of wireless sets in the North East. Indeed, the issue of effecting control was so problematic in Northumberland and Durham, the BBC decided to transfer the six sets installed in these regions to the South Wales area, where it was understood 'good use' was being made of loaned wireless sets.

There was a further problem of getting the unemployed to attend listening groups. A memo from the Secretary of the Yorkshire Area Council to the Secretary for the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education, dated 22 March 1932 (WAC, R14/84/2), states that 'after nearly two year's experience in running Discussion Groups at Unemployment Centres, it is now possible to say fairly dogmatically that ... unemployed men will not as a rule attend a centre at which 'listening' is the only activity'. Attendances at centres holding regular meetings for discussion groups clearly indicate their unpopularity among the unemployed.<sup>72</sup> They preferred those recreational centres which, to quote the Secretary of the Yorkshire Area Council, 'tend to become resorts for the 'bone' idle who want somewhere to sit, and to have things done for them'.<sup>73</sup>

The BBC not only intervened itself, but reported the nature and success of other interventions, such as the aforementioned labour camps. For example, in one of the *Time to Spare!* broadcasts, Anthony Diver, an unemployed man from Liverpool and living at a Government Instructional Centre, paid tribute to the camps (*The Listener*, 13 June 1934). He reassured the listening public that he too had been suspicious of the

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<sup>72</sup> For example: there were four centres in Leeds and an average attendance of thirty; in Bradford, there was just one participating centre, with an average attendance of fifteen-to-twenty; in Sheffield there was also just the one participating centre, with a reported average attendance of fifteen; in Doncaster the average attendance was as low as seven (WAC, R14/84/2).

<sup>73</sup> A further problem for the BBC was the hostility felt by the unemployed and the labour movement towards the NCSS and its involvement in the wireless scheme. This was stated in an internal memo from Felix Greene, dated 10 October 1934, in which Greene suggested that the Trades Union Council (TUC) be asked to form an ad hoc committee with the NCSS for the ostensible purpose of administering a proposed wireless fund, but, and moreover, in the hope that co-operation between the two organisations would 'do something to overcome the prejudice against the National Council' (WAC R48/29).



labour camps and had believed them to be an army recruitment scheme preparing for the next war, and generally exploitative of the unemployed. He then went on to dispel what he considered to be unfounded myths surrounding the labour camps. For example, he tells a story about men feigning hunger to new arrivals 'for a joke'. This, he suggests, is nothing but 'a wind up'. Indeed, he tells how 'the grub is fine, and plenty of it'; and how he has 'never been better than I am at the moment - I've put on 1½ stone'. He also reassures the public that 'the work's not really hard'. Elsewhere, he says how he had expected army discipline, but found there to be none. Indeed, the interviewee speaks highly of the centre manager, Mr S. A. Kettley, and how he would rather offer trainees a cigarette than discipline them. He also tells of how he arrived at camp in boots that 'were falling apart', and a coat that 'was torn and in a very bad condition', only to be given some new corduroy trousers, a new pair of boots, and even a suit to go to London in. All in all, Diver's portrayal of camp life is one of fulfilment, enjoyment, comradeship, and security. 'A Centre like this restores some faith in human kindness. We don't feel set apart no longer'. He concludes his talk by saying how he and the majority of the trainees 'hate to think of going back [home]', where there are 'only streets and slums'.

As a complement to Diver's talk, Kettley, the centre manager, was also invited to proffer his own thoughts and opinions on the unemployment camps (*The Listener*, 13 June 1934). He begins by empathising with the unemployed and how he 'has learned a great deal of their difficulties'. He enthuses about the purpose of the camps and considers their main aim to 're-condition a man so as to enable him to take his place in industry'. Like Diver, he is dismissive of the suspicion that the camps have 'an ulterior motive'. Indeed, he attributes the suspicion as being misplaced, an effect of 'months of drifting', resulting in a general suspicion 'against human nature, and against a society which gives them little chance'. Kettley says little about the camp's work ethic, and instead emphasises the recreational aspects of the camps, not least the friendships that form between the trainees and the locals in the village. Finally, he concludes by romanticising the ruralness of the camps in contrast to the 'city streets, and unlovely mining villages' from which many of the trainees came.

Similarly, S. P. B. Mais was full of praise for the so-called 'Grith Fyrd' camps in one of his S.O.S broadcasts (*The Listener*, 5 April 1933), idealising the camps as 'a sort of



Robison Crusoe life', 'a really good adventure'.<sup>74</sup> Established in 1932, and run by Toynbee Hall, the aim of the camps was, to quote G. W. Keeling (1934: 8), then organising secretary of the camps, 'an experiment in the constructive and purposeful use of leisure'. All the camps were located in rural areas, away from large industrial centres, in order 'to co-operate with both governmental and voluntary schemes for land settlement and for the revival of rural life generally'. Clearly, over-population still represented a significant urban fear for the power elites; and the solution envisaged by Keeling and the like was to establish 'labour colonies'.

What is interesting about the above commentaries is the way in which the BBC consistently portrayed the camps in a wholly positive light. On no occasion did the BBC allow negative views to be broadcast, even though these were readily available (cf. Colledge & Field, 1983).<sup>75</sup> Given the ban on controversy was no longer in force, one can reasonably surmise that the BBC was representing a point of view that was politically expedient inasmuch as the camps were useful means of managing the unemployed population. The extent to which the camps were an experimental governmental technology was clearly expressed by Keeling (1934: 9): 'The movement represents a case, common in English life, of a voluntary organisation co-operating with Government departments in trying out a new line of advance'. He might as well have been describing the role of the BBC, in the sense that the camps were indicative of the wider governmental rationality to 'advance' a civilising mission within and among the

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<sup>74</sup> The title of the organisation derives from two Old English words, apparently, 'signifying the working out of a policy of constructive peace'.

<sup>75</sup> For example, William Heard went through two labour camps in the 1930s (Colledge & Field, 1983). Like Divers, Heard also remembers being given 'a pair of heavy nailed boots, pair of corduroy trousers, and some kind of shirt'. However, unlike Divers, Heard thought that this had the effect of transforming trainees into 'convicts' in the sense that 'people knew who you were', 'because you were all dressed the same'. Heard also recalled meals times being more like 'Tom Brown's Schooldays': poor quality food and measly portions. He tells how men [sic] would climb fir trees 'to gnaw the globules of resin off the trunk', and 'pick the wild mushrooms and eat them raw', because 'they were that hungry'. Indeed, the few known instances of men protesting (many records of protests were destroyed) were over food (ibid.: 159-60). Heard also tells of the endless fighting between the men and how men were generally aggressive towards one another. He even recalls 'one young boy' committing suicide after being there 'only five or six weeks'. Other evidence suggests that recreational physical activities were provided only after problems with boredom and restlessness. Nor was there any real educational or vocational training for the unemployed; the promise of finding work for the trainees was more or less dropped as one of the camps' objectives. Indeed, admittance to the camps was gradually relaxed so that men of all descriptions were admitted. The Ministry for Labour had decided that 'reconditioning human material' was a valuable social corrective and worthy end in itself (ibid.: 161). Finally, and again, contrary to the impression given in the BBC broadcasts, many trainees also experienced hostility from both locals and future employers as a result of them being stigmatised. The campers were, to quote Colledge (ibid.: 162), treated as 'outcasts among outcasts'.

unemployed by training and reforming them in the arts of self-management and civic culture. For the BBC, the best way of effecting this cultural objective was to speak to both the unemployed and the wider populace directly on the problem of unemployment, and construct the problem as one that concerned the well-being of the entire nation.

### **The BBC and the Unemployment Problem**

BBC management identified its talks on unemployment as falling roughly into three categories: first, there were general discussions of the problem by prominent figures like William Beveridge; second, there were so called 'compassionate talks' on the suffering of the unemployed; finally, there were talks specifically addressed to the unemployed (WAC R51/605/5). Of these, the BBC gave priority to the latter two categories.

The most significant of the compassionate talks on unemployment were *S.O.S* and *Time to Spare!*.<sup>76</sup> *S.O.S* was a series of weekly talks 'describing the voluntary schemes for the alleviation of distress and appealing for help' (WAC R51/605/5). The broadcaster for the series was S. P. B. Mais, a public schoolmaster and writer of travel books. The series was introduced by The Prince of Wales, who appealed to the public to think of mass unemployment as 'a national emergency', and not as 'a section of the community by themselves' (*The Listener*, 11 January 1933). He appealed 'for individual service' to assist government and voluntary efforts to control the effects of unemployment, viz. 'how empty hours may be turned to good account'. However, the Prince did not have 'patronage or benevolence' in mind; nor did he simply want the public to simply give money. Instead, he urged the public to respond in terms of practical measures; measures that would forge contacts between different social classes, and would, therefore, 'have more than a passing value'.

The first of Mais' *S.O.S.* broadcasts was even more emphatic and is worth quoting at length:

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<sup>76</sup> Whilst there is no doubt some truth to Scannell & Cardiff's (1991: 58) argument that such talks were 'appeals to the conscience of the nation, a cry for voluntary effort to mitigate the worst consequences of these social evils', I am more interested in the way in which compassionate talks on unemployment united the nation around a common objective in which each and every individual had a shared responsibility to do their bit. This realisation was articulated by George Davies who was all too aware that the burden of mass unemployment 'may be cast off in anger and resentment from below, or it may be lifted by the growing conscience of those who care and who will share the load' (*The Listener*, 5 December 1934). In other words, the effort to maximise the efficacy of unemployment talks and the voluntary effort required the assistance of the wider listening public.

Here is an S.O.S. message, probably the most urgent you will ever hear and it vitally concerns you. You are called upon to create an entirely new social order. The bottom has apparently fallen out of the old world in which everything was subordinated to the day's work. We are now faced with a world in which one of the major problems is how best to occupy the day's enforced leisure. Some millions of our neighbours, without any preparation for it, have now got this leisure enforced upon them and, not unnaturally, are unable to cope with it ... they are in danger of regarding themselves as a class apart ... The problem resolves itself into that of devising methods by which these neighbours of ours are to be provided with facilities to occupy their minds and bodies ... the street corner is not the place where a fit and skilled workman wishes to spend the whole of his waking hours ... I hope I have made you realise that there is plenty of work for you to do and that you must do it if you care about your fellow-men. What, therefore, can you do at once? Make yourself known to the manager of your local Labour Exchange, or, if you live in a village, to the schoolmaster or parson. With their help collect a small group of the unemployed who show any interest; find a hut for them to work in or on, and remember that, once it is started, the men must run it entirely by themselves ...

(*The Listener*, 25 January 1933)

Mais concludes his talk by calling for 'the establishment of a regular staff college where experts and beginners can come together to discuss individual difficulties', 'a clearing house of ideas ... where we can all learn how best to turn our leisure to advantage whether we are employed or not'.<sup>77</sup>

Scannell & Cardiff (1991: 60) note that the construction of the talk's discourse, its mode of address, and its positioning of the listening public as middle-class like itself, objectified the unemployed as 'other'. The unemployed were effectively excluded from the suggested remedy. Indeed, this is true of the whole series. In another broadcast on 'How the Unemployed Can Grow their Own Food' (*The Listener*, 15 February 1933), Mais opines that 'the whole success of all schemes connected with the unemployed turns solely on the vigour and personality of the man who is trying to get in touch with them'. In terms of how the unemployed ought to spend their enforced leisure, Mais thinks there is 'a strong contrast' between a group of unemployed men who occupy their time usefully by, say, building their own club-house, acting in a pantomime, or cultivating an allotment, and a group of men who spend the day playing cards, dominoes, and indulging in other idle recreation. The former group of unemployed men are portrayed as being independent, alert, proud, cheerful, and contented, whilst the

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<sup>77</sup> This vision was eventually realised with the aid of the NCSS who organised three training colleges in country mansions, with the primary objective of training unemployed men as club leaders (see Mowatt, 1964: 488-90).



latter are represented as being unfriendly, affected, and lacking self-discipline. Similarly, in a broadcast on 'Clubs for the Unemployed' (*The Listener*, 2 August 1933), Mais argues that to supply the unemployed 'with the facilities to play draughts, dominoes or darts provides no solution to the problem ... and is more calculated to drive him to an asylum than to help him', again betraying the BBC's dislike for irrational uses of leisure. The unemployed require both assistance and moral leadership.<sup>78</sup> In yet another broadcast, Mais tells how when at one club he visited he 'saw a group of lads who made my blood run cold' as they 'sat over a fire singing aimlessly as someone strummed on the piano', when they could have been outdoors cultivating the land for an allotment.

What we are seeing here is governmentality on two levels: the middle classes are urged to be charitable and volunteer their leisure time for public service; whilst the unemployed are encouraged to participate in rational recreation, and in so doing, made to defer to middle-class values, not least those that pertain to cultured citizenship. This mobilisation of communities of individuals was central to the governmental rationality inherent to the political programme for unemployment, which not only sought to regulate the conduct of the unemployed, but also the conduct of the populace at large. The enormity of this was commented upon in *The Times* (7 January 1933), who noted that the 'social service for the unemployed aims at achieving something beyond the power of the State – a bond between man and man; a tie of human sympathy; the relation of a fellowship'. In other words, the problem of enforced leisure presented an opportunity to intensify political programmes and technologies of governance aimed at promoting social citizenship throughout the whole populace.

However, it was becoming apparent that, in order for unemployment talks to be effective in their aim of regulating the unemployed, it was necessary for agencies like the BBC to know more precisely what the unemployed actually wanted. For example,

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<sup>78</sup> S.O.S. was thought by many on the Left to be a ruling-class conspiracy (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 59). One of the strongest protests along these lines was from the National Unemployed Workers Movement in January 1933. Shortly after the Prince of Wales' broadcast, the movement sent a deputation of four representatives, headed by Wal Hallington, to speak to Charles Siepmann, then Director of Talks, and request that the movement be allowed to broadcast its point of view on behalf of the unemployed. The movement particularly objected to the way in which the broadcasts had undermined trade unionism by only advocating social services schemes. The request was refused, however, prompting the deputation to claim that 'the Corporation was an instrument in the hands of the National Government, which is attacking the unemployed' (*The Daily Worker*, 28 Jan 1933).



in response to Mais' 'Clubs for the Unemployed' broadcast, an editorial for *The Listener* (2 August 1933) recognised that there was still insufficient material to be sure of the needs of the unemployed. Though still couched in terms of needs and not wants, there was a genuine desire to elicit the opinion of the unemployed as 'an indispensable preliminary to the discovery of the new policy we require for the reconstruction of the future lives of the sufferers from unemployment'. Arguably the need was not so much that of the unemployed as it was the need to increase the efficacy of governmental technologies and their programmes of reform.

It was in response to this need that the BBC decided to gather and publish a series of first-hand statements by the unemployed themselves. These *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, though never actually broadcast, were first published in *The Listener* during the Summer of 1933, and republished a year later as a one volume book, introduced and edited by H. L. Beale and R. S. Lambert (1934). The twenty-five participants were instructed to describe, among other things, the effect of unemployment on the health and appearance of themselves and their families, their struggle against misfortune, their debts and to whom, their interest in politics and public affairs, and their attitude towards the future. The core rationality was to ascertain qualitative facts about 'what unemployment means, not in terms of economic loss, but in terms of human experience' (ibid.: 8). The survey was thus declared a 'study of the psycho-pathology of human communities affected by profound disturbances of the basis of their economic life'. There was little if any concern for the causes of unemployment. Rather the rationale behind the survey was borne out of a growing anxiety about how unemployment affected, not only individuals but, and more importantly, whole nations and their civilisation: 'We are witnessing nations suffering like individuals from hysteria and dementia, and the worst of it is that we suspect that these disorders ... may be contagious and may even now be secretly undermining constitutions as strong as our own' (ibid.: 8). One of the appendices is a study of 'the psychology of the unemployed from a medical point of view' by Morris Robb (ibid.: 271-87), who suggests that one of the primary effects of unemployment is mental illness. This decline in mental stability was thought to result in 'destructive changes', viz. it 'undermines the character of the affected individual, destroys the socialising influences of training, and alters his attitude to life' (ibid.: 274). Moreover, Robb was of the opinion that the degenerative effects of unemployment were disease-like. On more than one occasion he uses a variety of



medical discourses to describe the dangers of unemployment: 'as infectious as influenza' or as an 'epidemic' that 'can assume the same proportions of mass neuroses', causing 'whole communities acting under the sway of persecutory and megalomaniac phantasies'.<sup>79</sup> This discourse of physiological degeneracy was wholly compatible with unemployment as a moral problem.

Other effects noted by Beales & Lambert (1934: 9) betray a deeper anxiety that has some bearing upon what I have already discussed in chapter one vis-à-vis the crisis of liberalism, viz. that the harsh economic conditions of the early-twentieth century represented a significant threat to the liberal traditions of the nineteenth century: 'loss of interest in local and national party politics', 'decline in trade unionism', and the 'growth of disillusionment with philanthropic and educational endeavour'. Many of the unemployed gave testimony to the attractions of crime. Again, the effects of unemployment represented yet another threat to the moral and intellectual leadership exercised over the populace.

The authors conclude by remarking on what they consider to be the 'political substance of these memoirs', viz. that the state, by having intervened in the problem of enforced leisure, 'has become a means of satisfying [the unemployed's] claims upon society', and, conversely, society's claims 'to the validity of our civilisation':

Thus, more than in earlier ages, we are all members one of another. If hunger does not make rebels, it makes what is worse – criminals or listless unbelievers in the validity of our civilisation. These unemployed men and women are decent people. We are losing their help in building up our common life. They, like ourselves, have it in them to add their quota to the common stock.

(1934: 48-9)

In other words, though the unemployed are the reason for and primary objects of state intervention and other governmental programmes of regulation, the responsibility is laid at the feet of society as a whole, thus transforming the problem of enforced leisure into a political programme aimed at regulating the entirety of society's individual and

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<sup>79</sup> This fear that the intellectual and moral effects of unemployment was somehow 'contagious' was contemporaneous with surveys investigating the effects of unemployment on the national health. George Newman, then Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, had researched this topic extensively, and was of the opinion that whilst 'any harmful physical effect induced by unemployment will primarily concern the unemployed individual and his dependants ... unemployment may be so prevalent that it may also affect employed workers and the population generally. Its influence is pervading and ubiquitous' (cited in Beales *et al.*, 1934: 22).

collective use of leisure. Occupying the population's use of leisure in this way was also a way of inoculating the employed against the spreading of the unemployment epidemic. Hence, whilst the unemployed are constructed as inclusive 'members' of our common life and stock, they are constructed from the outside and from afar: they are an 'us' yet always 'them'.

Of the actual contributions made by the unemployed themselves, the more interesting comments were in some way concerned with the use of leisure. For example: whilst some of the unemployed writers were full of praise for the occupational centres and other voluntary recreations for the unemployed, there were those who were less enthusiastic about the various initiatives to usefully occupy the unemployed's spare time. One such person, an unemployed engineer's turner, lamented 'the erosion of life's little pleasures':

... a factor which seems to have been overlooked by those who so freely carp at the unemployed man's use of enforced leisure is that the increased intensity of modern routine occupations has necessitated the indulgence in some form of relaxation, such as a visit to the theatre, cinema, concert, or sports ground. In some cases this desire is satisfied by 'half a pint'. When the workman becomes unemployed, he is normally deprived of these things ... The habits of years are, however, not so easily thrown off, and the continued abstinence from small pleasures begins to be felt. This erosion of life's little pleasures includes the abandonment of hobbies ... Mending boots or digging allotments is by no means a substitute for those normal satisfactions of interests and hobbies which are the necessary antidote to the debilitating effect of modern industrial life.

(Cited in Beales & Lambert, 1934: 244-5)

The relative success of *S.O.S.* and *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, and the continuing effort to minimise the distance between broadcaster and listener, prompted another innovatory series of talks. Broadcast in April 1934, *Time to Spare* was a twelve-part series of documentaries on unemployment and, moreover, the first experiment in inviting ordinary members of the public to speak about their own everyday experiences, in this case, the effects of unemployment. Each talk was supplemented with a brief talk by a professional actively engaged in practical work for the unemployed. The object of the talks was 'to arouse the personal conscience [of the listening public] and to stimulate a desire to help supplementary [sic] to the activities of the government' (WAC



R51/605/5).<sup>80</sup> Brief talks by professionals aimed to ensure that public sympathy was made effective in a practical way (*The Listener*, 2 May 1934). According to a memo, dated 26 June 1934, the response from the listening public was extraordinary (R51/605/1).<sup>81</sup> The series producer, Felix Greene, spent some time touring the country meeting the unemployed in their homes and communities in an effort to better understand the facts of unemployment: 'People in safe jobs do not know what it's like to suffer unemployment. Some of them don't want to know. Let us have the chance to *make* them know - and something might be done' (*The Radio Times*, 25 May 1934). After meeting hundreds of unemployed, he selected and invited a handful to Broadcasting House so that they could speak to the Nation. Eventually, just eleven unemployed spoke, each for fifteen minutes.<sup>82</sup>

The series was introduced by S. P. B. Mais (*The Listener*, 11 April 1934), the same person who had hosted *S.O.S.* He continued to portray the unemployed as hopelessly lost, with 'neither the spirit nor initiative' to 'occupy their spare time profitably'. The solution was thus yet another appeal to the working listening public to use their own spare time to stimulate and occupy the unemployed: 'We have, quite simply, to *dedicate* our leisure to the unemployed'. Listeners were thus instructed to search about in their village or town 'for some unemployed family who need our friendliness' and cultivate their leisure interests. Listeners were again reminded not to offer 'charity or patronage'. To do so would undermine the efforts to get the unemployed back on their own feet and independent. Thus whatever services or goods were rendered were to be paid for, that is 'up to limit of their capacity to pay', 'otherwise they won't value it at all'.

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<sup>80</sup> Talk programmes such as *Time to Spare!* also exposed the urgency of the problems being discussed, and in so doing highlighted the inadequacy of state provision. Indeed, *Time to Spare!* caused such a furore in parliament and the public domain generally, Reith was summoned to Downing Street and instructed by MacDonald, then Prime Minister, to stop the talks. Though MacDonald backed down, the BBC did offer an olive branch in the form of a concluding talk which attempted to address some of the Government's grievances.

<sup>81</sup> More than 4,400 letters were received from listeners offering various forms of assistance: of these thirty per-cent requested that they put in touch with a distressed family; a further twenty-three per-cent offered clothing; and a number of others offered sums of money - a sum of about £1,522 was subscribed - holidays, and personal help in occupational centres, etc (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 389; *The Listener*, 11 April 1934: 620).

<sup>82</sup> It is interesting to note that Greene was clearly anxious to avoid a repeat of the controversy caused by the banned broadcast of William Ferrie, thus posing the rhetorical question: 'Censorship? The BBC has deleted or alerted nothing that the speakers wished to say' (*The Radio Times*, 25 May 1934).

Listeners were also urged to join the local occupational club, so they would be not just 'for the unemployed only, but for all men's leisure'.<sup>83</sup> Once members they were asked to make certain 'that the occupational club is occupational', 'and not just a place to rest in and play games'. Yet again we are told that what an unemployed person really wants is work; playing games, on the other hand, will only make an unemployed person fit for 'an asylum'. The association of irrational recreation with mental instability vis-à-vis long-term unemployment is a recurring theme in many inter-war broadcasts, official publications and reports. The idea that unemployment would produce mental disorder in the nation was a powerful testimony and not a simple one of social or political control.

In terms of what was said by the unemployed themselves, one of the more interesting broadcasts was that of John Evans, an out-of-work miner from the Rhondda Valley. Though Scannell & Cardiff suggest that the idiom of Evan's speech may have been partly scripted, making it difficult to ascertain to what extent he was speaking in his own voice (1991: 143-44), the content is clearly dissenting. The unemployed miner articulates his despair and annoyance at those who would have the unemployed utilising their spare time 'by reading and so on':

... don't for a moment look on the unemployed as a heaven-sent opportunity for ramming education down the throat of many who may not want it. There are other things which they may need more desperately. I know how difficult it is to be keen on one's education when one's mind is constantly worried and preoccupied by the facts of food and mere existence.

*(The Listener, 25 April 1934)*

Like the remarks quoted elsewhere, what the above articulates is the antagonism between attempts to reform the lot of the unemployed and the unwillingness of the unemployed to willingly accept and participate in such reforms. This bottom-up refusal of the patronage bestowed upon the unemployed implies that the more top-down technologies of governance were not as successful as it was hoped they might have been. It is perhaps for this reason that the BBC sought to further solicit confessions from the unemployed in an attempt to increase the popularity of unemployed talks. In a BBC document, dated October 1934, unemployment clubs and occupational centres

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<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Lord Bledisloe, then President of the NCSS, thought occupational centres ought to be regarded 'as permanent institutions designed to meet both the special needs of people when they are unemployed and the permanent need of men and women for satisfying occupations during their leisure hours' (*The Listener*, 8 January 1936).

were invited to 'write in with their suggestions and criticisms' (WAC R51/605/3). Similarly, in December that year, Greene also stated that 'we could do with more letters ... containing suggestions for improvements of these talks' (R51/605/2). In trying to represent the 'nation', the BBC was trying to be inclusive and thus inviting the otherwise excluded unemployed to participate in the construction of the nation – albeit on their terms, of course. Notwithstanding the limited dialogue between broadcaster and audience, this apparent invitation to the audience to 'improve' talks for the unemployed was something of a contradiction in that it was a departure from the usual paternalism espoused by the BBC.

Talks aimed specifically at the unemployed were finally broadcast in October 1934. The series of talks were introduced by George Lansbury, then leader of the Labour Party (*The Listener*, 3 October 1934). Lansbury urged unemployed listeners to 'use every ounce of our mental energies never to allow ourselves to settle down and become contented with a life lived outside the industrial and social life of the mass of our fellow-citizens'. Similarly, listeners were reminded that, though 'helpless victims of conditions beyond our control ... we are also citizens, part of the great democracy to whom has been entrusted the great task of administering and governing this country ... Therefore, whether we are employed or unemployed, rich or poor, it is our bounden [sic] duty to try and understand all that concerns the well-being of the whole nation'. Listeners were therefore strongly encouraged to be 'good listeners' and to discuss their thoughts and opinions among themselves after each broadcast. However, as with all group broadcasts, the BBC requested that any discussion be facilitated by the club's 'best and clearest thinker as Chairman', so as 'to try to keep each speaker's thoughts on clear straight lines'. Lansbury concluded by stating that the talks would do much to broaden one's knowledge and understanding if properly discussed. Moreover, he hoped it would make listeners understand 'that all that is wrong is in ourselves', and that 'the evil which curses present-day democracy is our failure to think for ourselves, and act as citizens responsible to each other'.

Again we can see how some of the key discursive concepts in the BBC's construction of the nation – *democracy* and *citizenship* – are reformulated around the problem of unemployment. The grounds for inclusion of the unemployed, and for the BBC the broadcasting of the unemployment problem, lies in the evocation and actualisation of

these discursive practices as a means of strengthening the unemployed's sense of civic duty as responsible and self-reliant citizens, and thereby regulate any inwardly or outwardly expressions of dissenting behaviour.

The first talks were broadcast on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, but it was soon realised that Friday broadcasts coincided with many unemployed men getting their unemployment benefits at the labour exchanges. Hence it was decided to bring the talks forward to the first three days of the week as of the 1 January 1935: Monday, at 11-11.20am; Tuesday, at 4-4.20pm; and Wednesday, 2.55-3.15pm. The rationale for this change, and the talks generally, was articulated by Felix Greene, a prominent BBC producer, in an internal memo dated 3 December 1934, and a subsequent four-page memo, dated 28 December 1934 (R51/605/2). Greene felt that the new timings 'should allow a far wider unemployed audience to make use of the talks'. Greene was especially open to suggestions and comments in regard to the talks scheduled for Mondays and Wednesdays. The Monday talks were intended as 'an important new service of information', specially information that was in some way concerned with issues of citizenship:

Our lives are becoming more and more regulated, and the rules under which we live increasingly difficult to keep up with. Particularly is this true of the unemployed, whose daily life is so much governed by complicated regulations under numerous laws and statutory regulations. The rights which we possess as citizens very often are not understood, and facilities provided by the State, or by local bodies are often not known even by those who might benefit by them.

(WAC R51/605/2)

The main object of the service was 'to let the unemployed know what their rights they have as citizens'. Listeners were thus encouraged to write in (envelopes were to be marked with the letter 'U') with any queries regarding the various acts of parliament and regulations that they did not understand. Wednesday talks were addressed specifically to unemployed clubs on their club activities. Greene was of the opinion that the club movement 'has a big future and may play a large part in our social structure in the days to come'. In order that the unemployed clubs have 'a sense of being within a movement', each week club leaders and other experts were invited to discuss club affairs and ideas about how to increase the activities and general effectiveness of their clubs. Following on from above, citizenship was defined for the unemployed as access to 'rights' given by the state. This opened up the possibility of the BBC acting as the



unemployed's rights expert, which was also a expedient way of depoliticising the BBCs relationship with the unemployed and the broader unemployment problem.

However, in spite of the attempt to close the distance between broadcaster and the unemployed listener, there were still signs of a gulf between the two. For example, in a memo from the Education Officer for Leeds, dated 24 November 1937, it was stated that 'day time talks on the whole are not listened to regularly by constant groups' (WAC R51/605/4). Indeed, he was firmly of the opinion that 'entertaining talks' would be the most popular and likely 'sort of material to find its audience'. In yet another memo, dated 22 November 1937, this time from an Education Officer in Nottinghamshire, it was stated that 'the great majority of the members in these clubs were quite apathetic'.<sup>84</sup> By the autumn of 1937 daytime talks had lost their specialised characteristics, that is they were no longer addressed specifically to the unemployed. In an internal memo, dated 29 November 1937, G. W. Gibson declared, 'the unemployed can be treated to some extent as a section of the larger public with free time during the day-time' (WAC R51/605/4). This change in emphasis, in the case of talks for the unemployed was no doubt as much a consideration of the improving economic situation as it was a sign of the difficulties experienced by the BBC to regulate enforced leisure.<sup>85</sup> By 1938, talks were transferred from the National Programme to the Regional Service after many of the BBCs Regional Education Officers reported that the unemployment problem had become regional and was no longer a national phenomenon.

Notwithstanding this gradual cessation, the BBCs talks for the unemployed were of monumental importance, not least because of their radical departure from Reith's elitist cultural politics. Instead of thinking of culture purely in terms of that which is best, the sphere of culture was opened up to include any practical recreational activity, provided it occupied one's time usefully. And whilst such activities hardly constituted a cultural canon, they were nevertheless cultural in the sense that they provided a cultural forum

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<sup>84</sup> The memo was in response to a memo issued in earlier in November by the Talks Department to G. W. Gibson, then secretary of the Central Committee for Group Listening, asking that he write to all regional Education Officers and ask them for information on, among other things, to what extent the talks are listened to 'regularly by groups in unemployed clubs', and whether 'they prefer talks with special application to the problems of unemployment', or 'entertaining talks'.

<sup>85</sup> An Education Officer for Nottinghamshire, already quoted in the above, found it increasingly 'more difficult to get any response from the present members of the clubs for group listening or any other form of mental activity', once industry had started to make a recovery.

that integrated individuals, individuals who were otherwise on the peripheries of society. And there were those who took full advantage of the new services on offer. John Evans, one of the unemployed speakers for the *Time to Spare* series of talks, declared that, whilst he was politically opposed to the occupational centres and thought them to be 'only a palliative', he nevertheless thought them 'a boon and a blessing to the men who make use of them' (*The Listener*, 9 May 1934). W. O'Neil, another unemployed speaker for the *Time to Spare* series of talks, thought the unemployment clubs and voluntary work schemes made the unemployed's time to spare more bearable. Thus whilst the patronage of voluntary unemployment clubs and the like was overwhelmingly middle class, and the public response a 'middle-class conscience' predicated upon an urban fear, for some unemployed, the opportunity to regulate their enforced leisure, and consequent idleness, boredom and apathy, was a positive and life-affirming experience, regardless of who was paying the piper.

### **Conclusions**

Ever since the mid-Victorian period there have been various attempts to regulate and control the uses of leisure, especially that of the working classes, so as to render them harmless and socially productive. The object was to transform leisure into a subtle form of cultural governance aimed at countering debasing pleasures, and promoting useful cultural values. However, rational recreation was not just a straightforward attempt at social control, the imposition of middle-class values on a passive working-class. The making of leisure was as much an expression of working-class culture as it was a governmental attempt at inaugurating a form of social control. Many of the working-classes resisted or renegotiated the discipline of rational recreation. Hence, many of the prohibitive practices exacted in public leisure spaces ('Keep Off The Grass', 'No Eating or Drinking', 'Silence', 'No Litter', etc) were simply ignored or transgressed. This is not to say the working classes were therefore necessarily uncivilised. Rather, their cultural habitat was wholly different to that of the middle classes. Hence the majority of the working classes approached rational recreation with deeply embedded cultural values and practices of their own.

Underlying middle-class anxieties surrounding the uses of leisure during the inter-war period was an anxiety vis-à-vis the perceived crisis of cultural hegemony. It was felt by the ruling elites that leisure was one of the better means with which to mitigate

working-class militancy. Hence, the problem of leisure was a recurring theme throughout my period of study, and was subject to constant scrutiny by cultural and political elites so as to ensure its proper development. It is for this reason we see the legacy of rational recreation continuing to exert a considerable influence over early-twentieth century developments in the spheres of recreation and culture. Middle-class moralists continued to castigate and chastise new leisure activities, especially those that were populist, making leisure a paramount political issue, prompting much parliamentary debate, sociological surveys, and, in some instances, direct state interference.

For the BBC the importance of early-twentieth century leisure was impossible to ignore: it was instrumental to the formation of cultural values and practices. Counterposed to the improving influence of BBC culture, were the time honoured 'irrational' recreations, or so they were perceived by those in authority, who criticised them for being frivolous, sensuous, and likely to encourage hedonistic and irresponsible sensibilities. The BBC represented a national culture that was sober and rational in its habits. Neither drinking nor gambling were part of this vision. Hence the BBC, as the conscience of the nation, was obliged to address drinking, and gambling especially, as moral issues which affected the nation's well-being. (In the middle of this emerges another BBC role as pseudo-sociologist since 'we' must find out more about gamblers and gambling). However, the BBC's desire to undermine gambling was at variance with its commitment to 'rational debate' about social issues. So the 'other's' point of view was given an airing even though the weight was always towards abstention.

Though apparently of a quite different magnitude, unemployment was also a national problem, even crisis (hence 'SOS'), to which the BBC was again obliged to respond. This, not for the first or last time, ran the BBC up against the problem of the boundary of who could speak about this problem and what they could be permitted to say. The initial move was practical intervention through the wireless scheme. The unemployed were to be helped by having their leisure time used constructively. This eminently practical response was part of a moral imperative for the employed to get up and do something to help the unemployed and to integrate them into the nation so they did not become a class apart.



Also, as with gambling it is acknowledged that 'we' need to have more knowledge in order to act appositely. So the BBC enters its sociological mode trying to explore and explain unemployment as a moral issue. In other words, and more crucially, unemployment could be discussed so long as it did not become 'political': the political economy of unemployment is of no interest, but the moral economy is; the BBC wants to know how unemployment affect the unemployed especially in their capacity as citizens of the nations. Hence, unemployment is entered into broader didactical prescriptions about enlightened-democracy and citizenship, viz. that the unemployed continue to function properly within the prescribed democratic apparatus.

In other words, the grounds for inclusion of gamblers and the unemployed, and for the BBC the broadcasting of these problems, lies in the evocation of these discursive practices. This was specially so for the unemployed for whom citizenship is defined as access to 'rights' given by the state. This, in turn, opened up the possibility of the BBC acting as rights expert perfectly compatible with its self-image and of course depoliticising the whole relationship. This can be seen as a double movement towards inclusion (the nation as a whole) and exclusion (of those lacking the expertise to speak). The inclusive move allowed BBC employees to travel about collecting the views of the unemployed; the exclusion meant many of the unemployed's opinions were never broadcast or that they were only allowed to speak within the 'moral' parameters of the unemployment problem.

This regulation of leisure was just one facet of the BBCs wider civilising mission, especially its commitment to cultural forms and activities that had an educative function. Indeed, the discourse of *educative-recreation* prevailed throughout a plethora of cultural institutions and practices, not just the BBC. It is to these pedagogical apparatuses to which I now turn, in particular the formation of adult education and the use of broadcasting as a means of facilitating learning over the air.



## Learning Over the Air

A major activity of the BBC from its inception was educational broadcasting. Indeed, the first word given as a central purpose for broadcasting was 'education'. Even as a private company, the BBC had been enjoined to broadcast 'educational matter' (HMSO, 1923a: 4). Both the Sykes and the Crawford parliamentary committees of inquiry confirmed that broadcasting was of great 'educative value' providing high standards were maintained (HMSO, 1923b & 1925). Broadcasting's educative potential was further underlined by Reith who made his own sharp distinction between the permanent benefits of educational broadcasting and the ephemeral satisfactions of entertainment.

... it was early realised that there were very great educational possibilities in broadcasting...Entertainment, pure and simple, quickly grows tame; dissatisfaction and boredom result. If hours are to be occupied agreeably, it would be a sad reflection on human intelligence if it were contended that entertainment, in the accepted sense of the term, was the only means for doing so.

(Reith, 1924: 147)

As well as general educative programmes, the BBC inaugurated specific educational broadcasts both for children and adults. For the purposes of this chapter, I have concentrated on adult education broadcasts. My reason for doing so is because both the BBC and other public bodies regarded adults to be especially crucial to the post-war reconstruction effort, particularly in terms of creating an educated democracy. This concern was expressed by Reith in a speech delivered in Glasgow at a conference of Education authorities in 1926:

... the development of broadcasting ... coincides with a critical time in the history of Education. Everybody realises that this generation, and that which follows, is faced with the urgent task of creating an educated democracy on a scale, and to a degree, never before attempted.

(BBC, 1927: 15)

Briggs suggests that the roots for educational broadcasting 'were hidden in new soil', viz. a widespread concern during and after the first world war that the country had failed 'to conceive the full meaning and purpose of education as a whole' (1965: 186). However, Briggs' analysis is based on, and largely sympathetic to, the then prevailing contemporary belief that education and broadcasting were the solution to all social ills, particularly fears about the dangers of an uneducated citizenry. In other words, his line

of argument proceeds from the type of principled intellectual analysis I critique in my introduction. It implicitly assumes the public service utilities of education and broadcasting to be the achievement of a progressive democratic politics; capable of realising the complete development of the self-forming subject, which necessarily presumes the perfectibility of human nature.

As with other chapters, the argument I wish to pursue is one which refutes this type of analysis and attempts to understand the formation of adult educational broadcasting as an apparatus for moral and cultural regulation. I mean to demonstrate how group listeners were impelled into undertaking an ethical self-labour so that they might better fulfil their civic responsibilities. But not so that they might contribute to the strengthening of the democratic process. Rather, it was more to do with training adult listeners in matters of conduct and social mores so as to make them more governable. Understood thus, I argue that broadcast adult education was less concerned with educating adult men and women, particularly working-class adults, than it was with endowing adult listeners with a capacity for effecting techniques of self-regulation. I will also demonstrate how broadcast education, in co-operation with other adult education agencies, was a means of enabling a disciplinary apparatus of discreet surveillance. Both techniques were crucial for securing cultural governance from a distance.

First, however, it is necessary to provide a cursory history from which one can vaguely discern broad developments in adult education so as to identify the available discourses and practices in relation to which the BBC had to position itself. I am especially wanting to analyse the political rationalities which informed the administrative programs of the liberal adult education movement that begins to emerge in the historical milieu of the early twentieth century, taking as its keywords 'culture' and 'civilisation' and its key practices as the dispassionate concern for truth and open debate.

### **Educating the Masses**

The history of adult education is one that can be traced back to the eighteenth century since when there have been constant efforts to realise an educational apparatus suitable for instructing adult men and women, in particular working-class adults, in matters deemed to be educational. The very earliest adult education agencies were organised by

religious bodies. Their principal function was to provide moral and literacy instruction, in order that working class adults might learn to read the bible. In the eighteenth century undenominational adult schools were organised by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, which eventually led to the foundation of the Institution for Instructing the Adult Poor to read the Holy Scriptures in Bristol in 1812. The intention was that every Sunday 'the whole country was turned into a school, where all taught and were taught in turn' (Pole, 1814). By the end of the nineteenth-century, the Adult School movement had crystallised into the National Adult School Union, which by 1914 had a combined membership of approximately 81,000 (HMSO, 1919: 11 & 212). Among the movement's stated aims were:

To make and develop men and women and to teach them the art of life. To study the bible frankly, freely, reverently, and without prejudice. To establish an unsectarian basis for Christian effort and unity. To bring together in helpful comradeship and active service the different classes of society. To stimulate and educate public spirit and public morality. To teach the responsibility of citizenship ...

(Cited in HMSO, 1927b: 14)

In addition to providing religious instruction, it would be true to say that a further defining characteristic of the various religious movements was political apprehension. Both the church and the establishment generally perceived the masses to be a potential threat to the status quo; and the supply of religious instruction was thought by many at the time to be the best means of securing governance and social order. Thus the early adult schools should be understood not just as places which provided religious instruction but as reformatories of manners in which adult students were subject to a plethora of disciplinary routines and practices.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The regimen of the schools operated according to a strict timetable. The following passage was typical of what was commonly known as the order of the school: 'Upon the scholars entering the room, they are to take their places at the class-stations. At five minutes past six, the Monitor-general says - 'Form circles'- The Monitors take down pointers - 'Begin'- After reading three-quarters of an hour, they all cease [at the ringing of a bell]. The Monitors hang up pointers, and the classes fall back. The monitor-general then says - 'Look-Go'- All then take their seats, and the bell rings to command attention (when all should have their hands beside them); the order is then given - 'Recover-Slates-Deliver-Pencils'- This done, the word they are to write is dictated from the head of the school [the Monitor-general] and the Monitors of the writing-classes set copies to such as cannot join letters. When the slates are all full - 'Shew-Slates-Monitors-Examine'- The bell rings, and the Monitors return to their sets; after which - 'Lay down-Slates-Clean-Slates'- The bell rings, and hands are put down: words are then dictated, as before. At three-quarters past seven, after - 'Clean-Slates-Return-Slates-in'- (when hands are immediately put down); the bell is rung to command stillness. The Monitor-general then reads a portion of Scripture; after which - 'Look-Go'- When they all go out of school, one by one. That is, the whole school stand up; those at the upper desk go first, the next follow, and so in the same order, until all leave the school' (Pole, 1814: 99).

Later adult education movements, such as The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, concentrated on the vocational education of the skilled workers required by the industrial revolution. The most important were the Mechanics' Institutes. Inspired by the teaching methods of George Birkbeck, who had readily admitted members of the public to his lectures at Glasgow University, the movement to establish Mechanics' Institutes was concretised with the founding of the Glasgow Mechanics' Institution in 1823.<sup>87</sup> However, like many of the early adult educational movements, the Institutes increasingly became recreational centres for the middle classes. As the interest of working class members diminished, many of the Mechanics' Institutes ceased to be Institutes in anything but name.

An alternative model of adult education was as a means of political emancipation of the working classes (see Johnson, 1979; Rose, 2001). From responses to the French Revolution through Chartism to the birth of the labour movement, attempts were made to use adult education as a means of radical political education. That said, not all popular adult education movements were partisan. The Co-operative and Economical Society, founded in 1821, was more typical of the emerging liberal adult education agencies inasmuch as it proposed to provide tuition only 'for the purposes of mutual instruction, and of rational recreation and amusement' (cited in HMSO, 1919: 21). The bottom-up demand for adult education greatly abated following the collapse of Chartism in 1848. Hereafter, the attention of working-class adults was redirected away from radical protest and focused upon the building of trade unionism and co-operation. The prevailing political philosophy was a heady mixture of socialist politics and Christian morality. Working Men's Colleges, the first of which was established in Sheffield in 1842 (see Bayley, 1847), were typical of this emerging co-operative spirit.

Whilst the above is no more than a short outline of the history of adult education, what I hope to have demonstrated is that the bulk of early adult education had been undertaken by voluntary movements and organisations. This changes, however, in 1851, when the

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<sup>87</sup> The emphasis was on useful knowledge, as specified in the prospectus of the Manchester Mechanics' Institute: 'This Society has been formed for the purpose of enabling mechanics and artisans, of whatever trade they may be, to become acquainted with such branches of science as are of practical application in the exercise of that trade, that they may possess a more thorough knowledge of their business, acquire a greater degree of skill in the practice of it, and be qualified to make improvements and even new inventions in the arts which they respectively profess' (cited in HMSO, 1919: 14).



state makes available for the first time public funding for Adult Evening Schools. Though the object of the evening schools was to assist elementary education, and whilst state aid was still minimal (see Marriot, 1981), the Committee of Council on Education's decision to aid evening schools is a significant watershed.

From here on the deployment of an adult education apparatus was to be more closely aligned with the art of government, both in the narrowest and broadest sense of the term. In the narrowest sense, modern adult education was increasingly governmentalised, that is to say, elaborated, rationalised, and centralised under the auspices of state approved agencies. In the broadest sense, the emergence of modern adult education formed part a complex machinery of government located in the whole social body. Hence, a new rationale for adult education begins to emerge in the early twentieth century. It was developed in certain directions and subjected to very specific discursive practices: adult learners were increasingly objectified, classified, individualised, and trained in the art of self-governance. Not so they might become self-determining however, but so that they regulate their own conduct and act upon the possibilities of action of other people. Concomitant with this was the emergence of a new pedagogical apparatus. Whereas the teaching of adults in the nineteenth-century had been heterogeneous and unsystematic, modern adult education was characterised by a homogeneity of teaching standards and methods.

### **Adult Education in the Early Twentieth Century**

Undoubtedly the most significant development in the emergence of liberal adult education was the establishment of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in 1903. Its objectives were expressed with some clarity.

It is the object of [the WEA] to supply a platform on which those engaged in manual labour may meet those engaged in the profession of teaching to discuss the problems of education, and more particularly those problems which concern the workers. It has no policy to push, except the policy of making the best education available to all ... Culture cannot be imposed upon any section of the community from above: it must spring from the experience won by men in their daily lives, and must reflect their own struggles, aspirations, and disappointments.

*(The Highway, October 1908)*

The organisation immediately sought co-operation with other educational agencies, not least the University Extension Movement (founded by a University of Cambridge

Syndicate in 1873) and the Board of Education. In so doing it soon became a state approved 'Responsible Body' and was therefore eligible for public funding provided it continued to fulfil certain criteria stipulated by the Board of Education Regulations for Further Education. The main criteria was that appointed Responsible Bodies provide a non-vocational education with an emphasis on objectivity and standards. Students were divided into a hierarchy of different types of classes and courses: terminal courses, one-year classes, university tutorial classes and university extension courses (see HMSO, 1927b: 4-10; Mansbridge, 1913: 136-41; Peers, 1934: 94-107). Of the different types of classes and courses, the three year tutorial class represented the pinnacle of achievement, since they were required to 'approximate in quality to a University Honours standard' (Peers, 1934: 101).

The initiative for the tutorial class system was provided by a conference convened by the WEA and the University of Oxford in the Summer of 1907. The specific purpose of the conference was to consider 'what Oxford could do for working people' (Stocks, 1953: 40-1). The conference proceedings were published as a report, *Oxford and Working Class Education* (reprinted in Harrop, 1987: 79-269). What the report reveals is that much of the impetus for adult education came from a sense of change in the political presence of the working classes and the dangers which might follow their estrangement from the middle classes.

The demand that the universities shall serve all classes derives much additional significance from changes which are taking place in the constitution of English society and in the distribution of political power. The most conspicuous symptoms of such changes to which we refer have been the growth of Labour Representation in the House of Commons and on the Municipal bodies, the great increase in the membership of political associations which claim to express the ideals of at least a considerable section of the working classes, the increasing interest taken by trade unions, which till recent years were purely industrial organisations, in political action, and the growing demand for a widening in the sphere of social organisation ... We are of the opinion that, as a result of these changes, all educational authorities, and Universities above all others, are confronted with problems to which they are bound to give continuous and serious attention ... the increasing complexity of industrial organisation, and the growing tendency of different classes to live in different quarters of the same town ... is making it increasingly difficult for the various sections of the community to appreciate each other's circumstances or aspirations. In modern life there is much which tends to the separation of classes, and little which brings them together. For this reason it seems important that the leaders of every class should have an opportunity of obtaining a wide outlook on the

historical development and economic condition of the whole English community, such as is given by a University education.<sup>88</sup>

(Quoted in Harrop, 1987: 142-43)

The report was insistent, however, that educated workpeople remain in the class in which they are born and in so doing raise its level from within. 'To those who do this their education will be a means, not only of developing their own powers of enjoyment, but of enabling them to exercise an influence for good in the social life of their factory and town' (quoted in Harrop, 1987: 176). What the report articulates is a governmental rationality whose *raison d'être* is to train useful workpeople so that they might penetrate working-class communities and disseminate hegemonic cultural practices through their exemplary conduct. Adult learners became agents with which to regulate the conduct of others:

If a class is formed under the control of members of the working-class societies, its influence filters through a hundred different channels, and may leaven a whole town. Every member of it is a missionary of education in a continually expanding field, and spreads habits of criticism and reflection among his fellows in a way that is impossible if education is organised from above.

(Quoted in Harrop, 1987: 152)

Hence the emphasis the WEA placed upon co-operation between tutors and students. Rather than the tutors deciding what the students should study, syllabuses were decided by both tutors and students. Also, classes were organised by autonomous districts and local branches. As the WEAs founder, Albert Mansbridge, put it:

Everywhere pointed to the fact that educational supply, even if devised by excellent and devoted people, was almost entirely useless unless there was co-operation with those who were to be attracted to use it ... The initiative must lie with the students. They must say how, why, what, or when they wish to study.

(Mansbridge, 1920: xviii)

Arguably, modern adult education was less concerned with the dissemination of knowledge than it was with endowing individuals with new capacities for self-development and self-regulation. 'Tutorial classes are less than nothing if they concern themselves merely with the acquisition or dissemination of knowledge. They are in reality concerned with the complete development of those who compose them'

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<sup>88</sup> This sentiment is further reflected in an article published in the WEA journal, *The Highway*, in January 1909: 'Oxford has been the training ground of our rulers and governors for generations. She knows the value of exactitude, and understands the subtle qualities necessary in the arts of government. She can instruct Labour in this, and the instruction will be turned to good purpose'.

(Mansbridge, 1913: 8-9).<sup>89</sup> Hence the WEAs precept for teaching adults 'how to think and not what to think'.

One final characteristic of the tutorial class was its facilitation of the hierarchical observation of working-class communities (see Foucault, 1991a: 170-77). The part the tutor played in this was of paramount importance. Robert Peers, the first university Professor in Adult Education, provides us with what is undoubtedly one of the most lucid expositions from this period of the kind of observational methods that were to be utilised and it is worth quoting at length:

The modern tendency in all forms of education is to stress the necessity of developing the individual as an individual ... The centre of gravity is placed in the living, active pupil rather than in the subject taught, and this attitude clearly implies that the teacher must seek to know his individual pupils as closely as he knows the subjects he professes to teach ... the tutor should set about getting to know his students as intimately as possible – the details of their occupations, their interests and hobbies, the political and religious opinions which form the background of their thinking, their home conditions, their ambitions ... Once the tutor has grasped the special meaning which the movement has for his students, he will realise that his responsibilities are by no means confined to the weekly meeting of the class ... If the subject of study is to have any real meaning, it must be built into the personal background of the student and brought into relation to the experience which has shaped and is shaping his life. Thus it is important that the tutor should learn, by informal contacts, to appreciate the temperament and the relevant circumstances of each student.

(Peers, 1934: 119 & 157)

Following Foucault (2002e: 298-311) and his analysis of the development of pastoral techniques of government in Christianity, we can see the mobilisation of modern adult educationalists as being in some way analogous to the ancient Hebraic conceptions of pastoral power modelled on the shepherd-flock relation, as discussed in chapter one. Particularly important is the responsibility of the shepherd to devote his time and energy to knowing each of his flocks particular needs and activities. In other words, the tutor was not only a means of disseminating exemplary knowledge and good conduct; they were also instrumental as a means of effecting discreet surveillance.<sup>90</sup> It was imperative

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<sup>89</sup> A summary report of the proposals made by the Adult Education Committee for the Ministry of Reconstruction reiterates this broader conception of governance: 'non-vocational adult education must be conducted in an atmosphere of co-operation, and with a large measure of 'self-determination' on the part of the students. An adult class must, in other words, be a self-governing community' (Greenwood, 1920: 16).

<sup>90</sup> This method of cultural penetration and surveillance was taken further still by the philanthropic Educational Settlement Movement. Its principal object was to reform working-class communities by living amongst the people they sought to 'help'. As the settlement's founder, Canon Barnett, put it: 'Let



that the tutor know as much about his students as was possible, that is to render them knowable. Hence some adult educationalists started to live in close proximity to their students; and those that did not were encouraged to take an active interest and participate in the communities in which they taught. Students were encouraged to reveal to their tutors and one another their experiences and consciousness. In so doing it was possible for government to have a more accurate understanding of the mass of adult learners and their multiplicity of individual elements and social relations. Whilst there were limits to this technique inasmuch meeting places were varied and often *ad hoc*, what was striking about the surveillance apparatus peculiar to modern adult education was its attempts to penetrate the private cultural spheres of the home and entire communities. This attempt to effect the domestication of cultural governance is something I will consider more properly in chapter six.

### **Revolting Students**

Diametrically opposed to so-called co-operative adult education was the movement for Independent Working-Class Education, which emerged with the founding of Ruskin College in 1899. The aim of the college was, in the words of one of its founders, Mrs Walter Vrooman, to 'take men who have been merely condemning our institutions and to teach them, instead, to transform these institutions so that in place of talking against the world they will begin methodically and scientifically to possess the world' (cited in Mansbridge, 1920: 7-8; Peers, 1934: 36). In reality, this involved endless attempts to 'sandpaper' the rougher characteristics of the students, interference with academic policy,<sup>91</sup> and proposals for closer links with the University of Oxford.

Not surprisingly, the college's early history was marked by much student dissent (see Jennings, 1977: 6). Two of the more significant events to arise from this malcontent were the setting up of the 'Plebs League' in 1908 and the infamous student strike of 1909. Several of the students were expelled and, subsequently, formed the Central Labour College in August 1909, later renamed the National Council of Labour Colleges

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those of us who belong to the nation on top make direct personal contact with those belonging to the nation underneath' (cited in Albaya, 1977: 8).

<sup>91</sup> The most notable instance of interference with academic policy was a scheme proposed in 1907 aimed at reorganising the Ruskin curriculum. Though the proposal was ultimately rejected, it is interesting to note that the central proposal was to substitute the teaching of Sociology and Evolution with Literature, Rhetoric and Temperance (see Jennings, 1977).

in January 1922. Unlike co-operative adult education providers, the Labour Colleges were, in the words of one of the dissident Ruskin students, W. W. Craik (1964: 86), committed to 'knowledge for action' rather than 'knowledge for its own sake'. In short, the Labour Colleges properly championed independent working-class education, whilst state approved adult education associations offered its students a liberal education (see Jennings, 1977). Furthermore, the Labour Colleges never sought recognition from the Board of Education, relying instead on the Trades Union Congress for its funding. Its constitutional object was: 'To further the interests of independent working class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present and to aid in the abolition of wage-slavery' Its method was to offer assistance 'in the formation of classes in social sciences', and 'such classes [were] to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trade Unions, Trade Councils, or other working class organisations'. Nor were the Labour Colleges afraid of engaging in polemic through its monthly left-wing newspaper, *Plebs*, which endlessly attacked liberal adult education as a ruling class stratagem. For example, an editorial published in October 1929 suggested that,

... the British governing class has never lacked representatives who appreciate how vital it is to control the education of the workers. As the demand for education grew in the working-class ranks, the governing class has not hesitated to spend large sums of money ... to inculcate in the minds of the workers the social theories necessary to ensure the continuance of the present order of society. It is true that with its growth, the working-class movement becomes more and more sceptical of the governing-class's direct methods of education. With an adaptation that does it credit, the governing class, however, has surmounted this difficulty for the time being by retiring into background and, by means of grants and through its trained educationalists from the universities, has maintained control over the education provided by bodies that have the appearance of being purely working-class ... With a class cunning that is difficult to beat, the governing-class has not made the mistake of keeping too tight a reign on such educational bodies ...

The capacity for state approved adult education to effect governance from a distance is not in doubt. However, the manner in which the Labour Colleges sought to efface co-operative adult education was misplaced. Though the likes of the WEA were funded by the state this does not mean they were first and foremost an ideological state apparatus. It was not just a straight forward case of who pays the piper calls the tune. More than this, adult education's *raison d'être* was not social control, but rather as a means for forming an adult working-class population with useful habits. It existed as a discipline rather than as an ideology. It was also an apparatus for regulating the relations between

the different social classes of the nation's populace as a whole (see Jones & Williamson, 1979). Understood thus, the deployment of adult education was not so much an attempt to contain and regulate the emerging power of the labour movement, but rather an effect of a whole economy of cultural and educational technologies whose rationality was to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the populace as a whole. Its source of power was founded upon a new solidarity and universal relation between educated and uneducated.

### **Post-War Reconstruction**

During and after the First World War there was a pronounced proliferation in discourse which postulated that advancements in the provision of adult education and, more particularly, 'educative-recreation', were necessary pre-conditions for effecting social, political and economic reform.

The community must provide for the continued culture even of its mature members, in order that they may efficiently discharge their responsibilities as producers of the nation's wealth, guardians of the nation's children, and governors of the nation's destiny ... it is plain that in order to secure education as well as entertainment, an increasing amount of organised provision for the adult should be made...e.g., the organisation of public lectures, the extension of facilities for home reading and study, the development of reference libraries and newsrooms, museums, art galleries, botanical and zoological gardens ... the establishment of public cinematographic shows, concert halls, and theatres – all as a policy of 'organising leisure' for the whole community.

(Webb and Freeman, 1916: 77)

Apart from the above passage encapsulating the Fabianism which guided so much liberal social policy during this period, of even greater interest are the terms of reference, particularly the way in which the community and the nation are defined, and the assumption that leisure and (though the word is not used) culture will provide the integrative force. What we see emerging are a nexus of discursive practices consistent with that which emerges around the regulation of leisure in an effort to establish common grounds for an educative-recreation agenda: culture, mature, responsibilities, producers, guardian governors, all to be fostered by leisure provision. Moreover, it is this model of citizenship, and of the ideal citizen, which again would prove so highly influential for the BBCs civilising mission.

Of the many other enquiries that were specially concerned with post-war reconstruction, I have chosen to concentrate on two in particular: (i) a sociological survey conducted in



Sheffield titled, *The Equipment of the Workers*; (ii) and the *1919 Report* of the Adult Education sub-committee for the Ministry of Reconstruction.

### The Equipment of the Worker

One of the most significant attempts to document the cultural milieu of the working-classes in the early twentieth century was a survey conducted in Sheffield in 1916 (Freeman, 1919). The survey was organised by Arnold Freeman (co-author of the above passage), social reformer and founder of the Sheffield Educational Settlement. The survey was designed 'to cover all those individuals referred to by the rich as 'the workers', 'the toilers', 'the masses', 'the common people', 'the lower classes', 'the poor', 'the proletariat', 'Labour', and 'they' and 'them'' (ibid.: 34). Based on data from interviewees asked about their educational and political ideas, uses of leisure, musical tastes, aesthetic feelings, social and religious activities, and reading habits, the working classes were divided into three categories: 20 to 26 percent were considered intellectually 'well-equipped', 67 to 73 percent were 'inadequately-equipped', whilst 5 to 8 percent were deemed to be 'mal-equipped' (ibid.: 65). Such classification was before its time.<sup>92</sup>

Not surprisingly, it was the mal-equipped who were of particular concern and the main object for cultural reform. However, for Freeman, 'the fundamental solution' lay not in social reform *per se* but in a program of educative-recreation designed to inoculate any undesirable subjectivities. That is to say, education and uses of leisure are increasingly brought to bear upon one another to form a disciplinary regime whose primary function

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<sup>92</sup> Rose (2001: 190) notes that the categories roughly approximate to what we might today understand to be working-class intellectuals, respectable working-class, and an underclass. So-called 'well-equipped' workers were considered to 'consist of men and women who have been awakened to the seriousness and the splendor of existence. They are active individuals; they can cope with life; they desire fine things; they live for noble ends. Mingling in them variously, according to their individualities, are intellectuals, aesthetic and moral elements that give them a positive spiritual value to the community' (Freeman, 1919: 4). Indeed, some of the interviewees were judged to be well-equipped on grounds of them being respectable and morally righteous, not because of their intellect necessarily (see Rose, 2001: 192-93). 'Inadequately equipped' workers were defined as 'men and women whose distinguishing characteristic is that they are asleep ... the mass of them let shameful slumber thrall them; they muddle through life; they are spiritually inert; they desire to rest and be left alone; they do not live for ends beyond immediate satisfactions; they are emphatically not 'bad' people ... but at present their value to the community is economic rather than spiritual, that of beasts of burden rather than that of free human beings' (Freeman, 1919: 6). The least desirable of the working-classes were those that constitute the 'mal-equipped'. They were deemed to read 'nothing of any value'; be possessed by 'root-desires' which are 'contemptible'; and seek recreational pleasure through the likes of 'Football, Picture Palace, Music Hall and Public-Houses' (ibid.: 49). Moreover, 'their existence (so long as their defects remain uncured) is a positive evil for the community'; they are the 'rotters', the 'wastrels', the 'Yaboos' (ibid: 60).



is the cultural penetration of the working-class populace. Again, the central preoccupation is not so much with training the mind as it is with disciplining the body in certain conducts of behaviour. Further, the survey was characteristic of many early twentieth-century sociological investigations which were concerned with the collection of statistical data that enabled the classification of human subjects, particularly the measurement of deviancy. Freeman was less concerned with revealing working-class social conditions than he was with creating a hierarchy of disciplined subjectivities.

### 1919 Report

The 1919 report of the Adult Education sub-committee of the Ministry for Reconstruction had more diffuse concerns. Its term of reference were: 'to consider the provision for, and possibilities of, Adult Education (other than technical or vocational) in Great Britain, and to make recommendations' (HMSO, 1919a: 1). Though the Committee published four reports, it is the recommendations of the *Final Report* that are especially interesting. As well as reiterating many of the liberal governmental rationalities that I have outlined in the above, viz. practices of self-governance and educated citizenship, the report was published just before the formation of the BBC.

We need to think out educational methods and possibilities from the new point of view, that of the adult learning to be a citizen. All this can only be effected by giving him a share of responsibility for his own education, a choice of the subjects which he is to study, and of the teacher who is to help him in his study. He must co-operate actively with that teacher and with his own fellow-workers.

(HMSO, 1919a: 4)

The report outlined an economy of political and social relations with transparent objectives (e.g. the economic recovery of the nation, the proper use of the responsibilities by millions of new voters, and rational uses of leisure) all of which were aimed at training the adult working-class population in the art of government. Moreover, we yet again see the reproduction of a discourse aimed at fostering an educated citizenship, community, and nationhood: 'the goal of all education must be citizenship – that is, the rights and duties of each individual as a member of the community; and the whole process must be the development of the individual in his relation to the community' (HMSO, 1919a: 4). In other words, the self is constructed through the same hierarchy of collective identities. And then, when we might have had politics or economics or philosophy as the best route to citizenship, what we actually get as the binding agent of this enterprise is education in the form of the Arts, arguably, a

very peculiar and English view of what constitutes civilisation, the national heritage, and the educated citizen.

[Education] must draw its materials from the natural impulses of common-life, including its labour and its recreations ... The natural bridge between the discipline of the mind and practical activities is to be found in the Arts, which unite thought with emotion and action'

(HMSO, 1919a: 86)

The report thus expands the definition of education so as to include less formal educational activities such as 'the activities of musical societies, the meetings of mutual improvement societies...' (HMSO, 1919a: 34). In other words, the report adopts an elastic interpretation of education and in so doing attempts to make recreation and education concomitant with one another.

Wiltshire (1980: 15) has suggested that the Report can be understood according to four priorities of meaning which can be imagined as arrangement of concentric circles: (1) at the centre is 'civic education' (e.g. history and the social sciences); (2) around this a wider circle of general 'cognitive education' (e.g. languages and the natural sciences; (3) around these an even wider circle of 'expressive education' (e.g. arts and crafts); (4) finally, around them all is an outer circle of 'educative-recreation' (e.g. theatres, libraries, recreational and social activities generally). The BBC, apparently an institution lodged in the outer circle, had the potential to penetrate to the very core of the enterprise. It would be guided by those models of adult education already in existence and especially those which had emerged most recently. Earlier ones of Christian discipline or vocational training were likely to be less influential than apparently liberal emphases on arts and culture. These were posited as solutions to identifiable problems of political and social integration. The terms used presented themselves as political – culture and civilisation – but were in fact clear agendas for the creation of a unified nation around a common culture. For the BBC this would prove a powerful inheritance.

The way in which educative-recreation is 'put into discourse' accords well with Foucault's carceral archipelago thesis (1991: 293-308) inasmuch it was essential that any formal distinction between education (in the strictest sense) vis-à-vis the uses of leisure be blurred if the carceral continuum was to reach into the everyday practices of

the adult working-class population. Arguably, the emergence of so-called rational recreation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented the very limits of social governance. That is to say, the synthesis of educative-recreation represented the furthest removed of the concentric circles at this point in time. It was the governmental technology *par excellence*. What was essentially a disciplinary apparatus was made to appear as a virtuous and neutral public service on the one hand, and a pleasurable recreation on the other.

### **Learning over the Air**

What I have so far attempted to demonstrate is the 'bureaucratic-pastoral' character of modern adult education. Assuming this proposition to be still tenable I would now like to turn my attention to what is the more substantive theme of this chapter: the emergence of public service broadcasting and its deployment as an apparatus of educative-recreation. This section discusses in turn: the foundation of the educational broadcasting department in the BBC; its consolidation in the early years; the nature and significance of listeners' groups; the beginnings of audience research; and some talks which specifically addressed the problem of 'educative-leisure'. In each case particular attention will be paid to the discourses and practices identified by the BBC as appropriate to its educational mission which inevitably drew on and sought to institutionalise the discourses inherited from the prior history of adult education.

The first systematic provision for broadcast adult education started in October 1924, shortly after educational broadcasting had been established as an administrative department in July 1924. The appointment of its first Director, J. C. Stobart, seconded from His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education, was reported on the front page on the *Radio Times* (13 June 1924) under the heading 'A Broadcasting University'.<sup>93</sup> The peculiarity and significance of a civil servant being loaned to what was still then a

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<sup>93</sup> Stobart anticipated the possibilities of learning over the air in the form of what he envisaged to be a 'wireless university'. In a memo to Reith (WAC R14/145/1; see Briggs, 1965: 188) Stobart states that one of its main objectives 'would aim at a very broad culture, and would always have in mind the equipping of its pupils for good citizenship and cultured home life, as distinct from training for a particular profession or group of professions'. The university was of course another model (or end goal) of adult education in the WEA's close links with Oxford. Its significance was that cultivated experts could digress for the benefit of students. This kind of expert lecture would be common in the BBC's adult education broadcasting.



business organisation did not go unnoticed and was 'taken as evidence of the Government's realisation of the national importance of broadcasting'.

For Stobart, broadcast education was as much about uplifting public tastes as it was disseminating knowledge: '... it was early recognised that wireless would exercise a powerful influence, for better or for worse, on the public taste. The British Broadcasting Company has aimed at making their influence raise the standards in this respect' (*The Daily Chronicle*, 11 November 1926). Stobart also saw entertainment and education as synonymous: entertainment ought to have a rational purpose and education ought to be enjoyable. How to effect this synthesis was expanded upon by Reith who advocated broadening the meaning of both terms.

We must try to make the word 'education' sound a little less formal, and perhaps somebody will some day produce a better term. Let us also, however, make the word 'entertainment' a little less narrow in its significance than some would have it. No one here disputes that among the function of broadcasting is to entertain; but if we were only to 'entertain', and if the word were to be used in its narrow sense, it would be quite impossible to fill up all the hours of transmission agreeably.

(*The Listener*, 30 April 1930)

This problem of the relationship between an entertainment medium and the process of education was a dilemma specific to the BBC. No previous model or discourse but adult education had been obliged to think through whether education should be entertaining or entertainment educational. The mass nature of the wireless as a medium raised this dilemma in acute form and much of the debate around adult education in the BBC would focus upon it.

The administrative work of the education department was greatly aided by the appointment of the Central Educational Advisory Committee in August 1924. Each regional station had its own Local Educational Advisory Committee, thus ensuring the co-operation of Local Education Authorities (see Briggs, 1961: 242). Though not the BBC's first advisory body, the Central Educational Advisory Committee was one of the most influential and far-reaching. Furthermore, the BBC stressed co-operation with existing adult education agencies. To quote Reith (1924: 147), to 'bring the best of everything into the greatest number of homes' meant 'that many educative influences must be stirred'. In October 1923, Reith thus wrote to The British Institute for Adult



Education, 'requesting' it 'to discuss collaboration' (cited in Robinson, 1982: 41). The response was a series of articles in the *Journal of Adult Education*, first published in 1926.

Most significant were the articles by Harold J. Laski (1926) and J. C. Stobart (1927). Laski was essentially concerned with how best to deliver adult education, ensure high standards, and widen participation. Amongst his suggestions for innovations in adult education was wireless (1926: 22). Stobart emphasised the importance and social magnitude of wireless

as a means of communication which brings three or four million homes into a single circle of influence, [wireless] is bound to have a powerful effect ... upon the social life, the civilisation and culture of the nation. By their choice of music and drama, by their presentation of news, and selection of speakers on current topics ... the British Broadcasting Corporation are bound to act as an agency of Education in the broadest sense.

(Stobart, 1927: 212)

Note again the continuity and strategic significance of the discourse, not least the emphasis it places upon civilisation, culture, and nation. Also in 1927 R. S. Lambert, then in charge of broadcast adult education, wrote to members of the WEA seeking to combine its 'long experience and knowledge of what is wanted educationally' with the BBC as 'an instrument of unparalleled range and power for reaching the mass of the people' (cited in Briggs, 1965: 218). Four years later the WEA journal noted that 'the BBC is doing a very important educational service, the full results of which cannot yet be seen. All concerned with adult education should remember that a new ally has suddenly come into the field' (ibid.: 220).

The BBC was especially anxious to ensure co-operation with the Trades Union Congress. A memorandum based upon conversations between C. A. Siepmann, then secretary of the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education, and the Education Committee of the TUC sought 'to suggest a practical scheme of co-operation, by which immediate steps may be taken to ensure that the services of the BBC on its educational side may be exploited to the full by constituent bodies affiliated to the TUC' (WAC R14/120/2). Whilst the Central Council was confident of the BBC's capacity to render a broadcasting service for adult educative purposes, it was not so sure how best 'to devise ways and means by which this service can at once be adapted to the special needs of the

workers ... throughout the country'. It thus proposed that a number of initial experiments in wireless group listening be undertaken by selected Trade Councils and be organised under the auspices of the TUC Education Committee on Trade Union premises, with the BBC providing adequate facilities such as 'the installation of an appropriate set in a room selected as suitable for the purpose, the provision of a group leader, of adequate local and national publicity, and the distribution of appropriate literature for the courses selected for study' (ibid.).

The reason the BBC was at such pains to gain the co-operation was, arguably, about social integration and the need to secure the agreement of an institution which (especially at a time of widespread industrial unrest) represented the potential of class division, thus dampening down any possibility of class conflict. At a higher level of analysis, the significance of the above is its articulation of a rationality whose objective was to establish a network of cultural technologies aimed at civilising the working class adults so as to render them more amenable to social governance.

### **New Ventures In Adult Education**

Of the various inter-war reports directly concerned with broadcast adult education, by far the most significant was *New Ventures in Broadcasting* (1928). The report was the outcome of a joint committee of enquiry between the British Institute for Adult Education and the BBC into the educational possibilities of broadcasting, chaired by Henry Hadow, vice-chancellor of the University of Sheffield. The tone of the report was overwhelmingly optimistic. 'The educational possibilities of [wireless] are almost incalculable. Even if no single item labelled educational ever appeared in the programmes, broadcasting would still be a great educational influence' (BBC, 1928: 1). The report also considered the bureaucratic advantages afforded by wireless: it was cheap and ubiquitous. 'Unlike the lecturer, it can be everywhere at once. It is the perfect method by which to conduct what has been described as "insidious education"' (ibid.). More than this, the report recommended an expanded concept of education, one which took measure of the ordinary person's everyday commitments to their work and their family vis-à-vis hours available for the use of leisure. It was acknowledged that a thirst for education might not be a priority for the ordinary working man.

There is ... a large body of hard-working people who feel disciplined in the evenings to do [no] more than go home, smoke a pipe, read the paper, or play a quiet game. After a day's hard work, it is natural to feel the need for amusement and recreation. They see comparatively little of their wives and families except at the end of the day, and they have no natural inclination to set out again after the evening meal to a lecture or class.

(BBC, 1928: 26)

Among the report's main recommendations were: (1) the establishing of wireless listening groups; (2) the setting up of a Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education comprised of representatives from important national bodies concerned with adult education and Area Councils representing local educational interests; (3) and the launching of a weekly educational broadcasting journal to supplement the aids-to-study pamphlets (BBC, 1928: 69 & 75-79; Briggs, 1965: 219; Robinson, 1982: 45). The report also recommended that broadcast adult education should supplement not displace existing adult education agencies. The objective was thus one of co-operation and mutual goal-sharing.

The Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education was formally brought into existence in November 1928. Its membership was wide-ranging and representative of the various adult learning agencies.<sup>94</sup> The Council based its policy on its belief 'in the unique and decisive influence of wireless on the future of civilisation' (WAC R14/124). Two key objectives were identified. First, it aimed 'at inducing among listeners a high standard of intellectual curiosity, of critical ability and of tolerance to all views held and expressed with a sincerity and a regard for truth'. This required 'a respect, even a reverence for truth in all its aspects and a desire for knowledge unfettered by dogmas of any kind'. Second came 'the more particular and tangible objective': to educate listeners in 'an appreciation of the forces of transformation and change in the world about them', especially 'the developments of science, the enlargement of knowledge and the evolution of social custom and practices'.

Here we see the general goals of culture, civilisation, and democracy being translated into educational principles: the reverence for 'truth' (as opposed to 'dogma') and the

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<sup>94</sup> The Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education contained representatives of twenty-two national bodies, including the Board of Education, the Universities, the Local Education Authorities, County Councils, Employers' Organisations, Libraries, Trade Unions, four Area Councils, and most voluntary adult learning agencies (for a full break-down of the Council's membership see BBC, 1932: 2).



understanding of 'science', 'knowledge' and 'custom'. Note the neutrality of the discourse: not a single truth we can tell them but a respect for truth; not a subservience to the natural order but an understanding of scientific and social change. It verges on advocacy of a kind of sociology but one clearly oriented to a dispassionate understanding which might well produce an urge to reform but not to revolution.

Finally, the report saw broadcast adult education as a means of extending the outreach of the adult education movement:

The adult education movement, vigorous as it is, touches as yet only a small proportion of the population. Broadcasting, which is the latest agency to place itself at the disposal of this movement, can fill many of the existing gaps; it can widen the field from which students are drawn, by its power to reach and stimulate a large public; it can provide a means of education for those beyond the reach of other agencies; it can put listeners in touch with the leaders of thought and the chief experts in many subjects ...

(BBC, 1928: 87)

Notwithstanding the odd criticism,<sup>95</sup> the report was well-received by both the national and regional press. There was overwhelming approval for the report's insistence on further developing educational broadcasting (see WAC, Newspaper Cuttings: Education, 1926-28). One of the more salient points of agreement was regarding the report's suggestion that the next census ought to ascertain how families spend their evening's leisure, a subject the BBC was itself to investigate, the significance of which I shall discuss in chapter six. There was also a great deal of support for the report's advocacy for a more elastic conception of education so as to encourage educative-recreation.

### **Wireless Listening Groups**

Though always a minority, the main focus of broadcast adult education was the organisation and development of wireless listening groups (see WAC, A/261; Williams, 1941).<sup>96</sup> The first listening groups started in the spring of 1927. By the winter 1931-2 there were 922 registered listening groups following a regular series of twelve talks

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<sup>95</sup> In an effort to gauge popular and expert opinion the committee issued a questionnaire to various bodies, one of which was the Wireless League. The League's reply was published in the *Yorkshire Telegraph & Star* (17 August 1927) and stated that 'the primary function of broadcasting is to entertain' and, therefore, did not support overtly educational programmes.

<sup>96</sup> Wireless listening groups were seen by many to be a new tutorial scheme. Indeed the *Westminster Gazette* (12 October 1926) described group listening as 'Oxford and Cambridge by wireless'.



(BBC, 1932; Briggs, 1965: 220; Robinson, 1982: 46 & 54). The stated object of listening groups was to develop 'the capacity to listen to other people's ideas even when they are unpalatable, and to follow up by discussion and calm analysis' (*The Listener*, 23 January 1929). Each group had a designated leader whose role was to 'guide and shape the discussion and know sufficient about the subject to take a lead with confidence'. A Board of Education inquiry (HMSO, 1933a: 9) considered group leaders to be 'the keystone of the listening group'. Peers (1934: 86) thought that the person chosen as leader should not only 'be competent to guide the discussion' but also 'have the ability to restrain his own and others' garrulity' (see also Williams, 1941: 240-43). Group leaders were not necessarily required to have specialist knowledge but should be 'educated' and 'respectable' persons from business and the professions.

Such was the importance accorded to group leadership, training courses were organised. The first one was held at University College, Hull, April 1929, when about forty students assembled to study the conduct of group discussion under Professor Searls (*The Listener*, 1 May 1929). This was shortly followed by the first National Conference of Group Leaders at the London School of Economics, January 1931, when some 200 group leaders and listeners attended. Summer schools for the training of group leaders were also arranged in close connection with WEA summer schools (*The Listener*, 1 & 8 July 1931; Williams, 1941: 244-47).

Like WEA tutors, wireless group leaders were deployed as pastoral pedagogues. Just as the tutorial class system was concerned with effecting disciplinary practices of self-regulation and surveillance, the principal *raison d'être* for listening groups was to inculcate listeners in self-regulatory practices that were concurrent with the art of governance, that is rational discussion, tolerance, restraint and impartiality. It was important that the popular masses be taught how to think for themselves and how to imitate exemplary conduct. Understood thus, listening groups were as much to do with contact between conduct and conduct as they were with contact between mind and mind. Many of the committees of inquiry into the educative potentialities of broadcasting affirm this. The Hadow Report (BBC, 1928: 26), for example, was of the opinion that adult education generally 'can do much to secure the balance between reason and emotion which makes sound decisions possible'. Similarly, a Board of Education inquiry (HMSO, 1933a: 30) into Wireless Listening Groups thought that 'the

value of real discussion lies in being able to take a particular topic out of a partisan or highly controversial atmosphere into an atmosphere, detached, disinterested and scholarly'. The report goes on to state that 'insofar as the Listening Groups can help build up this dispassionate and critical outlook, they are performing a useful service for the community; but this can only be done if the members are willing to undergo the discipline which real discussion entails' (ibid.). Yet again we can see the recurrence of a discursive practice that seeks to de-politicise the discussion of social issues likely to cause conflict of public opinion. Such differences were to be suppressed in the interests of the community at large, the nation.

A further characteristic of broadcast adult education was the way in which the listening public was constituted according to a hierarchy of listening subjectivities, similar to those discussed in chapter two. By the 1930s the BBC began to differentiate between the casual and the serious listener. A. C. Cameron, then Secretary of the Central Committee for Group Listening, described those listeners that did not wish to commit to being members of approved adult education agencies as 'the Second XI of adult education' (*The Highway*, November 1937). A special supplement published in *The Listener* (18 September 1935) aimed to encourage critical listeners who might 'form their own opinions about the subjects and views which they hear propounded in wireless talks' since 'broadcasting can only be good provided listeners will do their part'. Similarly, the Hadow Report stressed the effort required of the committed listener.

In the first place, he [sic] must realise that he can scarcely expect to get the greatest amount of enjoyment from the programmes unless he is willing to choose the items that appeal to him, and reserve the time to listen to them. Few people in search of recreation or enjoyment go to the theatre, concert, cinema or lecture hall without finding out first what they are likely to see or hear ... the serious listener will find that he will get most from his set if he studies programmes beforehand and plans his other engagements accordingly.

(BBC, 1928: 69)

What one can discern from the above is that there was an order of discourse in which the serious listener was deemed to be culturally superior and something the casual listener should therefore aspire to. Casual listeners, that is listeners who lay outside the scope of discussion groups, presented a special difficulty inasmuch as their cultural habits and comportment were unknowable. Consequently, they were not as easily subjectable to techniques of individualisation and normalisation. This was problematic

from a governmentality point of view since it presented an affront to the order of proper conduct necessary for ensuring social solidarity and civility. Converting casual listeners into serious listeners was thus crucial to the construction of an informed and ordered listening public, as the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education Executive Committee recognised:

The welfare of our nation depends upon a rapid increase in the number of those who were ready to think for themselves and ready to exercise individual judgement, ready to enter into a real relationship pooling their own mental resources with others in order that all together, as each gained some glimpse of the whole variety of truth, they might shape their policy as a people with reference to the whole of it.

(WAC R14/120/4)

The Council was particularly anxious to curtail 'that element in contemporary life' whose qualities were deemed to be 'a certain pugnacity of temper with a herd mentality' (WAC R14/120/1). Such an unknowable mass was potentially unruly and liable to rebel. It was essential that as much as possible be known about the many facets of the listening public: its social composition, cultural habits, tastes and preferences; especially that element of the adult listening public which remained untouched by educational broadcasting. Hence listener research becomes an essential administrative feature from the late thirties onwards, whereupon R. J. E. Silvey (1977) was recruited to the BBC to establish audience research on a systematic basis. Whilst many in the BBC were sceptical about audience research, not least Reith, it soon became an indispensable diagnostic instrument for calibrating and quantifying popular opinion and ascertaining the demographics of its multifaceted audience (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 234 & 375-80). Moreover, it was integral to the wider emergence and development of numericisation, as discussed in chapter one.

### **Enquiries Into Extent Of Educational Listening**

One early attempt at listener research was a survey of the listening public carried out in Autumn 1930. It was advocated in a memorandum presented by the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education Executive Committee in June 1930 (WAC R14/120/2). This expressed a concern over the Central Council being 'short of information on the subject of the reception of the programmes it controls' (ibid.). It was not enough to know about 'the comparatively small proportion of the listening public in organised groups', when there was an unknown 'wider listening public'. A survey would thus 'procure a fairly representative cross-section of public opinion in this country within and without



organised adult education on the habits and tastes of listeners with special reference to educational programmes' (ibid.).

The survey was supposed to sample industrial towns in the North and in the Midlands and rural areas in the North, the Midlands, and the South and West, but the only report I have come across was a summary of data from six villages in north and mid Bedfordshire. Some questions were about preferred times of listening; others sought to elicit knowledge of adult educational broadcasting: (1) 'Do you listen consecutively to series of talks?' (2) 'Do you select from the programme items to which you listen?' (3) 'Have you ever seen the Programme of Broadcast Talks?' (4) 'Do you regularly receive a copy of the Programme of Broadcast Talks?' (5) 'Do you enjoy listening to talks?' (6) 'What subjects and speakers do you like to hear most? Give reasons'. The percentage of interviewees with a serious interest in educational broadcasting varied. One village, Goldington, averaging 48 percent, whilst another village, Riseley, only averaged 20 percent.

The report concluded that hardly any listeners 'were found making full use of the Talks in accordance with the spirit of the study-to-aid pamphlets, with follow-up reading, etc'. Nevertheless 'quite a large proportion of the listening public in the villages listens to at least some of the Talks with a seriousness of interest' which might be converted into 'purposive study'.

Another initiative, mooted in 1929 but never implemented (WAC R14/120/1), was to establish a Guild of Listeners, again to 'facilitate the collection of statistical and other information'. It was suggested that members of the Guild should be registered both centrally and locally, making possible 'a more or less accurate knowledge in each region of the extent and nature of local resources for co-operation in the matter of group organisation and leadership'. However, the proposal never got beyond the preparation of a card index. More successful were two widely known and influential investigations carried out by W. E. Williams (1936 & 1941), then secretary of the British Institute of Adult Education and editor of the WEA monthly journal, *The Highway*.

*Learn and Live* (1936) was especially concerned with the consumer's view of adult education and surveyed the 'educational life-histories' of over 500 adult learners. This



yielded a vast amount of quantitative and qualitative information covering every facet of adult education. *Radio Listening Groups* (1941) provided a comparative analysis of listening groups in the United States and Europe, Great Britain especially. The second study was based upon the testimony of more than 300 witnesses, mostly listening group participants. The tone of the report is both cautious and agnostic about the efficacy of group listening as a means of education. Unlike the earlier enquiries into broadcast adult education, Williams' report is mildly pessimistic.

On the whole it seems that group listening has not managed to mark out for itself territories which were unoccupied or uncolonised before. Except for a small salient here and there, its sphere of interest lies inside rather than outside the established frontiers of adult education ... It is an auxiliary or supplementary service rather than a pioneering activity.

(Cited in Robinson, 1982: 56)

It was at about the same time that both the BBC and the adult education movement generally started to recognise that broadcast adult education had hitherto only appealed to a minority of adult listeners. The BBC was also increasingly reluctant to fund the 'listening-end' work, arguing that this ought be the responsibility of other adult education agencies. However, many tutors and students preferred to concentrate their energies and resources in putting on conventional tutorial classes (see Robinson, 1982: 54-55). There was also the fact that, unlike compulsory elementary education, adult education was a voluntary movement. And like most voluntary bodies the adult education movement experienced an ebbing and flowing in members' enthusiasm. Furthermore, for many adult learners, broadcasting was an informal alternative to the more formal tutorial classes and organised listening groups. Another obstacle inhibiting the development of broadcast adult education and the practice of structured group listening as a pioneering activity was to do with the medium itself. Radio was a domestically located medium listened to casually by families in their homes. As Lambert pointed out, the success of group listening rested upon the assumption that, 'listeners would be eager to leave their comfortable firesides on wintry nights and go out to some local hall or schoolroom to sit round a loudspeaker and discuss the words of wisdom let fall by the invisible broadcaster in their midst' (ibid.: 61). The adult educationalist, W. E. Salt, also noted that, 'many keen members of the broadcast audience prefer individual listening in their homes to class work' (cited in Peers, 1934, 85). Hence Llewellyn-Smith thought that whilst 'broadcasting is an immensely

powerful instrument for the diffusion of popular cultural entertainment ... as a means of education it is handicapped by the inevitable lack of personal contact between teacher and taught' (1935: 8). The problem facing the BBC was thus how to convert radio's everyday familiarity into an instructional medium in the atmosphere of the classroom.

### **Adult Educational Broadcasting and Public Libraries**

A supplement to direct investigation of listeners was to seek feedback from others strategically placed to gauge the effects of educational broadcasts. Library staff were such a group. An interim report for the Ministry of Reconstruction had already recommended that libraries make available 'a room large enough to be used for classes, lectures, and discussions' (1919b: 124). Hence, public libraries were particularly favoured as venues for wireless discussion groups. They were ideal as disciplinary public spaces as they were supervised by highly skilled cultural technicians in the form of librarians. Members of the public were inculcated in how to use libraries properly and conduct themselves in a manner deemed to be appropriate. Failure to conform to the normative standards of behaviour would almost certainly result in some form of disciplinary action being taken either by the librarian or a fellow user, possibly resulting in private embarrassment over one's personal conduct, something Rose (1999: 73) refers to as 'government through the calculated administration of shame'. In other words, the public is coercible by means of a surveillance which elicits an anxiety over one's deportment in public spaces.

Furthermore, insofar as public service broadcasting and public libraries were both means of cultural governance, one can discern a mutuality in their objectives and political rationalities. An example was the BBC issuing a questionnaire to about seven hundred public librarians throughout the country in May, 1927. Its object was stated in a memorandum on 'Adult Educational Broadcasting and Public Libraries' prepared by Lambert:

One of the principal difficulties at present facing the development of adult educational broadcasting is the lack of knowledge concerning the constituency with which we have to deal, and the effects which our work is having upon it. Any piece of evidence which contributes to throw light on this problem is therefore of great importance.

(WAC R14/145/1)

Two of the questions asked were: (1) 'Did you notice any effect of broadcasting on the demand for books in the last three months? Which talks, if any, were particularly successful in this way?' (2) 'Can you suggest any further lines of co-operation between your library and the BBC for the promotion of reading in your area'? (see BBC, 1928: 51 & WAC R14/145/1). Of the reported seventy-five libraries which replied to the questionnaire (see WAC, Newspaper Cuttings: Education, 1926-28) forty-four reported an increase in the issue of books referred to in the adult education talks. The *Morning Post* (19 August 1927) reported that many librarians from provincial libraries were 'being overwhelmed with requests for books that have never been stocked or ever before required'. The chief librarian of the Sheffield Library reported that group listening 'composed of a variety of personality, belief, opinion and outlook, could blend together and discuss questions of importance without any distinctions of bias or feeling'; and that 'the Library was indeed a 'Public House' for the free, open and sympathetic exchange of views' (WAC R14/120/1). The amount of information provided by librarians did not go unnoticed, prompting the *Yorkshire Post* (24 August 1927) to comment that 'every librarian is a statistician'.

Among the suggestions made for better co-operation between public libraries and broadcasting were the following: (1) 'The issue by the BBC of a poster to be displayed in public libraries stating that the library in question is co-operating with the BBC and calling attention to the books connected with the talks; (2) 'Continuous consultation between librarians and the BBC in regard to the development of the work from both sides'; (3) 'The provision of occasional broadcast talks on the use of libraries by the public'; (4) 'Broadcast readings from famous books readily available in all public libraries'; (5) 'Libraries to be the visible connecting link between the BBC and the public. Boxes to be placed in the libraries in which could be dropped cards supplied by the BBC for suggestions or questions in regard to programmes' (WAC R14/145/1). Many of the librarians also stated that they would prepare short lists of the books recommended by adult educational broadcasts which they had in stock and circulate them to the public. In cases where they did not actually have the books that are recommended in stock, many librarians expressed a preparedness to provide supplementary lists of books which they would recommend themselves as substitutes.



Not only access to books was to be encouraged. The British Institute of Adult Education experimented with exhibitions of loan collection of pictures 'in centres where there has hitherto been little chance for the ordinary man to see anything of the sort' (see *The Listener*, 13 February & 3 April 1935). It chose for the first phase Barnsley, Swindon and Silver End (near Braintree). The declared object of the experiment was to breach 'the gulf between art and men's ordinary activities' and in so doing 'expose' people to 'the novel experience of looking at good works of art'.

At each exhibition there were a number of 'observers' who, as well answering any questions, were also 'to instigate impromptu discussions with visitors'. Visitors were encouraged to answer a 'form of inquiry' consisting of four questions: (1) Which pictures do you like best? (2) Why do you like them best? (3) What opportunities do you get to visit Art Galleries or Exhibitions? (4) In what ways do you think these opportunities could be increased or improved? Whilst all four questions were clearly aimed at eliciting information about cultural tastes and preferences, questions (3) and (4) are particularly pertinent inasmuch as they required the interviewee to say something about how their social conditions affect their use of leisure. In other words, the experiment was clearly yet another attempt to render the problem of leisure more knowable by extracting information from working-class populations. This knowledge could then be acted on and incorporated into future governmental programs of cultural management aimed at securing political obedience. The above also demonstrates how the BBC closely identified with extant agencies with their own mission towards culture and civilisation: not only adult education groups but libraries and art exhibitions. The new medium was grafted onto some longstanding routes to cultured citizenship, which brings us back to the problem of leisure.

### **Educative-Leisure**

It was felt by many early twentieth century social progressives that education would facilitate the proper use of leisure. For example, Ernest Barker, Principal of King's College, London, thought that, 'education is a necessity if men are to gain the faculty of using leisure easily, happily, and fruitfully' (Barker, 1926: 32). More than this, he feared that,



Leisure without faculty for its use may even be a mother of mischief; men may dissipate themselves in frivolities, and worse than frivolities, because they do not know how to concentrate themselves upon better things. A society which guarantees leisure is guaranteeing something which may be useless, and even dangerous, unless it adds, or at any rate encourages its members to add, the one thing which will enable the gift to be used – a continuous process of education.

(Barker, 1926: 32)

Of the adult educational broadcasts which specially addressed the problem of leisure, probably the most interesting was *The Changing World* (see WAC, BBC Talks and Lectures, Vol. 6, September 1931 - July 1932 & R129/3/1; Briggs, 1965: 220-21; Robinson, 1982: 53-54; Williams, 1941: 181-83). The series covered six main subjects, ran for a period of six months, and was broadcast five evenings a week between 7.30pm to 8.00pm. The series was accompanied by six study-aid pamphlets, one master pamphlet (BBC, 1932) and a Board of Education publication (HMSO, 1933).

The scope and aim of the series was to 'provide a survey of the many changes in outward circumstance, and in the evolution of thought and of values, which have brought into being the world as it is today'. Though each series of talks differed in subject matter, all centred around three key questions, one of which concerned itself with asking the listener to reconsider their civic responsibilities in the light of certain prevailing forces of change to 'remodel our ways of life' and 'the machinery of government'.

One of the talks, *The Modern State*, was introduced by J. A. Hobson in a study-to-aid pamphlet. As well as outlining the desirability of broadcasting being a public utility, Hobson also expounded the educative potentialities of broadcasting:

... if, as may hold, the time has come for applying a conscious art of Government to the ordering of public affairs, in local, national, and international spheres, the all-important question of the part which the ordinary citizen shall play in this great new enterprise will depend upon the reliability of this new instrument [i.e. broadcasting] of popular education, more than upon any other fact or force. Not merely, or mainly, as the provider of sound information, but as the chief stimulus and irritant of thought and feeling, broadcasting must come to rank as the 'popular educator'...

(WAC, R129/3/1)

Another of the talks was *Education and Leisure*. Listeners were exhorted to form discussion groups and to consider such questions as: (1) 'How do think leisure ought to be employed'? (2) 'How far is it necessary to educate people in the proper use of

leisure’? (3) ‘In what ways would education need to be altered if this were to be regarded as an essential part of it’? (4) ‘Has the cinema in your district made any difference to the popularity of the public houses’? (5) ‘Do people stay at home more or less than they did in 1900’? (6) ‘Can there be a civilised community without a leisure class’? (WAC, R129/3/1). What we see here is yet another attempt to elicit quantifiable information from a public who will then become the object of its own confessional discourse.

The accompanying study-aid pamphlet, entitled *Learning to Live*, specified how education and leisure should be harnessed towards the same goals.

We have to envisage education and leisure as forces of transformation ... we are not permitted to put education or leisure in watertight compartments. We are not concerned with education merely as education or with leisure merely as leisure. We are concerned rather with the whole nexus of our social life, and with education and leisure as forces within which are continuously at work changing and altering its character and its quality.

(MacMurray, 1932: 1)

Leisure was taken to be an index of: ‘the quality of our humanity’ since ‘leisure ... is the condition of culture, for culture is merely the expression of free human activity’ (MacMurray, 1932: 38 & 25). Hence the pedagogical imperative that we ‘learn to live’, ‘to be trained to use our freedom, and to employ our leisure to the best advantage’ (ibid.: 25). Not surprisingly, the main condition for the proper use of leisure ‘is the possession of a spontaneous, self-controlling, self-directing mind’ (ibid.: 39). Rationality becomes the pre-eminence of the mind over emotions and the body. The idea of civilisation is one where the mind controls our baser natures. Note also the prominence of culture here and the way in which it was reinterpreted as encompassing leisure. In other words, the dilemma of the relationship between education and entertainment was inserted into a new problematic, already discussed in the previous chapter, of the uses of leisure. In this way the BBC positioned itself as both provider of leisure and arbiter as to how to best use leisure. Here then, was a kind of solution to the tension between education and entertainment.

Consciousness of the leisure problem was evident at a conference organised by the National Institute of Industrial Psychology and the British Institute for Adult Education, held at Queen Mary Hall, London, in 1937 (see WAC, R14/42/1). The purpose of the

conference was 'to discuss how people might more usefully spend their leisure time', and was attended by a variety of national organisations, including the BBC, all of which were in some way concerned with cultivating educative-recreation. The conference proceedings identified the problems of leisure provision as being of increasing sociological and national importance.

Opportunities for amusement, recreation and self-improvement are rapidly multiplying, but much confusion and overlapping exists in their use. We have found a striking consensus of opinion among all the principal organisations concerned with leisure that there is a distinct need for a more exact assessment and co-ordination of the facilities available ... In order to deal successfully with the social problems arising from the increase in leisure hours, the fullest possible information must be made available to the bodies engaged in practical and educational work in connection with leisure activities.

What the above passage, and indeed much of this chapter, clearly indicates is the extent to which educative-recreation discursive practices prevailed across a plethora of cultural institutions that were summoned to the task of the cultural governance of the adult population. With this in mind I would now like to consider more properly the political rationality discernible in broadcast adult education and the other cultural institutions that are in some way concerned with educative-recreation qua leisure.

It would be true to say that most of the discourses and practices discussed so far have all been concerned with cultivating an educated and politically obedient citizenship. Broadcast adult education was just one of many institutional attempts to intervene in the public uses of leisure in an effort to encourage recreational practices whose principal *raison d'être* was to train the adult population in the social, economic and political capacities required for an educated-citizenry. Crucial to this project was that broadcast adult education, and adult education generally, was constructed as a self-acting imperative which the popular classes voluntarily followed in pursuing the abstract rhetoric of 'educated-democracy'. Consider for example the following paragraph from the BBC publication on how to organise discussion groups and what they are for:

... if democracy is to be a real democracy, it must be an educated democracy ... Broadcasting, breaking down the barriers of space, destroying distinctions of class, placing its resources at the service of all men, whether rich or poor, can do more to ensure an educational democracy than any other single agent. Whether it does do all that it can do, depends mainly on the listener.

(BBC, 1932: 39)



Similarly, an article to appear in *The Listener* (8 August 1934) reiterated: ‘... if we are gradually to develop a finer and nobler civilisation, our citizens must care more and know more’. However, the discourse of educated-citizenship was as much about disciplining citizens in the art of self-government so as to have a deeper sense ‘of social responsibility, of sympathy and of the willingness to help in working for a common purpose’ as it was with equipping them with abstract rights and freedom. In order to secure governance from a distance it was necessary for individuals to translate the values of a higher and distant authority into their own terms, such that they provide both totalising and individualising normative standards for conduct.<sup>97</sup> It was essential that the populace both in its entirety and as individuals cared more about its civil responsibilities. This was particularly so in the early twentieth-century when governmental attempts to reconstruct a new social order and reinvigorate national efficiency greatly depended upon a useful and productive citizenry.

In short, the problem for government was how to effect a technique of power that could at one and the same time wield political power over legal subjects who have certain rights of freedom and pastoral power over live individuals whose welfare must be provided for as an individual and as part of a population (see Foucault, 2002e: 314-17; Dean, 1999: 82-3). Broadcast adult education and the corresponding practice of educated-democracy was just one cultural apparatus through which reasons of state and pastorship was realisable.

## Conclusions

The early years of the twentieth century were marked by a concerted effort to deploy an adult educational apparatus that was both totalising and individualising as a technique of governance. The positive effect of this was that many previously uneducated working-class adults were to be given the opportunity to broaden their intellectual and cultural horizons and in so doing realise a fuller way of life. However, to say that adult education was concerned with the educational completion of its subjects is questionable. Rather the apparatus of adult education had as its object the formation of highly specific cultural practices, viz. ones which would foster an efficient but docile citizenry. The

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<sup>97</sup> This consensual nature of broadcast adult education was observed by the then Education Officer of the London County Council: ‘The strength of this movement for education by wireless lies at the circumference, not at the centre’ (BBC, 1932: 10).



governmental rationality was the inculcating of the adult working-class population in matters of culture and morality; and was made possible by a complex machinery of social investigation and administration thus rendering the adult working-class population an object of government. To paraphrase Hunter's (1988: ix) work on nineteenth century secondary education, it was 'in and through this machinery', and not through the idea of 'educated democracy' that a modern adult education service was effected. In short, modern adult education was less to do with supplying the needs and demand of the working-class populace than it was to do with supplying a useful working-class populace who would discharge their democratic rights in the newly established, post-war mass democracy.

That said, there is some evidence to suggest that large sections of the working-class population still remained outside any serious educational influence, even educational broadcasting. In other words, the adult education movement mainly appealed to the converted and did not reach out to the working-class population en masse. The BBC itself was increasingly reluctant to prioritise and fund adult education broadcasts, particularly the so-called 'listening-end work' (see Briggs, 1965: 223). Endless administrative reorganisations and changes in policy resulted in adult education becoming something of a nomadic service. Consequently, the importance initially accorded to adult education and listening groups steadily diminished, their eventual cessation being announced by the General Advisory Committee in June 1938. Hereon, the educational emphasis was on the general audience, not the adult education audience (see Briggs, 1965: 222-226; Robinson, 1982: 60; WAC, A/261). This shift in policy was made clear in an internal memorandum which stated that series talks suitable for listening-groups would hereon 'form part of the Corporation's general talks programme and that, coming at important listening periods, they must be of interest to a wider audience than is likely to listen in groups' (cited in Briggs, 1965: 224). In short, radio was more effective as an educative or informative medium rather than as a conventional-teaching medium. Hence the BBC abandoned its formal efforts at adult education and instead adopted an educational practice which was more general in its aims and strategy. Moreover, it sought to target the listening audience as a whole, rather than just the listening-groups, which had become increasingly parochial and of a minority interest. A further difficulty, as noted by Siepmann (1950: 282), was 'finding group leaders with sufficient skills and knowledge to hold the groups together and to

sustain effective discussion following the broadcasts'. There was also the indisputable fact that there was much popular demand for entertainment during the peak hours of evening listening.

Notwithstanding the above developments, the deployment of wireless as a educative-recreation was to fundamentally alter the way in which adults could be inculcated in the arts of governance. Broadcast adult education and its co-operation with formal adult learning agencies was instrumental in realising a disciplinary apparatus which enabled the formation, constitution, and dissemination of certain types of comportment. Further, this process of objectification was one which necessarily involved the adult listener actively regulating themselves, and participating in self-forming practices mediated by the external agencies of pedagogical expertise and pastoral power.

Following on from this I now want to consider more properly the deployment of public service broadcasting as a means of securing the moral well-being of the popular masses. Whilst I have made some reference to this already in the above, the extent to which moral training was a discernible characteristic and rationality of early broadcasting is perhaps most salient when one considers the specificities of religious broadcasting and its relations with a whole variety of other Christian pedagogical technologies, the subject of my next chapter.

## **Radio Evangelism**

What I mean to demonstrate in this chapter is the way in which religious broadcasting developed as an extension of Christian pastoral guidance and the disciplinary apparatus effected by religious morality, that is the socio-religious mechanisms that give direction to practical conduct and hold individuals to it. The significance of this is that broadcast religion was a broadcasting activity to which the BBC, and Reith particularly, ascribed special importance. As demonstrated in other chapters, the BBC was determined to provide what it thought was for the moral good of the greater majority. In spite of overwhelming criticism from the listening public and secular public opinion, the BBC was unswerving in its commitment to the centrality of Christianity in the national culture. By the end of the 1930s the 'Reithian Sunday' was the most enduring and controversial of the BBCs inter-war practices.

In order to understand the institutionalisation of religious broadcasting, it is first necessary to review the role of religion in British life, especially its perceived connection with the crucial themes of civilisation, nation and culture. As with the chapter before, what follows is a tentative interpretation of some of the dominant aspects of religion during the nineteenth-century and into the early twentieth-century: its changing role in society during this period; its response to that change; and its social relations with other forms of recreation, particularly the BBC during the inter-war period. Some of the topics to be discussed in the first part of the chapter, together with some indication of why these are important to understanding early religious broadcasting, include: religion as guarantor of the moral order, the secularisation of society, Christian and wider governmental responses to the apparent decline of religious belief and morality from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Sabbatarianism, unofficial or popular religion, and the ecumenicalism of inter-war Britain. It will be seen later that the BBC adopted a distinctive line on each of these issues.

### **The Secularisation of Society**

In the course of British history church and state have taken very different attitudes towards each other, varying from close collaboration to complete indifference or, occasionally, outright hostility. The historic and constitutional relationship between the

English state and Christianity dates back to 1531 when parliament and the convocation of Canterbury and York declared the monarch, then Henry VIII, the supreme head of the Church of England. Since then the relationship between church and state has been one where distinct functions have been observed: the Church as the trustee of Christian utterance and a servant of the state by proclaiming the will of God as the supreme standard to which all human wills must be subject and all human conduct must conform; and the state as the guarantor of justice and civil liberty, and the nation's economic welfare and security. In their totality the two institutions have historically functioned to ensure social and moral order. The principal means of accomplishing this end has been to educate its people to be loyal and capable citizens or subjects.

However, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards there is a tendency for the state to exert a more totalising control of human life in all its individual and social aspects than before. With the fundamental secularisation of society and culture, including recreations and belief systems among the working classes, the church's popular base and social importance diminished.<sup>98</sup> Consequently, it began to narrow its concerns and concentrate on more purely religious tasks, what functionalist sociologists describe as a process of 'functional differentiation', which is itself part of a more general bureaucratic rationalisation of modern society. Increasingly, the church relinquishes its civilising mission, including responsibility for the entire conduct of morality and education (see Cox, 1982: 177-220). Conversely, secular authorities also became less dependent on religion as a means of securing social governance. Thus support for institutions providing religious instruction, such as the adult and Sunday schools, greatly abated from the early twentieth century onwards. The Victorian crisis of faith was further exacerbated as English society becomes relatively more affluent from the early twentieth century onwards; not least because growing affluence meant more freedom in

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<sup>98</sup> The main evidence often cited to sort this secularisation thesis is the decreasing levels of church attendance and participation in official religion generally, especially among the urban working-class population (see Gilbert, 1976 & 1980; Inglis, 1963; Wickham, 1957). The ratio of civil to religious marriages is another indicator of secularisation. For example, in 1851 the number of civil marriages was 6813 compared with 147,393 religious marriages; in 1900 the number of civil marriages was 39,471, whilst the number of religious marriages had increased to 218,009; by 1919, the number of civil marriages had more than doubled to 85,330, whilst religious marriages had increased by only a quarter to 284,081 (Currie *et al.*, 1977: 223-4). Secularism was also evident in the rise of secularist organisations, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire. For example, in 1900 the number of Rationalist Press Associations stood at 192, increasing to 2789 in 1919, and 3526 by 1930 (*ibid.*: 194). Unlike Nonconformist dissenters, radical secularists were atheists and opposed to all forms of religion, regardless of their denomination. Many would later join the Social Democratic Federation, and later still, the Labour and Communist Parties.



what ones chooses to do with one's leisure-time, even for the labouring masses (see Gilbert, 1976: 112-13, 145-8 & 186-7; McLeod, 1984: 31). Whereas the church had provided community structures in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Currie *et al* (1977: 64) suggest that, from the mid-nineteenth onwards, 'the urban population consolidated its own largely secular community structures, based on the pub, the club, the trade union, and neighbourhood relationships'. In other words, working class leisure and popular culture became a direct threat to the Church and their moral authority.<sup>99</sup>

The response of the churches was to attempt to colonise these new leisure times and spaces. Less attention was focused on the prayer or class meeting: in their stead, attention was paid to weekday activities more oriented towards entertainment, light relaxation or general education (see Gilbert, 1976: 182). Even the traditionally conservative Anglican Church began encouraging socio-religious activities such as the Mothers' Union, men's fellowships and youth clubs. In spite of the Churches' efforts to widen their social appeal, they increasingly found themselves losing ground to the increasingly popular secular and political activities that begin to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whilst secularisation was occasionally punctuated by a period of religious revival, such revivals were more often than not isolated and insignificant when one considers the overall pattern of religious decline during this period. To quote Gilbert, rather than resembling 'plateaux divided by abrupt chasms', cycles of religious revivals came to resemble 'mountains separated by wide valleys' (1973: 193). It was in response to this phenomenon that we see the emergence of socio-religious activities that were concomitant with the emergence of wholly secular rational recreations. However, by the twentieth century official religion increasingly relinquished its function as a means of enforcing social cohesion and moral authority to secular social institutions, viz. state sponsored education, rational recreations, and the entertainment industry, not least broadcasting. In time, secular recreational associations would replace the Church in terms of offering its incumbents social prestige and

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<sup>99</sup> The theological credibility of religion was also greatly undermined with the proliferation of scientific and irreligious discourses –viz. Darwinism and Marxism– which challenged the veracity of creationism and religious morality. This crisis in plausibility was also an effect of Puritanism and its creation of what Weber (1976: 95-155) called 'this worldly asceticism', that is to say, an ethic which was pragmatic, disciplinarian, rational and anti-emotional (see Gilbert, 1976: 184; Wilson, 1969: 43-5). In other words, the advent of the Protestant ethic and its encouragement of capital and a rational bourgeois economy was to greatly undermine the spiritual hold of religion.

respectability. The entertainment industry's challenge to religion was more specially concerned with its ability to communicate to a mass audience. Consequently, the Church was no longer the primary source of information or means of public communication. Rather, the church becomes one of several competing voices; and perhaps the least efficient in terms of communicating to a mass public (Wilson, 1969: 62). That religion should become one of the core broadcasting activities only accentuated this process inasmuch as the church was seen to be actively consenting to the relegation of religion to the level of an essentially secular-based medium, that is, one far removed from the nexus of the pulpit and pew.

### **Aggressive Christianity**

Probably the most famous comment on nineteenth-century religion and secularisation – and its subsequent development in the early twentieth century – was the English Religious Census of 1851 undertaken by Horace Mann (1853), the then Registrar-General of Religion. As well as showing the amount of 'accommodation' for worship provided by the various religious bodies, the report also summarised the extent to which the means for religious worship were used, not least its absence among the working classes. Unpalatable though such knowledge might be, it was essential to the nation's rulers, as Mann noted in a prefatory letter addressed to George Graham, then Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.

Whether we regard a people merely in their secular capacity, as partners in a great association for promoting the stability, the opulence, the peaceful glory of a State; or view them in their loftier character, as subjects of a higher kingdom – swift and momentary travellers towards a never-ending destiny: in either aspect, the degree and the direction of religious sentiment in a community are subjects of the weightiest import: in the one case to the temporal guardians of a nation – to its spiritual teachers in the other. Statesmen – aware to what a great extent the liberty or bondage, industry or indolence, prosperity or poverty, of any people, are the fruits of its religious creed, and knowing also how extensively religious feelings tinge political opinions – find an accurate acquaintance with the various degrees and forms in which religious sentiment is manifested, indispensable to a correct appreciation either of the country's actual condition or its prospective tendency ...

(Mann, 1853: 8)

Mann went on to lament that 'a sadly formidable proportion of the English people are habitual neglecters of the public ordinances of religion' (ibid.: 158). And the particular class of people singled out as being most estranged from religion were 'the labouring myriads', those most in need of religion.

There is a sect, originated recently, adherents to a system called 'Secularism' ... This is the creed which probably with most exactness indicates the faith which, virtually, though not professedly, is entertained by the masses of our working population; by the skilled and unskilled labourer alike – by hosts of minor shopkeepers and Sunday traders – and by miserable denizens of courts and crowded alleys. They are unconscious Secularists – engrossed by the demands, the trials, or the pleasures of the passing hour, and ignorant or careless of the future. These are never, or but seldom seen in our religious congregations; and the melancholy fact is thus impressed upon our notice that the classes which are most in need of the restraints and consolations of religion are the classes most without them.<sup>100</sup>

(Mann, 1853: 158)

Mann was especially critical of the Church of England's indifference towards pastorship vis-à-vis the 'Methodist patriarchs' for their 'unceasing labours' in converting non-believers. The ineffectiveness of the Anglican parochial system was further aggravated owing to the spatial isolation of many of its parishioners from the church, the parsonage, and the manor house. It was becoming apparent that the traditional Anglican parochial system was one that belonged to a rural, pre-industrial England (see Eliot, 1953: 214-6; Gilbert, 1976: 100-10; Inglis, 1963: 24-7). Conventional parish ministers were in no position to reach such people since they essentially waited for the people to come to them. By contrast, the non-conformists went to meet the people.

The people who refuse to hear the gospel in church must have it brought to them in their own haunts. If ministers, by standing every Sunday in the desk or pulpit, fail to attract the multitudes around, they must by some means make their invitations heard beyond the church or chapel walls ... until the dingy territories of this alienated nation are invaded by aggressive Christian agency, we cannot reasonably look for that more general attendance on religious ordinances ...

(Mann, 1853: 162)

The influence of pastorship upon 'the conduct of life' was also noted by Weber (1971: 75-6) who thought pastorship to be 'the priests' real instrument of power' insofar as the pastor would normally be consulted in all worldly matters by both private individuals and the communities in which they live. How to develop new methods of pastorship, or

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<sup>100</sup> How to get through to the working classes was a constant problem for religious leaders. Of the institutions aimed at providing religious and moral education for the popular masses, adult schools and Sunday schools were by far the most prevalent. We have already seen in chapter four how adult schools were concerned with reforming and regulating the morality and behaviour of the common people. From this example developed Sunday schools, especially in Methodist chapels, from the 1780s onwards. The significance of the Sunday school movement was momentous: evangelical in origin and method, they are universally appraised as bringing Christianity to parts of those working-classes who were otherwise out of reach of the churches. By 1818 there were nearly one and a half million Sunday school scholars; approximately five million by 1900; and at the height of the movements popularity in 1906 there were over six million students (see Currie *et al*, 1977: 88; Laqueur, 1976: xi & 246). This virtually universal phenomenon survived well into the early-twentieth century.



what Mann called 'aggressive Christianity', was a concern for all the Christian denominations, so that by the early twentieth century we see a shift towards more practical forms of religiosity, ones which increasingly relied upon discreet forms of surveillance. The settlement movement was undoubtedly one of the more significant experiments in religious and social reform.<sup>101</sup> Wireless, though it was to be in some ways a negation of traditional pastorship, was to greatly aid the extension of pastoral power, as demonstrated in chapter four.

Mann (1853: 167-68) concluded his report by emphasising the expediency of religion and that 'no inconsiderable portion of the secular prosperity and peace of individuals and states depends on the extent to which a pure religion is professed and practically followed'. Further,

Applying to the regulation of their daily conduct towards themselves and towards society the same high sanctions which control them in their loftier relations, Christian men [sic] become, almost inevitably, temperate, industrious, and provident, as part of their religious duty; and Christian citizens acquire respect for human laws from having learnt to reverence those which are divine. The history of men and states shows nothing more conspicuously than this – that in proportion as a pure and practical religion is acknowledged and pursued are individuals prosperous and nations orderly and free.

(Mann, 1853: 168)

It is in the above passage that we see quite clearly the function of religion as a technology of social governance: religion guarantees morality; morality guarantees order within the state; the state guarantees the welfare of its citizens, and so on. More than this, almost exactly seventy years later these problems would become the guiding tenets of the BBCs approach to religious broadcasting. It also inherited a distinctive view of Sunday as the crucial time for the construction and imposition of Christian morality.

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<sup>101</sup> Toynbee Hall, located in the East of London, was the first of the settlements to be established in 1884 with Rev. Samuel Barnett as warden. The majority of founders and residents of settlements were mostly clergy and young Oxbridge-educated male adults who accepted a responsibility as Christians to live for a time among the urban working-classes (see Inglis, 1963: 143). The purpose of the settlements was twofold: on the one hand, the settlers hoped to inculcate the masses in civic education and in so doing foster a greater intimacy between social classes; in uplifting the moral well-being of the poor it was also hoped that the settlements would restore a degree of religiosity.



## The Use of Sunday

The tradition of a seven day week with a weekly day of rest and worship has been observed by most religions for hundreds of years (see Eskenazi *et al*, 1991; Lincoln, 1982; Rordorf, 1968). English Sabbatarianism emerged as a widely observed social custom during the sixteenth century Reformation, since when there have been various legal and moral prescriptions for Sunday observance: the *Sunday Observance Act* (1677) prohibited work and trade, and restricted Sunday travelling; the *Sunday Observance Act* (1780) declared places open for public entertainment on Sundays, to which admissions was charged, disorderly and illegal; the *Beer Act* (1830) restricted public house opening hours and the *Gaming Act* (1845) prohibited the playing of billiards and bagatelle; the *Factory Acts Extension Act* (1867) prohibited the employment of women and children in factories. Laws enforcing Sunday observance was still being passed in the early-twentieth century: the *Betting and Lotteries Act* (1934) forbade Sunday betting by means of bookmaking or totalising; and the *Shops (Sunday Trading Restriction) Act* (1936) prohibited all shops from opening on Sundays. However, there were some concessions: the *Sunday Entertainments Act* (1932) repealed the 1677 and 1780 Acts by allowing cinemas, musical concerts, museums, galleries, zoos, gardens, lectures and debates to take place and open on Sundays, provided there was no fee for admission.<sup>102</sup>

The high point of English Sabbatarianism was the mid-Victorian period. The austerity of the English Sabbath during this period was infamous, prompting one foreign observer to remark: 'I do not know for what unspeakable sin the Lord has sentenced England to the weekly punishment of her Sunday' (cited in Pickering, 1972: 35). Of the various Sunday observance societies, by far the most significant was the Lord's Day Observance Society (LDOS), founded by Daniel Wilson in 1831. Among the society's stated principles was a 'firm belief in the Divine Authority and perpetual obligation of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day' (WAC R41/100). One of the earliest LDOS publications was a treatise entitled *An Appeal to the Rich* (1831), warning the ruling

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<sup>102</sup> For a brief summary of the major Acts of Parliament relating to Sunday observance in England see Wigley (1980: 204-208). Though all the above laws worked in the same direction, increasingly the working classes perceived Sundays differently from religious leaders and employers. Wigley (1980: 79) identifies three competing definitions of Sunday: (i) the Sabbatarians wanted committed and obedient worshippers; (ii) employers wanted their workers to rest and recuperate for the working week ahead; (iii) workers wanted bodily and mental amusement and recreation.

class that if the poor be allowed to break God's law there was a possibility that they might reject all human authority upon which the social status quo depended (see Wigley, 1980: 46). Other Sunday observance societies included: the National Lord's Day Rest Association, the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association, The League Against Sunday Travelling, and the Imperial Sunday Alliance.<sup>103</sup> All enjoined strict observation of the Sabbath. Even Sunday newspapers were deemed a profanation of the English Sunday insofar as they encouraged the dissemination of secular ideas and practices.

However, by the early twentieth-century, all social classes participated in some form of Sunday leisure: the rich enjoyed a long weekend and took to travelling a great deal by the newly invented motor-car; the middle-classes turned Sunday into a holiday and participated in respectable sports such as tennis and golf; the working classes meanwhile were divided among the respectable members who spend their Sunday afternoons going for leisurely walks and having high tea, and those who still preferred to spend their time drinking and gambling (Wigley, 1980: 159). Sabbatarians were particularly anxious to regulate working class uses of leisure on Sundays. So much so that many religious figures began to advocate that, to quote Inglis (1963: 79), 'the churches take pleasure and consecrate it'. Just as social reformers had turned to recreation in an effort to regulate the conduct of the popular masses, so too did religious leaders begin to infuse religion with secular, rational recreation in the hope that it might revive the popularity of the church and religion. Just as the political rationality of many so-called educative leisure activities were opaque, so too was the religious pill tempered with a coating of sugar.

The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement, established in 1875 by John Blackham, an Independent deacon in West Bromwich, exemplified this change in rationality. Aimed at the non-church going public or what were more commonly referred to as the 'lapsed masses' (Inglis, 1963: 82), its object was to provide a balanced mixture of entertainment, edification and religion. The National Sunday League, founded by R. M. Morrell in 1855, and by far the most significant of the so-called Free Sunday Societies,

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<sup>103</sup> Founded in 1908 by Bickersteth Ottley, and supported by the Convocation of Canterbury, the Imperial Sunday Alliance (later renamed the Imperial Alliance for the Defence of Sundays) was to exert a great deal of pressure on broadcasting policy (see WAC R41/74).

was primarily concerned with promoting intellectual and elevating recreation on the Sabbath, such as the opening of museums, art galleries, and libraries, excursions or band concerts in the park. One of the more notable achievements of the Society was its inaugurating of the London Palladium Concerts in 1910. All such societies had in common attempts at reconciling religion with leisure, particularly rational recreation. Though the aims of the Societies were initially met with stubborn opposition, it was gradually recognised by Sabbatarians – though not all by any means – that nothing pernicious was done to the observance of the Sabbath ‘by the sane healthy enjoyment of good music and such proper and innocent pleasures as improve both mind and body’ (WAC R30/2/166/1). In other words, though there was a good deal of conflict between those who saw Sunday as a day of strict religious observance when all normal activities of work or leisure were to be forsaken and those who saw Sunday as the day for leisure and pleasure, in between were those who sought to use Sunday as a day for ‘rational’ recreations compatible with broad Christian morality. This issue would prove thorny for the BBC.

### **Popular Religion**

In recent years there have emerged a number of so-called revisionist religious histories that refute the secularisation thesis expounded in the above (see Cox, 1982; Green, 1990 & 1996; McLeod, 1984, 1987 & 1996; Morris, 1992; Williams, 1999). Whereas the above histories were preoccupied with the question of religious decline and institutional expressions of religiosity, more recent histories have focused upon popular expressions of religiosity. Hence a characteristic of popular religion histories is that they tend to focus on detailed research in particular localities. Here is district nurse Margaret Loane’s account drawn from her visits to working-class homes in London at the end of the nineteenth century:

To count the churchgoers and chapel-goers and argue that the neighbourhood is without religion or to estimate the proportion of children and young persons in places of worship and then say ‘religion has no hold on them’ ... is a serious error. It is a confusion of formal outward signs and inward spiritual graces. Many of the poor rarely attend church, not because they are irreligious but because they have long since received and absorbed the truths by which they live ...

(Cited in Williams, 1999: 1)

What the above passage illustrates is that Christianity amongst the working-class was distinct from the official ideal of the true believer (see Williams, 1999: 105-25). In



other words, the popular masses did not regard church-based culture as the only arbiter of truth or morality. Rather, the ideas and practices of popular religion were firmly rooted in the ethical and religious milieu of the local community and tended to be enacted within a context of nostalgia, loyalty, and tradition. Such practices included simple humanitarian goodness towards one's family, neighbours and friends, a respect for the Sabbath, sending one's children to Sunday school, and teaching them to say prayers. Sunday school was especially popular, at least with parents. Sending their children to church – a practice commonly referred to as 'religion by deputy' – presented themselves as being respectable members of the community, if not actively religious themselves. A more sceptical view was that the working classes were using the churches simply for entertainment purposes, charity hand-outs, or somewhere to unload the children for a couple of hours, without making any formal commitment beyond attending once in a while or sending their children to Sunday school.<sup>104</sup>

In all these forms, working-class aloofness from church-based culture should not necessarily be understood as indifference but rather as a renegotiation of what it meant to be a 'good Christian'. Direct church involvement was not the only criterion for observing or ensuring the moral well-being of the populace. Many working-class families continued to uphold Christian morality and traditions based on their own reinterpretations and cultural heritage thus effecting what Williams (1999: 166) describes as a 'coalescence of folk and official religious discourses'. Similarly, Currie *et al* (1977: 101) have suggested that families would participate in religious worship only insofar as being a member of that denomination was considered 'an appropriate and desirable characteristic of their community'. This would certainly explain why religion was particularly strong in small isolated communities.

The reason for my mentioning the above is because the BBC religious broadcasting would succeed best where it exploited the popular basis of religion rather than reproducing the dominant forms from which too many were already alienated.

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<sup>104</sup> One churchman interviewed for Booth's (1902a: 103) *Life and Labour* survey, argued that the public had no real sense of sin or atonement: 'Most men believe in God to whom they ascribe their vague humanitarian impulses but he is a God who makes small demands upon them in terms of worship and right conduct and with whom they are consequently on the best of terms ...'.



## Post-War Christian Faith

The full extent of the Church's estrangement from the everyday fabric of English society became transparent after the First World War. One of the many Ministry of Reconstruction reports was one on religion, *The Army and Religion* (1919). The report committee was convened by The Rt. Rev. E. S. Talbot, Bishop of Winchester. The aim and scope of the enquiry was to ascertain what male soldiers thought about religion, morality, and society; how the war has affected their moral and religious outlook and character; and, finally, the relation of the men to the Church. What the report made clear was that an overwhelming majority of working class males were no longer reached by the Church. The report was also quite candid in its articulation of the perceived threat posed by disaffected soldiers to the social order on their return. More than this, the report was concerned that male soldiers were potentially disaffected from all established institutions, with that danger that 'our statesmen may find themselves later on facing tidal forces of feeling which will sweep them away into oblivion' (ibid: xxvi).

Among other things, soldiers were asked if they considered the following statement to be true: 'The soldier has got religion, I am not so sure that he has Christianity' (1919: 9). The question was intended to test to what extent religion had become detached from the actual teachings of the Christian Church. The report suggests that whilst many soldiers expressed an elementary religiosity, their beliefs were not in any way grounded in official religion or Christian morality. Rather their religion was premised upon popular interpretations of Christian faith and practices – what prevailed amongst the soldiers was not so much Christianity as, to quote the report, a 'natural religion'. This was regarded as insufficient since it prescribed no clear rules for moral conduct or objective exercise of the intellect.

Whilst the report recognised that such practices cannot 'be overthrown by repressive agencies alone', it strongly recommended that 'vital impulses' be somehow channelled into more 'wholesome' and 'honourable' practices. And it is suggested that the Christian Church pioneer the way for the state by discovering and providing these channels, that is to say, practical remedies. The report thus stresses that in order for social reconstruction to be realised there must be a concomitant spiritual and moral regeneration. In other words, religion must lead in setting the standards for the whole nation.

... it seems as clear as day that here must be a real awakening of the moral and spiritual forces of humanity. The world is busy to-day with plans for reconstruction. But deeper than the need for reconstruction is that for regeneration, the 'moral change' in ideals and in conduct, which is essential, if reconstruction is to leave us with anything but new mechanism and only the old driving power.

(1919: 432)

The suggested solution was for the Church to try and align itself more closely with the progressive spirit associated with popular demands for social reforms; rather than associating itself too exclusively with the middle or governing classes. Another recommendation was to remedy the ecclesiastical divisions between the different Christian denominations (1919: 212-14). Indeed, one of the most frequent reasons given by the interviewees for their aloofness from and ignorance of official religion was the churches denominational schism: 'The average man inevitably feels that while there is so much divergence of belief among those who claim to be experts, clearness and conviction cannot be fairly expected of him ...' (ibid.: 420). The report thus recommended that rigid ecclesiastical structures be transformed to meet the religious requirements of modern society; thus ensuring greater Christian unity and co-operation. This advocacy for interdenominational ecumenicalism was, as we shall soon see, embraced by BBC religion, and was particularly supported by Reith.

One final effect of the war was the withdrawal and displacement of the male population from most official religious activities. Consequently the Church began to focus increasingly on how to best provide for the needs of female and youth culture religion, and in so doing further effected what has been described as a process of 'privatisation' and 'domestication' of religion (see Williams, 1999: 158 & 171). Mothers were especially influential upon the characteristic of popular religion and morality as they became more associated with and rooted in the private context of the home, something I shall discuss in more detail in chapter six. This is particularly relevant when one considers how broadcast religion facilitated private forms of religious worship and morality.

The significance of the above is that there was a reworking in more modern terms of the same concerns as the 1851 census, viz. how to reclaim a Christian identity for the nation. Then the remedies were evangelism and rational recreation; now the emphasis

is more on reformist politics, ecumenicalism and penetration of the home. This shifting definition of the role of religion in the life of the nation was to have a direct bearing upon BBC religion. The issues, however, were much the same: the moral functions of religion; the rising tide of secularisation; the need to 'reach out' to the majority who did not go to Church; the kind of official/unofficial religion to be broadcast; the relationship to ecumenicalism; and, perhaps above all, the view taken of the 'special' Christian character of Sunday. It is with all this in mind that I now wish to consider the emergence and development of religious broadcasting; and its deployment as an agent of Christian morality.

### **Radio Evangelism**

In the entrance of Broadcasting House is the statue by Eric Gill depicting *The Sower* casting his seed abroad. Though the act of sowing is nowadays commonly associated with primitive farming methods, the iconography of the sower was in fact used to illustrate a well-known parable from the bible. For just as Jesus told his disciples that the farmer goes out to sow his seed in order to yield a crop, so too do the agencies of religion sow the word of God in order that, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear'. However, just as the farmer is likely to cast seed on ground that will not yield any crop, so too will the word of God fall on deaf ears or ears that, 'As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them'. Ideally casting abroad the word of god would have the effect of seed sown on good soil, and produce a crop 'thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown' (Mark 4: 9-20). Above the statue of *The Sower* is a Latin inscription, which translates as follows:

This Temple of the Arts and Muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first Governors of Broadcasting in the year 1931, Sir John Reith being the Director General. It is their prayer that good seed sown may bring forth a good harvest, that all things hostile to peace or purity may be abolished from this house and that the people, inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful and honest and of good report, may tread the path of wisdom and uprightness.

(Cited in Briggs, 1981: 146)

What is clear from the above passage is the extent to which the BBC undertook its wider civilising mission with a religious zeal. There was a direct link between religion and morality on the one hand, and culture and self-improvement on the other. This point was amplified by Basil Yeaxlee who, in an article entitled 'Religion and Adult Education', argued that 'the study of religion is not only legitimate and desirable for its



own sake in any reasonably complete scheme of adult (or other) education' but also 'necessary in order to make explicit facts and problems implicit in practically all other cultural pursuits' (*The Listener*, 4 December 1929). Many of the approved adult education providers discussed in chapter four taught religion as a normal part of their curriculum. Indeed, the Board of Education provided grants for adult classes that studied the Bible, church history, or the philosophy of religion.

Initially, religious broadcasting was administered by J. C. Stobart, the BBC's first Director of Education. It was not until the appointment of F. A. Iremonger, then Editor of the *Guardian*, a Church of England weekly newsletter, as Director of Religion in July 1933 that religious broadcasting became an administrative department in its own right (WAC R51/482). That said, one can discern the special character of religious broadcasting and the primacy accorded it by the BBC since the first religious address was given on 24 December 1922, by the Rector of Whitechapel, the Rev. J. A. Mayo. For the BBC Sunday was by far the biggest listening day of the week: if the casting of seed abroad was ever to bear fruit, Sunday was the day on which the soil was most fertile.

One of the clearest articulations of BBC policy vis-à-vis religious broadcasting is expressed in the *BBC Handbook* for 1928 (131), in which we are told that 'it was natural that from the beginning religion should find its place in British Broadcasting', not least because, 'when those who were responsible for Broadcasting set before themselves the object of raising the national standard of values and of a constructive idealism, it was obvious that the religious service should be one of the regular programme features ...'. The guiding principles for BBC religion were as follows: to secure the co-operation of the Christian Churches; ensure that broadcast services did not enter into competition with the ordinary Church services; prohibit any controversial broadcasts that might offend Christian sensibilities; and to present a 'thorough-going, optimistic and manly religion' that avoids narrow interpretation of denominational dogma but instead concerns itself 'with the application of the teaching of Christ to everyday life'. It was hoped that religious broadcasting would 'prevent any decay of Christianity in a nominally Christian country' by 'keeping alive but giving new life and meaning to the traditionally Christian character of the British people'.



Elsewhere religious broadcasting was conceived to have four more specific objectives: (i) to maintain standards of morality in private and public life; (ii) to explain what the Christian faith is, to eliminate misunderstanding of it, and to demonstrate its relevance to everyday life; (iii) to convert non-churchgoers and the semi-religious to an orthodox Christian faith; (iv) to bring unity to the various orthodox Christian denominations so that they might speak with one voice (WAC R51/482). In short, religious broadcasting constituted a civilising mission, both educational and evangelistic. More than this, the agenda and objectives of BBC religion, the taken for granted of 'natural' and 'obvious', the more specific formulation of 'the traditionally Christian character of the British people', were essentially a working through in a new broadcasting context of pre-existing discourses, there in the 1919 report and the 1851 census. What they all had in common was to assume religion to be integral to the national identity (which the BBC sought to recreate) and state institutions (which in a complex way the BBC was).

The detail of the meeting in which Reith effectively secured the co-operation of the Anglican Church after convincing the Archbishop Randall Davidson of the potentialities for broadcast religion is well-known (see Wolfe, 1984: 6; Briggs, 1995: 220). In addition to securing the co-operation of the churches, Reith wanted access to the best preachers and churches. The first meeting of the 'Sunday Committee' (which subsequently became the Central Religious Advisory Committee) took place on 18 May 1923, under the chairmanship of Cyril Garbett, then Bishop of Southwark. Though the membership of the CRAC was representative of the mainstream Christian denominations, the Anglicans had a pivotal influence within the committee, with the Catholics and the Nonconformists having to accept a less central role (see Wolfe, 1984: 32-41). That the CRAC was the first of the BBC's Advisory Committees is significant; and it soon established itself as the most influential. Indeed, much BBC policy was virtually dictated by the CRAC, particularly in regard to Sunday broadcasts (ibid.: 70).

The BBC Sunday Programme began with a morning religious service between the hours of 9.30 to 10.45. There was silence then until 12.30, after which there was various serious music and talks until the evening service at eight in the evening. This was followed by yet more earnest music until the Epilogue formally brought the day's observance to a conclusion at eleven o'clock (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 232). Apart from its insistence that no secular programmes of any kind were to be broadcast on the

Sabbath, the CRACs most controversial edict was to permit only mainstream Christian denominations to broadcast. Unorthodox religious sects (e.g. Christian Scientists, the Unitarians, and the Oxford Group Movement) and irreligious free-thinkers were excluded. Nor would they be allowed to creep in by the back door. A committee meeting on 13 March 1931, recommended that manuscripts on philosophical subjects 'be more carefully scrutinised with a view to obviating statements which might be interpreted as disruptive of Christian morality' (WAC R6/21/1). Reith, ever anxious about his religious duty, sought the advice of William Temple, then Archbishop of York, about instructing non-clergy speakers what they could say on religious topics. Even clergy were requested to submit their manuscripts five days before their sermon was due to be broadcast, alienating Roman Catholics who objected to lay censorship. Later, only studio broadcasts were requested in advance with editorial decisions taken only by CRAC members (WAC R34/809/1).

In spite of widespread criticism, Reith maintained the increasingly unpopular Sabbath policy as well as the policy of refusing minority religious or secular groups from broadcasting an oppositional viewpoint, no matter what day of the week. The lifting of the ban on 'controversial broadcasting' in 1928 did not extend to religion, with the decision to 'continue to exclude the discussion of certain subjects likely to offend religious or moral susceptibilities' (WAC C1/26/1). As the *BBC Handbook* for 1929 noted (210), 'the removal of the ban on controversy in regard to religion creates a new possibility in theory rather than in practice'. In effectively maintaining a ban on controversial broadcasting in all matters that pertained to religion, the BBC curtailed any considerable criticism of Christianity by secularist and unorthodox Christian groups. The corporation's policy of protection effectively amounted to censorship, preventing other minority Christian faiths and irreligious groups from contesting the 'truth' of mainstream Christianity. The orthodox Christian churches benefited enormously inasmuch as they exerted a disproportionate influence over broadcasting policy generally. Not surprisingly, the BBC faced accusations of creating a Christian monopoly over religious broadcasting.

By contrast, Sabbatarian pressure groups praised the BBC for helping to preserve the Christian Sabbath. The most vociferous of these groups was the Lord's Day Observance Society. In early correspondence, the LDOS formally thanked the BBC for 'respecting

the quiet and religious character of the British Sunday in the compilation of its Sunday Programmes' (WAC R41/100). Like Reith, the LDOS firmly believed that the BBCs Sabbath policy needed no defence as it was 'in accord with the mind of multitudes of our countrymen who have no desire for a more secular or vaudeville Programme on Sundays, or indeed any approximation on that day to the atmosphere of the continental station broadcasts'.

Occasionally, however, the Corporation was criticised by Sabbatarians,<sup>105</sup> particularly in the late thirties when it began to express an interest in extending the hours of the Sunday Programme to fill the hitherto silent hours between 10.45 am and 12.30 pm by broadcasting appropriate secular material 'in keeping with the BBC Sunday policy'. The BBCs motive was to attract back listeners who tuned in to the commercial, continental stations (WAC R30/2/166/1 & R34/809/1). The puritanical instinct for Sunday Observance was most pronounced in Scotland. Such was the opposition to the extension of the Sunday Programme that BBC management responsible for broadcasting in Scotland were obliged to meet a deputation from the Lord's Day Observance Association of Scotland on 12 April 1938 (see WAC R44/557; Dinwiddie, 1968: 25-6; Wolfe, 1984: 72-5). The deputation was introduced by the Rev. E. J. Hagan, Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, who stated that he was 'profoundly disturbed by the gradual introduction of secular programmes on Sundays, and felt that some protest was necessary ... to prevent further encroachment of secular programmes on the Lord's day' (WAC R44/557). Rev. W. A. Guthrie added that it was in his opinion 'a moral wrong to broadcast such programmes on Sunday'. The Rev. James Hair felt it was necessary to 'face up to the ethics of life in these days, and that such an organisation as the BBC could help very greatly in this respect'. In spite of these protestations, BBC opinion increasingly viewed strict Sabbatarianism as outmoded, in view of recent innovations in amusement and entertainment. The Scottish Regional Director, Melville Dinwiddie, drafted an internal memorandum after meeting the

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<sup>105</sup> One such protest came from the Imperial Alliance for the Defence of Sundays, who engaged in a lengthy correspondence with the BBC objecting to the proposal to introduce musical comedy in its Sunday Programme (WAC R41/74). As with most Sabbatarians, the IADS was confident that Sunday was needed by all and desired by all. However, this desire and need was being undermined by the increasing number of secular innovations and encroachments. The IADS was thus of the opinion that, 'the introduction into Sunday programmes of comedy would be a further distraction and negation of the high and noble purposes for which Sunday was ordained and for which it has been used for many centuries'.



ministers, urging a move away from Sabbatarianism towards secular entertainment, if only so that it might engage 'those who would otherwise be idle and at a loose end on a Sunday morning' (WAC R 30/2/166/1). The BBC was slowly moving away from seeing Sunday as a day entirely for religious observance but it was only with the introduction of the Forces Programme early in 1940 that secular entertainment was finally introduced. Until then the spectre of Reith still held sway.

### **Reithian Christianity**

We have already seen how Reith was anxious that broadcasting ought serve the Christian faith and the observance of the Sabbath as a sacrosanct institution. He was all too aware of the increasing diminution of the Sabbath tradition and genuinely thought that 'the surrender of the principles of Sunday observance is fraught with danger'; and that 'the secularising of the day is one of the most significant and unfortunate trends of modern life ...' (Reith, 1924: 195). For Reith, Sundays were a day for 're-creation of the mind and refreshment of the spirit' and therefore represented 'one of the invaluable assets of our existence – quiet islands on the tossing sea of life' (ibid.: 196). He thought it 'a sad reflection on human intelligence if recreation is only to be found in the distractions of excitement' (ibid.). Giving oral evidence before the Crawford Committee, Reith stated that 'broadcasting should not assist the secularisation of [the Sabbath] ... the Sunday programmes should be framed with the day itself in mind ... There should be a religious service every Sunday evening from every station in the country and whatever may take place thereafter, music or otherwise, be appropriate' (WAC R4/28/1). For Reith religion was more than just a system of faith in some form of superhuman controlling power, since religion should induce 'an adjustment of conduct in daily life to accord with the known or assumed characteristics of the Supreme Being' (1924: 191).<sup>106</sup> Religion was as much to do with regulating one's behaviour and effecting 'an essential code of ethics common' as it was with offering solace and the hope of salvation.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> This belief in a higher incontrovertible authority to which one owes the whole self and the whole of one's behaviour was propounded by the Rev. C. C. Martindale in a service broadcast on 20 October 1929, of which a précis was published in *The Listener* (30 October 1929). Like Reith, Martindale thought Christianity instils a sense of obligation or duty 'to act thus and thus', to behave in accordance with a conscience that constantly invokes a sense of 'I ought'. In short, religion is a moral imperative.



Whilst Reith's attitude towards Sunday was typical of contemporary attitudes of middle-class churchgoers who saw religion as a means of inculcating both morality and respectability, his religiosity was undoubtedly more radical. For example, though Reith (1924: 200) sincerely hoped that religious broadcasting would rejuvenate church attendance and other official religious practices – indeed he thought that if the churches recognised their new opportunity, there would 'not be room enough to hold their people' – he did not think it was 'necessarily a criterion of any religious or spiritual value'. Reith believed in an essentially 'Christian Britain', which broadcasting only need tap into. His concern for practical remedies meant he 'did not find theological doctrine or dogma of much practical significance in the world today' (cited in Wolfe, 1984: 19). Far more important was that the various Christian denominations speak with one voice and sustain a Christian version of 'the nation'. Hence Reith's (1924: 194) stated preference for non-denominationalism; and his insistence upon a 'thoroughgoing, optimistic and manly religion'.

Reith's advocacy for non-denominationalism was amplified in much BBC religious broadcasting policy. A BBC brochure, *Hints to Sunday Speakers* (1928), proscribed 'sectarian propaganda or provocative argument' (WAC R6/14/3). The 1928 *BBC Handbook* (131) reiterated that religious broadcasting 'does not concern itself with a narrow interpretation of dogma, but with the application of the teaching of Christ to everyday life'. Similarly, the 1932 *BBC Handbook* (216) stressed that 'broadcast services are not the occasion for sectarian propaganda' and the need 'to dwell rather on that which unites than on that which divides'. That BBC policy was concurrent with the wider movement within Christianity towards ecumenicalism is significant, and is something I shall discuss in more detail in a short while.

### **BBC Religion**

The degree to which broadcast religion became regarded as an authoritative ecclesiastical practice was confirmed in the often used reference to 'BBC Religion'. Indeed, concern in the church that religious broadcasting was too populist, and thus undermining the sovereignty of the church, led the Convocation of Canterbury, the

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<sup>107</sup> Reith's intolerance for any kind of impropriety was especially pronounced with regard BBC employees: so-called 'guilty parties' were quickly dispensed with: even Peter Eckersley, the BBC's Chief Engineer, was made to leave the Corporation shortly after he divorced his wife.

church's inaugural policy making executive, to call for 'clearer guidance as to the ways in which it was possible for the church to deepen and extend the good influences that broadcasting has brought to bear' (cited in Wolfe, 1984: 20). It appointed a committee of inquiry, chaired by L. J. White-Thomson, Bishop of Ely. The committee presented its report, entitled, *The Religious Value of Broadcast Services and their Bearing on Public Worship*, to convocation on 21 January 1931. In spite of the suspicion and doubt expressed by some clergy that broadcast religion would have a derogatory effect on church attendance and public worship – indeed the committee emphasised the fact that religious broadcasting 'should not be regarded as a substitute for corporate public worship' – the first unanimous resolution to be carried in both the upper and lower houses of convocation was a 'grateful appreciation of the service rendered to the cause of religion by the British Broadcasting Company' (1931: 10). They were of the opinion that

the effect of broadcasting has been exceedingly valuable. It has recalled to the acknowledgement of God many thousands who had, from various causes, been out of touch with sacred things. The appeal of God has found its way into homes and into hearts untouched by organised religion ... It has brought religion once again into the market place. Discussions spring up ... between men descending in the cage, in factories, under the lee side of a hedge, in bars, and places where other songs and subjects are usually heard and discussed.

(1931: 4)

Elsewhere the Committee quoted in the Report, and made their own, the words in which the Corporation, in its memorandum on the history and development of the religious side of broadcasting (WAC R51/482), defined the scope of its activities:

They would claim that its obvious possibilities (brining religion to the hearthside as a source of comfort to the sick, the isolated, the timid among religious people, and in making the voice of religion, the beauty of worship and the attractions of Scripture known to the vast numbers of irreligious and semi-religious outsiders) have been explored and exploited to the utmost with results little short of marvellous; but at the same time there will be no denial of the fact that people whose only religious contact is through listening miss some of the most essential influences of religion, and their constant hope is that, as in the field of education, so in the field of religion, broadcasting may act as a stimulus and a means of recruitment for the Churches.

(1931: 3)

Just as the 1851 census had complimented Nonconformism for its missionary zeal, so too was broadcasting congratulated on its capacity to reach those who had been lost to religion. The report concluded by exhorting the clergy to make wider use of

broadcasting's educational facilities and to lead people to select 'the best thing to listen-in to' so as to 'gradually wean them from the cheap and the mean' (1931: 7). The report was undoubtedly a landmark in the history of religious broadcasting: the policy of the Corporation had been vindicated, and was now firmly established.

### **Popular Theology**

How to preserve the popularity of religious broadcasting and engage ever increasing numbers of listeners became the primary focus of Corporation policy during much of the thirties. A series of connected religious talks, *God and the World through Christian Eyes*, was broadcast in place of the ordinary services in the National Programme on the first and third Sundays of the month throughout 1933, each half-an-hour lecture being preceded by a fifteen-minute service (WAC R34/809/1; Wolfe, 1984: 49-53 & 84-5). The series was a response to the Ely Report's recommendation that the Corporation develop broadcasts of a more theological character in an attempt to better inform the general public about Christian doctrine. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his introduction to the talks, hoped that the series would facilitate intelligent discussion by presenting the central truths which Christians hold in common (WAC R6/21/1). Many clergy felt that broadcasting could succeed where preaching could not, in bringing an intelligible understanding of Christianity to the broad mass of the people (Wolfe, 1984: 85). The BBC saw the talks as a means of promoting adult education in religious knowledge (BBC, 1933: 60). It was also hoped that the series would encourage listeners to think more about their personal religion, and in so doing situate religion more firmly within a domestic context as well as the more traditional pew and pulpit mode of worship (Dinwiddie, 1968: 25). As the lectures were planned as a contribution to adult education, clergy were encouraged to form and lead discussion-groups among their congregations. The BBC was confident that, 'Any clergyman who sits in at a number of such discussions conducted by groups from among different sections of his [sic] congregation will surely grow in the knowledge of his people's mind, and find his power of useful leadership correspondingly increased' (1933: 60). In other words, the onus was 'on the clergy and other leaders of religious thought to see that good use was made of the instrument put into their hands' (ibid.).



Despite the odd example of successful discussion groups, the series was essentially a failure.<sup>108</sup> Widely criticised for being too 'technical' and 'high-brow', regular listeners had turned off in droves, preferring to listen to the more orthodox religious broadcasts or not at all (WAC R34/809/1; *BBC Handbook*, 1934: 94). For the church and the BBC it was a stark reminder that the listening public did not like the didactical style of the formal lecture for religious broadcasting; many still preferred to feel that they were participating in religious worship and ritual, as they would when attending church. The problem was thus how to combine the discursive form of the lecture with that of the sermon, that is the technical with the popular. Subsequent series of religious talks, for example *The Way to God* and *This Christian Faith*, were conceived with this objective in mind. In his foreword to the pamphlet for *The Way to God* series, William Temple, stated that this series would 'start from the common facts of experience, continue with questions everyone was likely to ask, give the answer the Christian Church exists to proclaim, and end by applying that answer to life and its claim on our attention and action' (cited in Dinwiddie, 1968: 80). Though some complained that the talks were still incomprehensible, the series and the discourse it employed was a marked contrast to its predecessor.

This move towards popular theology was further developed alongside a series of national and international ecumenical conferences held in the mid-thirties. It was felt by many Christian clergy that the age-long conflict between the Church and secular power had again become acute. A series of reports of the Conference at Oxford entitled, *Church, Community and State* (1937) had as their theme the problem of 'how religion is to survive in a single community which is neither Church nor State ... but which covers the whole of life and claims to be the source and goal of every human activity' (ibid.: 9).<sup>109</sup> Among other things, the report reviewed the possible sites of Christian observance, lamenting its decline in the home but noting the potential of new education agencies, such as broadcasting and the cinema, to 'provide unprecedented opportunities

<sup>108</sup> One borough librarian reported how a group meeting in Leicester public library had averaged an attendance of about sixty and that religious book borrowing had increased by seventy-five per cent, leading him to conclude that the religious life of Leicester had greatly benefited (Wolfe, 1984: 53).

<sup>109</sup> This anxiety was to surface time and time again throughout much broadcast religion discourse. For example: in an afternoon Sunday talk given by the Rev. Myrddin Davies on 14 March 1937, the speaker tells the listening public that in order to prevent the demise of both the Churches' of Wales and England, it was necessary for the Churches to 'unite on certain fundamental Christian principles, and in so doing, 'discover anew their essential power' (WAC R51/568).



for reaching and influencing masses of the population' (ibid.: 141 & 154). Though many of its recommendations were in fact concerned with the Church's role in providing leisure activities, it implicitly endorsed the view that broadcasting represented a real opportunity to recover Christianity's popularity. This public symbiosis between the church and the BBC was however paradoxical for it depended upon addressing an audience it could not see, and whose responses it could not control.

The significance of the Oxford conference was that the clergy yet again acknowledged that broadcasting represented a real opportunity to redress the Church's ever increasing unpopularity with the popular masses. There was recognition of the need to exploit the intimacy of radio as a medium, addressing not a congregation in a church but individuals in their own homes, thus connecting Christian theology with 'popular' religion. The project was distinctly missionary, and in keeping with the wider innovations in techniques of cultural governance already discussed in this chapter and elsewhere.

### **Private Worship**

Reith and the like believed in a new sort of Christianity, one which would take religion to the people by penetrating what was for many people their sanctum sanctorum – the home. Religious broadcasts, studio services in particular, thus became an instrument of private mediation when at home and, as Wolfe notes (1984: 46), 'could properly bring religious piety to the hearer rather than draw him away to some church actuality'. In short, the BBC was promoting public religion as private entertainment.

There were some favourable conditions for this project. One, noted by Filson Young, was that popular culture recognised Sunday as a special day, set aside from the ordinary working week. 'The habit ... of putting on better clothes than usual and having something special in the way of food on one day of the week is a very sound thing; and broadcasting with us has always put on its very best clothes on a Sunday'. Radio fitted in well. 'Sunday is still essentially a day devoted to the enjoyment of their homes by those who have them, and wireless is a very important part of the furniture of these homes' (cited in Briggs, 1981: 148-9). Young recognised that whilst the public may not partake of official religion they did observe the special nature of Sunday as a day for familial recreation centred around the home and hearth. If radio could situate itself at

the centre of this familial institution, the creation of a 'wireless congregation' was a distinct possibility.

However, unlike church or Sunday school, discipline could not be enforced at home where listeners were relatively free to do as they please: to move around rather than remain seated, to listen passively rather than attentively and in silence, and so on. The concern that private worship would encourage inappropriate forms of religiosity was expressed in the *Edinburgh Evening News* (5 May 1928) which asserted that, 'a man sitting in an easy chair with headphones on, or even listening to a loud speaker, cannot in any sense be said to be taking part in worship. He is not of the service he hears; his attitude of mind, sitting in his armchair, is altogether different from what it would be if he were sitting in a pew'. Homes in which a spatial and temporal sanctuary were set aside for the purposes of religious broadcasting were the exception; more often than not, there was much to distract from the true spirit of worship. In other words, the home did not embody a spatial disciplinary apparatus in the same way that a church did. It is probably for this reason that both the BBC and the Church were pro-active in organising listening fellowship groups or Church Tutorial Classes which, like many of the WEA tutorial classes, would take place in buildings whose architecture embodied a disciplinary apparatus, such as libraries or school classrooms for example.

All this made it vital that the content of broadcasts should be appropriate for the domestic context of listening whilst not deterring listeners or provoking other inappropriate responses. The problem was addressed in an internal memorandum on how to improve broadcast religious services, circulated to all members of the CRAC by Iremonger in February 1937 (WAC R6/21/1). The chief problem was ensuring how listeners might share in broadcast services without loss of attention. One of the first suggestions was that abstract nouns –such as co-operation, fellowship, and service– ought to be avoided on the grounds that 'the listener receives the impression that he [sic] is hearing an entirely impersonal statement'. Hints to Sunday speakers issued by the CRAC in 1928 asked them to remember that 'the tone of voice found to have most appeal is that of the intimate and sympathetic talk rather than that of a public address' (WAC R51/482). Speakers were asked to 'think of his [sic] audience not as a crowd or a congregation, but a vast number of individuals to whom he is speaking in the intimacy of their homes' (WAC R6/14/3). Even prayers were kept short and simple as opposed

to the more traditional discursive or preaching prayers commonly practiced in the church (see Dinwiddie, 1968: 52-60). Prayer books were especially published for broadcast services and their contents organised around everyday practices. The *Book of Common Prayer* was revised in 1929 under the new title of *Service for Broadcasting*. Among its fifteen forms of service were: 'The Fatherly Care', 'The Responsibilities of Life', 'The Duties of Life', 'Home and Friendship', 'Education, Art and Letters', and 'Health, Recreation and Healing' (WAC R51/482). From September 1926 the Sunday Programme concluded with an Epilogue, another broadcasting innovation which was essentially a very brief meditation on some religious theme, much like a thought for the day. An internal memorandum on Epilogues stated that it 'was always the object of the BBC to preserve an air of mystery with regard to the Epilogue, and to retain an "improvised, unexpected quality" that would set it apart from the rest of the evening's programme' (WAC R51/482). It was something to mull over in one's head before going to bed. And maybe a kernel of its 'moral truth' would have taken hold by the morning.

Some elements of Christianity could be exploited for their inherent enjoyment. One of the most popular expressions of religiosity during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was hymn singing, not least because hymns were closely interwoven with familial and communal life (see Williams 1999: 150-4). The broadcasting of hymns on the radio could be both Christian and popular, especially with the proliferation of 'new hymns' which tended to be even more populist in form and content, bearing a close resemblance to popular secular songs. There are even reports of hymn signing by radio congregations in public-houses, as testified by a correspondent of the *Radio Times* who wrote in May 1924:

Dear Sirs – While at Erith [Kent], the other day, I heard one of the wonders of wireless. While passing a public house, I was more than surprised to hear all therein joining in singing a hymn which was then being broadcast from London. Surely, the preacher never dreamt of such an audience.

(Cited in Briggs, 1981: 148)

Unfortunately, not all sacred music broadcasts were appreciated by the listening public. The complete series of Bach's cantatas broadcast in 1928 for a whole year were



notoriously unpopular.<sup>110</sup> While it stayed close to popular tradition and exploited the intimate potential of the new medium of radio, religious broadcasting could gain an audience but when it became too theological or highbrow, the audience was often lost, prompting them to tune in to other stations.

### **Popular Alternatives: Luxembourg and Normandie**

By the 1930s broadcast religion had assumed a definite shape: output had increased considerably: Sunday evening Services, Bible Readings, Religious Talks, Missionary Talks, the Epilogue, Weekly Evensong and a Daily Service were all now prominent features in the weekly broadcast programme. Outside broadcasts had taken place from many different churches as well as from several cathedrals, including York, Worcester, Durham, Belfast, Armagh, Lincoln and Liverpool (WAC R34/809/1). Nevertheless, it was becoming increasingly clear that the BBC's Sunday Programme was unpopular. The listening public preferred listening to Radios Luxembourg and Normandie, which began broadcasting an alternative secular Sunday programme during the inter-war period (see Briggs, 1965: 362-4). The BBC was increasingly aware, as stated in an internal memorandum outlining the historical development of religious broadcasting, of 'the lamentable gap that often occurs between hopes and fulfilment'; and of 'the limitations of religious broadcasting' (WAC R51/482). Sunday Speakers were thus urged to remember that 'listeners are able to stop listening at will', and that, 'thousands of them will switch off their sets before the end of a long, elaborate and unfamiliar anthem, psalm or hymn' (WAC R6/14/3).

And so they did. According to Rowntree's (1941: 407-8) survey of listeners of working-class households in York 'it is often customary to switch on to Luxembourg first thing in the morning and leave it on all day, with perhaps a break in the evening for the religious service'. A survey by the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising in 1935 showed that a half of British listeners regularly tuned in to Radio Luxembourg on Sundays. A further survey carried out in 1938 estimated that one million households listened to Luxembourg (Briggs, 1965: 363-4). The first major BBC departmental report on the audience for religious broadcasts, carried out by Robert Silvey in 1939, provided a more detailed portrait of those most likely to stay with the

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<sup>110</sup> Dinwiddie (1968: 63) tells an amusing story of a taxi-driver who refused to drive a musician to Broadcasting House on discovering he was engaged in 'them Bach cantatas'.



BBC for religious broadcasts (Wolfe, 1984: 127-9). They were most likely to live in the South West and more likely to be middle class than working class.

Since most listeners to religious broadcasting did not regularly attend church, broadcast religion was less a supplement than an alternative to church attendance. Compared to church services, religious broadcasts seemed less demanding and more entertaining (Wolfe, 1984: 129). But this remained a minority appeal and the demand for entertainment pure and simple on the radio, including Sunday, could not be held back. The Ullswater Committee (1935: 31), the last of the inter-war broadcasting committees, noted the severity and 'lack of attractiveness in the programmes broadcast on Sundays'; and recommended that 'one of the alternative programmes should be of a lighter and more popular character'. For all their efforts to steer broadcast religion away from populism, sabbatarians had failed to curb the demand for popular religion and entertainment. It would seem that the spirit of Reith was about to be exorcised.

## **Conclusions**

This last comment seems to neatly summarise the tensions between Sabbatarianism on the one hand and the strong pressures towards the provision of entertainment within which radio was caught. Paradoxically, radio as a form of popular entertainment was itself implicated in the secularisation of culture and leisure. This contradiction remained at the heart of BBC policy, not least in the tension between instruction and entertainment. This was less evident in the early than the later years of the inter-war period. The early BBC developed a clear sense of mission in relation to religious broadcasting. And it did so in the context of discourses and practices inherited from the history of English religion. The late BBC, however, was becoming increasingly aware of the immensity of the task as envisaged by Reith, viz. restoring the centrality of the Christian faith in an essentially post-Christian society. It is at this point that we see the contradictory nature of the BBC's wider civilising mission, of which religion was only one facet. Much better that religious broadcasting provided a positive method of observing the Sabbath, rather than the earlier negative policy which attempted to negate the desire for secular amusement and relaxation.

Notwithstanding the moderation of BBC Religion, wireless became an indispensable instrument for disseminating Christian utterance. Once initial suspicion had given way

to a policy of co-operation, public service broadcasting and ecclesiastical politics were inextricably intertwined. By the 1930s, the BBC was widely regarded as an adjunct of the Christian establishment. Not surprisingly, religious broadcasting mirrored changes and developments in the wider Christian community; this was particularly so vis-à-vis the progressive ecumenical movement that emerged in the inter-war period.

Whether religious broadcasting succeeded in making Britain a more religious country is debatable. That broadcast religion was a technology of pastoral power whose rationality was to instil a stronger sense of religiosity and morality in an increasingly secular, non-attending church public is unquestionable. Radio became the agent of aggressive Christianity *par excellence*, inasmuch as it was able to penetrate the inner sanctum of the home. One is reminded of the proverb: 'If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain'. This particularly suited middle-class families who could relax in the comfort of their homes. Moreover, it was also a means of containing the popular masses by discouraging public gatherings on the day when the working-classes were most likely to do so. In other words, the home increasingly becomes an object of government. Mothers in particular become the focal point of a plethora of discursive practices aimed at regulating the everyday practices of domesticity and the private sphere. It is with this in mind that I now wish to consider in more detail the political rationalities that effected the reordering of familial relations and recreational practices.

## The Domestication of Government

What I have alluded to in much of the thesis thus far is the way in which early broadcasting attempted to direct the conduct of the listening public as a national audience. What I have not given due consideration is how the family audience was constituted, as the technology of broadcasting ‘captured time and space’ in the home (Johnson, 1981). The significance of this is twofold. First, though early broadcasting was widely perceived as the mass media *par excellence*, with the exception of publicly organised listening-groups, the everyday context of listening-in was actually situated in the private sphere of the home. In other words, the primary technological function of wireless was as a means of transmission to individual homes via individual wireless sets, a fact which has been obscured by broadcasting’s definition as mass communication (Williams, 1974: 24). Second, and perhaps more importantly, how early public service broadcasting constructed the family audience is fundamental to our understanding of the BBCs civilising mission.<sup>111</sup> As in previous chapters, I want to problematise what I consider to be one of the defining characteristics of early broadcasting. And what I propose in this, my final chapter, is that broadcasting, as embodied by the BBC, was concomitant with a matrix of other governmental strategies that sought to regulate the organisation of family life by simultaneously domesticating and feminising certain cultural practices, reinforcing demarcations between the spheres of public and private, and thereby establishing the home as a site for social governance.

Moore (1988 & 2000) probably best describes broadcasting’s early relationship with the family and home, not least the somewhat startling revelation, given the ubiquity of broadcasting technologies in the present day, that the acceptance of wireless into the interior home space was a gradual, not immediate, process. The main reason for radio’s

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<sup>111</sup> Of the many institutions fundamental to governance, the one social phenomenon more or less universal throughout modern Western society is the family. Nearly every human being is born into a family, has ancestors, parents, brothers and sisters, kindred, and, will quite probably, in later life, form new familial relationships – to wife or husband, to children, even grandchildren. Furthermore, assembled around the constituent relationships inherent to any family are several primary functions fundamental to human social life, viz. the sexual, the economic, the reproductive apropos socialisation, and the educational (see Morgan, 1975: 21). And whilst there are other social institutions that have some bearing upon one or more of these primary functions, no institution but the family fulfils and reinforces one and all. The significance of this is that the family is a privileged instrument for the government of populations because it is the main locus of people in relation to most other things.

initial unpopularity as a domestic form of cultural activity was to do with the way in which the technology was gendered. Initially, the innovation of wireless was a masculine hobby located in the male dominated sphere of technology and science: early broadcasting literature was highly technical and virtually incomprehensible to anybody who did not have an interest in electrical engineering; listening-in was restricted to a single listener using headphones, which, more often than not, were monopolised by the male head of the house. Consequently, women were excluded from the early years of broadcasting, which probably explains why so many experienced wireless as, to quote Johnson (1981: 167), 'an unruly guest', 'upsetting daily routines and interfering in family relationships'.

All this changes with the advent of the loudspeaker, making it possible for the whole family to listen together. The advent of domestic electricity meant manufacturers had more scope to improve wireless' technical componentary and mechanical appearance: do-it-yourself wireless kits were gradually replaced by ready made wireless sets, mounted in a variety of furniture cabinets (Butsch, 1998: 558). Non-technical wireless magazines (e.g. *The Broadcaster*, *The Listener*, and *The Radio Times*) began to appear, and presented the reader with weekly articles, advertisements and cartoons that portrayed broadcasting as a quintessential family activity (Briggs, 1981: 86-7). This and greater emphasis on broadcasting content, symbolised by entertainment programmes such *Children's Hour* and *Household Talks* aimed at different family members, did much to elevate wireless' social status as a household consumer durable. Hence by the 1930s broadcasting was the primary form of domestic entertainment and assumed a central place of cultural importance in most homes, as evidenced in the significant increase in the number of licence holders.<sup>112</sup> It becomes, to quote Peter Black (1972), 'the biggest aspidistra in the world', 'a useful and decorative plant' that not only 'thrives in parlours, sitting-rooms and the like', but also 'prosperes in temperate conditions and reproduces itself by division'.

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<sup>112</sup> In September 1939 there were 8,968,338 licence holders, compared with 2,395,183 when the Corporation was granted its Royal Charter in January 1927, and 35,774 in 1922 when the Company was first founded (Briggs, 1979: 279).



The musicologist and BBC broadcaster, Basil Maine, also testified to radio's apparent omnipresence:

Of the external forms that are helping to shape human life and behaviour, none I should say, is more ubiquitous and permeating than radio. Men and women have arrived at the point where they feel that, be it grand or ever so humble, no place is like home that has no radio. That gentle or not so gently murmur of music or talking which people summarily referred to as 'the wireless' has become as necessary a background to home life as was once the loud tick of the grandfather clock or the singing of the kettle on the hob.

(Cited in Briggs, 1965: 4)

The acceptance of wireless as an everyday household object, as opposed to it being a miraculous toy for male adults and their sons (see Briggs, 1981: 26-53), made broadcasting the ideal medium for organising domestic life and bringing the family together around the 'radio hearth' (Frith, 1983). The report of a BBC sponsored survey into the effects of broadcasting on the quality of individual, family, and social life noted that wireless had 'taken its place as a normal feature of home life' among all social classes (Jennings & Gill, 1939: 39). More than this, by increasing 'the attractiveness of the home', it was felt that broadcasting had tempered those uses of leisure thought to be licentious or disorderly: 'comparatively few people now spend a whole evening in a public house, as they want to get home to the wireless. The children also play less in the streets than formerly ... because they like to listen to the wireless programmes' (ibid.: 21). Wireless became both cause and occasion for visits between friends, relatives and neighbours.

However, the family's relationship to programming was highly gendered. Amongst the earliest regular programme slots were 'household talks' aimed at the housewife. Deliberately broadcast at times that reflected the daily timetable and 'natural' breaks of the average housewife, these talks defined women's political duty in terms of their domestic activity in the private sphere, according them little role in the public sphere of politics. The relationship between wireless and women listeners during the inter-war period is all the more interesting when one bears in mind that it is during this period in which women finally acquired the right to vote on equal terms with men, thus signalling the long-awaited arrival of universal adult suffrage. Just when women were slowly entering the public world of politics through the extension of the franchise, public

service broadcasting ascribed women listeners a social role confined to the domestic sphere of family and home.

The collusion of the BBC in reinforcing a female gender identity lends itself to feminist interpretation in terms of patriarchy. While not denying the force of such an analysis, my interest is in understanding familial relationships from a governmentality point of view. You will recall that modern government, understood as the exercise of power, is principally concerned with the government of people in their relations with other things: wealth, resources, sexuality, customs, ways of behaving and thinking, disease, death, and so on. Many of these relations constitute a set of problems specific to the issue of population. Hence, the art of government becomes intrinsically entwined with the welfare of the populace. What I mean to demonstrate is that public service broadcasting takes its place as an instrument of governmentality, implicitly tied to the exercise of bio-power, particularly the bio-politics of welfare and social policy. Moreover, and this bears upon what I have so far alluded to in the above, it was women *qua* mothers and housewives who were singled out as the main instrument for reforming and ensuring the family's moral and physical well-being by facilitating governance from a distance.

In order to understand the role of broadcasting in the governance of the family, we need briefly to review some predominant familial discursive practices. Most important are those about public health, the feminine ideal and the position of women. We can then explore how such discourses were inscribed in and inflected through broadcasting discourses during the inter war period.

### **A Doctor in the House: Managing Health through the Family**

How to penetrate the inviolable sanctuary of the home has long been a recurrent problem for government. Historically, the clergy, and the religious apparatus generally, had been the cornerstone to the old familial order. The historical sacramental character of marriage and monogamy as the spiritual union of love, Christ, and church, is an obvious example of how the personal relationships within a family were incorporated by the church and re-presented as Christian virtues of love and morality. The family thus became a means of controlling individual sin. Anything that detracted from the idealised family was hailed as a breakdown of family life and a threat to social stability. Hence divorce, abortion, sexuality (particularly homosexuality) have been historically

castigated by church and state, and subject to considerable moral, social, and legal supervision.

However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the church's efficacy in managing familial morality, let alone its monopoly over marriage, was greatly diminishing by the mid-nineteenth century. Families no longer sought the counsel of clergy or blessing of the church as they had done before. We have already seen how religion was increasingly challenged by non-religious discourses. The irony is that social medicine, along with education, was one of the primary challenges to the traditional alliance of church and state from the nineteenth century onwards. This was particularly so in relation to social relations which had hitherto been thought of as the sacred preserve of the church (e.g. sexuality, matrimonial relationships, use of contraception, etc) and which medical practitioners now treated as the business of the secular state and social medicine. Thus there occurs an overlap of competing governmental strategies between the clergy's way, upon which family morality depended, and the doctor's way, upon which the physical well-being of the population depended.

In time, the registers of religious confession and medical expertise would combine to form part of an equilibrious interplay of vested interests and relations of power at the centre of which was the conjugal family (see Donzelot, 1980: 171-211). That said, it was public health discourses that undoubtedly come to prominence in the early-twentieth century and, along with education, constituted the main institutions of government. More especially, public health became one of the main driving forces for augmenting and transforming the modern family by inciting its various members to take responsibility for their own well-being and the welfare of others, and to observe and report any familial deviations from social norms, norms which to all intents and purposes function for the collective good, thus forming a matrix of inter and intra familial relations of power.

State responsibility for public health emerged in the early-nineteenth century in an effort to manage the conditions and consequences of a newly evolving urban industrial economy. Public health was essentially a fearful response to the hidden dangers of the city, such as disease and epidemics caused by overcrowding and poor sanitation (Porter, 1997: 397-405). Moreover, Victorian social reformers, such as Edwin Chadwick (1842)



and James Kay-Shuttleworth (1832), increasingly identified a causal relationship between insanitary living conditions, poverty, illness, and immorality. Consequently, poverty and deviant behaviour associated with it – drunkenness, vice, squalor, lack of religiosity – all become objects of governmental technologies: religious morality, education, and public welfare.

The utility of sanitary reform from a governmentality point of view is that it afforded a strategy of indirect government, not so much of the family but through the family. The supply of sewers, drains, privies and clean water literally connected the political rationality of public hygiene with the sanctity of the private home. As noted by Osborne (2001: 114), such provisions were intrinsically ‘organic’ in the sense that they were tied directly to the vital economy of both the individual somatic body and the collective social body

By the early twentieth century, the political terrain of public health shifts: the problem of health is no longer that of water and sanitary provision but one of making individuals take on the responsibility for their own welfare. There emerges a ‘neo-hygienist’ strategy (see Rose, 1985), a fusion of nineteenth-century *laissez-faire* liberalism and early-twentieth century Liberal collectivism. This shift from a public health strategy that was principally concerned with the regulation of things and collective environments (air, water, housing, domestic sanitation, etc) to the welfare of the individual can be understood as ‘the individualisation of preventive medicine’ (ibid.: 146). It was expressed by the then Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, George Newman:

In order to secure a healthy nation we must first obtain healthy individuals. This is the reason why – almost imperceptibly – we are moving from external conditions to personal characteristics, from the study of the environment to the study of the mother, the child, and the adult; or, in other words, to the problems of maternity, of child welfare, and of insurance against ill health of the individual.

(HMSO, 1914: 16)

What the above passage clearly articulates is the extent to which governmental prescriptions for new norms of health are entered into the private space of the family as everyday practices of household management so as to incite individuals to be responsible for the hygienic management of bodily functions, habits, personal



environment and the welfare of all whose health depended upon the hygienic conduct of others (Roberts, 1980: 78; Rose, 1985: 146-51). The imperative of health becomes, to quote Foucault (2001a: 94), 'at once the duty of each and the objective of the all'. Understood thus, the habits and conducts of the body promoted by neo-hygienism were intrinsically moralistic. Being healthy implied responsible and conscientious habits about cleanliness, regular meals and temperance.

In other words, early-twentieth century welfare policies deploy the family as a technology of 'responsibilisation' (Rose, 1999: 74), a means for disseminating sober habits and good conduct. The household assumes an increasingly important role in this network of 'medicalisation' since it facilitates the organisation of a domestic form of 'hospitalisation'. Central to this form of governmentality was the health and welfare of the child. A whole tranche of legislation (e.g. *Factory and Workshops Act* 1901, *Education Act* 1907, *Children's Act* 1908, *National Health Insurance Act* 1911, *Notification of Births (Extension) Act*, 1915, *Maternity and Child Welfare Act*, 1918) established the welfare regulation of children. The state could not alone be responsible for the welfare of children. Parents had to play their part. To not do so was to risk the humiliating ordeal of being visited by a health official or being talked about in the neighbourhood (see Roberts, 1980). Mothers especially were expected to ensure the proper development of their children, biologically and socially. As noted by Rose (1985: 148), if the occasion and objective of much early-twentieth century neo-hygienist strategies was the child, its instrument was the mother. Women were thus entered into medical discourse as family doctor. The family would not only be subject to a professional medical gaze but also the discreet and ubiquitous gaze of the mother, prompting Donzelot (1980: 12 & 221) to point out that, 'by augmenting the civil authority of the mother', the doctor furnishes them with a social status previously unavailable. However, this ought not be understood as a direct affront to the patriarchal authority of the father, much less that of the state. Rather, women were still essentially confined to the private sphere, but are accorded a new role as educators, medical auxiliary, and emissaries of culture.

### **The Angel in the House: the Feminine Ideal**

Despite the emergent emphasis on public welfare, many twentieth century public health reformers continued to equate malnutrition and ill health with bad household

management, rather than poverty. How to provide a population with enough nutrients in times of economic hardship was the main political issue for much of the inter-war period, not least because putting food on the table represented the main struggle for most working class families during this period (see Roberts, 1980; Thompson, 1977). Needed was an angel in the house capable of performing minor miracles in the art of domestic economy with very frugal resources.

The idealisation of women as the servile domestic had proceeded apace during the Victorian period, evident in such divergent forms as Coventry Patmore's poetic eulogy, *The Angel in the House* (1854-62), or Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1861). The quasi-canonisation of women as homely saints greatly restricted women's participation in the work place. Women who chose to work were routinely blamed for deteriorating familial values. General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, typified this point of view:

The home is largely destroyed where the mother follows the father into the factory, and where the hours of labour are so long that they have not time to see their children ... It is the home that has been destroyed, and with the home the home-like virtues. It is the dishomed multitude, nomadic, hungry, that is rearing an undisciplined population, cursed from birth with hereditary weakness of body and hereditary faults of character ... Nothing is worth doing ... that does not Reconstitute the Home.

(Booth, 1890: 65-6)

The debate in the early-twentieth century centred around the effect working women had upon birth and infant mortality rates, and the nation's well-being generally. The case against was made forcibly by a memorandum from Dr. Janet Campbell (HMSO, 1919c) to a report by the Ministry for Reconstruction. Amongst the adverse effects were a lowering of the rates of marriage and births and a decline in standards of childcare. The 'future well being of the race as a whole' (ibid.: 250) depended upon women being discouraged from taking up employment in industry. Similarly, Arthur Newsholme, then Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, published several reports on the subject of infant mortality, all of which recommended that women concentrate their energies upon housewifery and child-care. Prominent trade union leaders argued that women workers were responsible not only for infants deaths but also, broken homes, low wages, and dysfunctional husbands and fathers (Dyhouse, 1989: 84-5). Such views were often reinforced by discriminatory work practices, the most prejudiced of which

was the unofficial (and unlawful) marriage bar, a practice that prohibited married women from earning a living wage, even in professions such as teaching.

Though the feminine ideal remained the image of perfection for many, especially male, commentators, it was frequently contested and had constantly to be reformed and reasserted. First wave feminism undoubtedly represented the main challenge to sexual discrimination. Organised groups, such as the Fabian Society Women's Group and the Women's Industrial Council, essentially comprised of educated, middle-class feminists sympathetic to the plight of working-class women, campaigned vigorously for better social welfare provisions and economic independence for women. Many looked to Engels' (1977) famous critique and analysis of the relations between the family, private property and the state. Another seminal text for the women's movement was Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour*. Schreiner argued that industrialisation had deprived middle-class women previously employed in home-based industries (textiles, milling, baking, brewing, dairy work) of their social usefulness and economic independence. They had become increasingly dependent upon marriage and husbandry for economic support, whilst working-class women were exploited for their labour. Thus feminists classified the state of 'the kept wife' as one of 'parasitism', a social institution that enslaved women into economic dependence upon their husbands (Dyhouse, 1989: 38). Writing in 1909, Cicely Hamilton described marriage as a 'trade' in woman as unpaid domestic servant, the personal property of her husband, a mere 'breeding machine and the necessary adjunct to a frying-pan' (ibid.). The most vehement critique of the feminine ideal during the inter-war period came from Virginia Woolf (1947: 149-54) in a lecture given to The Women's Service League in 1931. Though talking metaphorically, Woolf urged her female contemporaries to 'kill' the angelic spectre in an act of self-defence.

In these various ways, some women were intellectually, politically, or interpersonally resistant to the angelic ideal. As pointed out by Roberts (1980: 112), 'Not all women called their husbands 'master''. Increasingly, the 'Woman Question' was becoming a game of two halves. Hence in the inter-war period there was both a reformulation of the woman as housewife and an alternative view of the woman as an individual with the right to make the same choices as any man.



### **Matters of Breeding: Women's Education, Employment and Citizenship**

With the advent of compulsory state schooling education, provision for girls was still focussed on domesticity. Women's education was to provide a cadre of docile and efficient mothers and daughters able to keep men in the house. Such objectives were reflected in early-twentieth century Schools for Mothers, Baby Welcomes, and Infant Welcome Centres, established by middle-class women to inculcate working-class women with maternal and domestic skills.

The emphasis upon the housewife role was reinforced by shrinking employment opportunities for women. The end of war and the return of ex-service men meant that women wartime workers were more or less displaced overnight. Despite the invaluable contribution woman workers had made to the wartime effort, their industriousness was soon forgotten. So much so that by 1921 women constituted only 29 per cent of the workforce that they had in 1911 (Thompson, 1975: 270). Ejected from the workplace, the majority of women were encouraged to once again take up their domestic duties as housewives or domestic servants. Between 1920 and 1931 the number of domestic servants increased by 16% from 1,148,698 to 1,332,224. This was now the lot of a quarter of employed women (Benn, 1996: 383; Taylor, 1979: 121). Ironically, the reliance of many middle-classes women on domestic service to 'black their stoves' was partly to blame for this alarming increase in the supply and demand of domestic service. The Women's Industrial Council, for example, founded a nursery training school in Hackney specifically to train young working-class females in the arts of domestic economy and child rearing largely for the benefit of middle-class families in need of nannies (Dyhouse, 1989: 144).

For all the pressures towards the redomestication of women, working class women especially, women's education would also have to take account of their enhanced role as democratic citizens. This was recognised by the '1919 Report' of the Adult Education Committee for the Ministry of Reconstruction. Its prescriptions for women would later be echoed in the BBC's attempts to 'educate' the 'housewife'. Hence, at this historical juncture, two contradictory political rationalities come together for the first time. On the one hand, women are required to fulfil their traditional private domestic role as homemakers. On the other hand, it is important that women are better equipped to understand matters of public importance. How to reconcile these two hitherto



diametrically opposed spheres was now a matter of increasing importance, not least because the cultural regulation of both women and men depended on it.

This brings me to what is the main hypothesis of this chapter: wireless permits a fusion of the two spheres. It educated women in their newly ascribed civic function, whilst simultaneously located in the private sphere. It became the role of radio to construct women as mothers and housewives, literally amplifying Victorian idealisations of women. In so doing, it redefined the public/private divide, a divide which itself was integral to the newly emerging discourse about the social function of wireless.

### **Home sweet Home: Radio and Hearth**

Evidence of the BBC's appropriation of these discourses can be found in its idealisation of the home as reconstituted by radio; the nature of programming explicitly aimed at women and children; the effort to research the state of family life; and an intervention in discussion of the housing problem. At different times radio was ideologist, educator, and social investigator.

We have already seen how wireless constituted itself as an everyday household object through technical innovations and radio publications portraying idealised images of familial relations. The romanticisation of the radio hearth was perhaps most fully stated in a special 'Fireside' issue of the *Radio Times* (15 November 1935) in which the reader-cum-listener was cordially invited to imagine a typical English November evening vis-à-vis the home comforts afforded by an evening listening-in.

To come home from work on a November evening, through the wet confusion of the city, the humid press of bus or train or tram, the rain-dimmed streets that lead to the lights of your own home; to close the door behind you, with curtains drawn against the rain and the fire glowing on the hearth – that is one of the real pleasures of life. And it is when you are settled by your own fireside, with no inclination to stir from it until you get up to go to bed, that you most appreciate the entertainment broadcasting can bring.

An editorial in *The Listener* (7 October 1931) argued that the home was 'emerging at last from its long eclipse', and 'about to recover its full effectiveness as a stabilising ... social institution'. C. A. Lewis was even more candid:

Broadcasting means the rediscovery of the home. In these days when house and hearth have been largely given up in favour of a multitude of other interests and activities outside, with the consequent disintegration of family ties and affections, it appears that

this new persuasion may to some extent reinstate the parental roof in its old accustomed place, for all will admit that this is, or should be, one of the greatest and best influences on life.

(cited in Frith, 1983: 110)

However, this recovery of family moral values was dependent, to a large extent, on the part women would have to play in transmitting the cultural values of public service broadcasting into the *sanctum sanatorium* of the home. Radio, like the broader project of homemaking, needed a feminine touch. Women listeners were thus interpellated by gendered broadcasting discourses as housewives and mothers with civic responsibilities: keeping the husband out of the pub by making the home an attractive alternative, ensuring the physical well-being of the family, the rearing and moral education of children, among others. This articulation of public and private roles was an ideal function for a medium publicly produced but consumed in private (see Lacey 1994 & 1996). Women could go about their everyday domestic chores whilst simultaneously being educated in issues of political and social importance. Broadcasting reinforced and rationalised the housewife's timetable of work, with occasional 'natural pauses' so that more effective listening could be undertaken. Located in such pauses was programming for women, otherwise known as household talks.

### **Programming the Housewife: The Angel in the Ether**

Though only broadcast for eleven months during the inter-war period and not reintroduced until 1946, *Woman's Hour* began on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1923, when the Duchess of Athlone delivered the first Afternoon Talk for women on 'The Adoption of Babies' (WAC R51/646). After much experimentation with timing, in the summer of 1930 household talks moved to a regular slot between 10.45am and 11.00am. Women were expected to turn on their wirelesses for the morning service and continue listening during their daily household chores (WAC R51/239). Though including news from parliament and other countries, more frequent topics were housecraft, child welfare and cookery. This was in spite of women listeners expressing a clear preference for talks on general topics, not cookery or housekeeping hints, when once invited to send in their

Household talks were supplemented with the introduction of a women's 'home pages' as a regular feature in the *Radio Times* from March 1934. Though articles varied and included a diversity of subjects, perhaps the most interesting regular feature, in terms of the way in which it sought to discipline women listeners, was a column by the home economist, Elizabeth Craig. In her first article, she instructed housewives how to plan their working day by breaking it down into an ordered succession of prescribed domestic responsibilities as follows:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 7 a.m.                   | Draw curtains. Open windows. Clean dining room and living room.  |
| 8.15 a.m.                | Prepare breakfast ...  |
| 8.30 a.m.                | Serve breakfast  |
| 9 a.m.                   | Turn down beds. Clear away breakfast things. Wash up, and return everything to its proper place, polished and ready for the next meal. Leave breakfast table tidy and chairs in position. Tidy kitchen premises. |
| 10 a.m.                  | When you do your own shopping shop at once ...   |
| 11 a.m.                  | Make beds. Clean bedroom or bedrooms, staircase if you have one, and hall and passages and bathroom, etc.  |
| 12 noon                  | Prepare midday meal and lay table.   |
| 1 p.m.                   | Serve midday meal.   |
| 2 p.m.                   | Clear away, wash up, return everything to its place, polished and ready for next meal.   |
| 3 p.m.                   | (a) Clean kitchen premises. Set and cover tea-tray. Wash out tea-cloths and finish any odd jobs. (b) Prepare everything as far as possible for evening meal.   |
| NOTE:                    | Spend 30 minutes attending to your toilet, your hair and hands, changing your clothes, and seeing to immediate necessities.  |
| 4.30-5.30 p.m. or 6 p.m. | Free to entertain or rest, etc., unless there are children to see to.  |
| 6 to 7 p.m.              | Prepare evening meal and prepare bedrooms for the night.   |
| 7 or 7.30 p.m.           | Serve meal.  |
| 8.30 p.m.                | Clear away, wash up, return everything to its proper place, etc.   |
| 9 or 9.30 p.m.           | Free again.  |

Another example of the interpellation of women as housewives was a broadcast, summarised in *The Listener* (9 October 1929), entitled 'The Art of Easing Housework'. It reminded housewives that the home is not 'just a place for cooking, washing and

<sup>113</sup> The invitation was made following a suggestion made at the first Women's Committee meeting that a debate be staged by two of the committee members with a view to ascertaining female listeners' opinions on the timing and subject-matter for women's talks. As a result it was found that 75% of listeners wanted talks on general topics, whilst the remaining 25% wanted talks concerning the home, but not cookery or household hints (BBC WAC R51/646). Having said that there is also evidence to suggest that a large number of listeners came to enjoy listening to household talks, in particular ones that gave details of recipes or where listeners were invited to contribute recipes and hints of their own (WAC, R51/239).



cleaning', but also 'a place where children are brought up, and where adults can come back happily to their rest and recreation'. As well as to themselves, housewives 'owe it to others to try and ease your housework', so they would not neglect other family members. Essential to 'the art of easing housework' is to 'make a definite plan, a timetable, for the work you have to do, get it down in black and white'. As an incentive, women are encouraged to 'make a game of finding short cuts', for 'two minutes a day mean twelve hours in the year'(!)

In both of the above instances, one is immediately stuck by the extraordinary attention to temporal regulation and the regimental like discipline with which the BBC exhorted women to go about their housework. In fact, this organisation of time was a recurring theme in many of the women's talks and wireless literature generally. Just as the industrial labourer was subjected to the virtues of punctuality and the discipline of the factory whistle, broadcasting was instrumental in institutionalising 'the domestication of standard national time' to order and demarcate the day's social activities (Moore, 1988: 38).<sup>114</sup> For women especially, there was now a more clearly defined time to work and a time to play. If they were to be diligent housewives, it was imperative that they learn to conduct their lives by hours, minutes, and seconds (Rose, 1999: 31). Idleness or frivolous pleasure was not permitted. And the best disciplinary method with which to manage the activity of female listeners was to prescribe particular temporal regularities in the form of a time-table whose *raison d'être* was to, as pointed out by Foucault (1991: 149), 'establish rhythms, impose particular occupations [and] regulate the cycles of repetition'. In other words, household talks and the accompanying literature constituted a mode of 'disciplinary time', a means with which to train women in the art of efficient timekeeping and hence good housekeeping.

Another aspect to household talks was the concern with public health. It was early recognised that broadcasting could play a significant part in maintaining a healthy populace. Hilda Matheson, then Director of Talks, thought that 'broadcasting can do a great deal to make effective the modern campaign for preventative medicine' (cited in Karpf, 1988: 32). This was specially important in the 1920s and 1930s when it was widely feared that the nation's physical well-being was underdeveloped and a liability

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<sup>114</sup> For a classical analysis of the institutionalisation of time-work discipline, see Edward Thompson's (1967) 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism'.



to the country's security in the event of another major military conflict. Building a healthy nation was crucial to ensuring a strong nation state and empire. Hence the establishment of the Ministry for Health in 1919 and other attendant post-war welfare reforms.<sup>115</sup>

Military and imperial rationalities were not the only reason for raising the public's consciousness about public health. Equally important, and in some ways related, was the state's efforts to increase national efficiency, particularly economic productivity. A regular broadcaster on health issues was George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health.<sup>116</sup> In one particular broadcast Newman argued that personal health was one of the main 'contributions to national prosperity and the wisest kind of economy', citing ill health as a cost to the worker, the employer, and the state (*The Listener*, 4 November 1931). Indeed, Newman calculated that if one were to add up the number of days workers were absent from work in 1930 a total of 26½ million weeks were lost owing to sickness, which, as he went on to point out, was 'more than all the time lost to industry in all the trade stoppages, strikes and lock-outs put together'. Hence Newman's belief that, just as Chadwick had taught the necessity of the 'sanitary idea', the chief aim for early twentieth century social reform was to instil in the public what he called the 'health idea', that is to say, 'the discovery by every individual of a systematic way of health for himself or for herself'. In short, it was imperative that the public learn that 'to attain health is a discipline and not a spree'.

This change in 'the rules of health' was similarly noted in the editorial of the same issue of *The Listener* in which Newman's broadcast was transcribed. Emphasising the virtues of cleanliness, exercise and diet, the editor argued that being vigilant about one's health was more to do with 'the adoption of a few common-sense habits and precautions', than it was 'the multiplication of restrictions, exercises, ablutions and other health ceremonies'. In other words, the discourse of health and its disciplinary apparatus is presented as a natural state of affairs, it is 'what-goes-without-saying'. And it is from

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<sup>115</sup> To an even greater extent than the Boer war, the First World War strengthened the case for state intervention in the field of public health, prompting some social historians to argue that many early twentieth century welfare reforms can only be properly understood in the historical context of the then prevalent imperial consciousness (see Fraser, 1982: 164-7; Wilson, 1977: 100).

<sup>116</sup> It should be noted that relations between the BBC and the Ministry of Health were not always amicable. This was partly to do with the latter's attempts to dominate public health broadcasts to which the BBC occasionally objected (see Karpf, 1988: 38-43).

this premise that the editorial – and broadcasting generally throughout the inter-war period – affirms Newman’s recommendation that, ‘Good health should be regarded as a duty of individual citizenship, and not merely as a lucky accident’.

This discipline-health couplet was further expounded in a series of twelve talks broadcast in the winter of 1932, entitled ‘The Doctor and the Public’. One of the talks was given by Thomas Horder, one of the foremost members of the medical profession. Among other things, Horder considered a healthy body synonymous with a healthy mind. In other words, he proposed that health was impossible without morals. Hence it is ‘easier for the disciplined man [sic] to keep his health than for the undisciplined’. Parents were specially instructed how to best discipline their children in body and mind, since adult health depends upon ‘the habits that have been formed during childhood and youth’. For Horder health was thus ‘very much bound up with education’, education here understood to mean not only ‘the giving of instruction’, but also ‘the formation of the mind, the regulation of the passions and the establishment of principles’. In short health was ‘inseparably bound up with the conduct of life’. Indeed the listener was reminded that just as ‘order is heaven’s first law, it is the first law of health also’ (*The Listener*, 5 October 1932). Just as godliness was equated with cleanliness in the nineteenth century so too was it equated with healthiness in the twentieth century.

Another aspect to household talks was the importance of dietetics and nutrition. It was widely realised that fit bodies, and a healthy nation, could not be built up on empty stomachs.<sup>117</sup> Hence women listeners were also educated in the importance of nutrition, especially for themselves and their children, receiving frequent advice on family budgeting. Talks were more often than not presented under the rubric of ‘national health’ and ‘progress’ (see Newman, 1939: 322-59). The importance of this was stated

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<sup>117</sup> How to develop a wise nutrition policy was widely discussed in both houses of parliament. The following extract from a speech by Kingsley Wood in the House of Commons, dated 8 July 1936, was typical of the concern expressed by all political parties: ‘... there is a great scope for activity and advance. Malnutrition in the true sense of the term exists and must be fought, and it is manifest that we must continue to pay increasing attention to the nutrition of the nation as a potent weapon against disease and a great instrument for the promotion of mental and physical efficiency and well-being’. Lord Horder, speaking in the House of lords, 10 November 1936, was even more candid: ‘Let the Government have faith that if the people of Britain are given the modest requirements of security at home and the security of sustenance, their sturdy common-sense will do the rest ... and I would remind your Lordships that democracy, especially a democracy asked to be physically fit, also advances on its stomach’ (BBC WAC R51/359).

by Edward Le Gros Clark, an eminent anatomist, in one of many internal memos relating to talks on nutrition:

we are on the eve of a great movement of reform in this country; and the motto we shall take will be ... If everyone could be properly fed, the progress in health and happiness would be even more remarkable than the progress we made last century when we made our vast sanitary reforms, laid down our drainage systems and guaranteed our water supplies free from contamination.

(WAC R51/359)

As well as addressing scientific and policy related issues, nutrition talks were supplemented by information about diets for different levels of income in relation to food prices. A deluge of BBC publications accompanied morning talks: *Home, Health & Garden* (1928); *Choosing the Right Food* (1933); *Economical Cookery* (1933); *The Wise Penny – Hints on Economical Marketing & Recipes* (1934); and *Shopping & Cooking* (1935). The BBC even appealed on air for listeners to submit details of their family budgets, based on actual expenditure. Fifty were received and analysed, the results being discussed in a special issue of *The Listener* (15 July 1931). Though the conclusions which could be drawn from such limited evidence were tentative, by calculating per capita expenditure on food, a dietician could none the less surmise the standard family's probable nutritional state vis-à-vis the family's cost of living. The main recommendation was that the minimal cost per person expenditure on food ought to be 1s. per day. Anything less than this merited some kind of intervention, if only to give advice. The BBC felt that it had to maintain standards even when dealing with food matters. There was also the additional point of interest that the figures had been gathered together through the agency of broadcasting and that they might form the basis for future investigations.

However, this kind of project attracted criticism for its class bias and patronising tone, both evident in the advice given in a series of talks by Margaret McKillop in April 1924, on 'The Family Budget on A Weekly Wage':

The Father should be in regular employment; both parents need to be sober, steady and unselfish; then the money has to be laid out, and all the items put down afterwards, with regularity, careful planning, and a good deal of orderliness and perseverance, so that to hand in a budget at all is evidence of good housekeeping'

(*The Listener*, 24 April 1929: 563)



Not surprisingly, working-class women and men objected to being lectured to on how to best spend what frugal resources they had whilst middle-class housewives were more or less free to spend what they liked. Catherine Byworth, a listener from St. Leonards-on-Sea, stated as much in a letter addressed to the editor of *The Listener* (19 June 1929):

... how irritating it is to hear people talking about the best way of spending a minimum wage of 30.s per week on a family of four ... It is only the poor mother of only two who knows what a struggle for existence it is year in and year out and never able to have a week's holiday ... It is not human to preach to people who have so little sunshine in their lives.

Similarly, trade union official and founding member of the British Communist Party, Walter Hannington, criticised the way in which the reports of Medical Officers of Health discussed working-class diets using bourgeois pseudo-scientific terms, thus excluding working-class women from what was essentially a public issue about poverty and economic hardship.

We frequently come up against insidious propaganda, which I believe has been encouraged by the Ministry of Health, to the effect that it is not the amount of income to the household that is too low, but ... the ignorance of the average working-class housewife in regard to food values and the art of cooking, resulting in the loss of the nutritive qualities of the food, which is responsible for the present ill-health that pervades so many working-class homes. It is indeed interesting to read of the well-to-do women assuming the right to instruct the working-class mother on the way she shall spend the 4s. or less on twenty-one meals a week.

(Hannington, 1936: 60-1)

Such sentiments were more widespread; working-class mothers especially objected to being made to feel inadequate (Wilson, 1977: 125). To many working-class families the series of early-twentieth century welfare strategies, of which broadcasting was one, were as offensive and insulting as the patronising charity interventions of the nineteenth-century.

Household talks remained important well into the late 1930s. A women's conference held in April 1936 about the BBC's morning talks was attended by a plethora of prominent women, women's organisation, and educational associations. Among other things, conference delegates discussed the timing and salience of talks and their links to wider public health concerns (WAC R44/86/1). One delegate, Mrs M. A. Hamilton, particularly welcomed the attempt of household talks to enhance the skills of home maintenance through 'scientific' advice with its purpose 'to do everything to strengthen



the sense of self-government ... in this country'. This emphasis on individual responsibility was indicative of many inter-war public health initiatives, which sought to exact governance from a distance. Other conference speakers asked whether greater co-operation between public and voluntary agencies promoting public health could be encouraged. Lady Burton asked whether BBC programmes could be more closely aligned to the work of district nurses, health visitors, infant welfare centres, etc. Similarly, Lady Rhys Williams stressed the importance of broadcasting as a means of co-ordinating the health services throughout the county.

### **Surveying the Family**

Despite its critics, the BBC continued to research the state of the nation.<sup>118</sup> Of the many subjects upon which social investigators, the BBC included, wanted to have more detailed returns from the public, *The Listener* (27 January 1932) argued that none was 'of more immediate interest than the changes which we believe to be taking place today in family life': 'how is it being affected by present-day economic conditions, by the emancipation of women and their entry into industry, by changed ideas on the subject of sex, by changed conditions of health, and even by such radical alterations in the amenities of home life as are brought by modern inventions like the wireless?'

One outcome was a series of talks on 'Changes in Family Life', initiated and organised by William Beveridge and broadcast over a six week period between February and April 1932. As well as providing a general historical overview of the family, the talks considered the importance of certain familial relationships: marriage and its relation to occupation and size of family, the relationship between the family and the population, the economic functions of family, family income and its use, employment of married women, changes in legal position of married women, state provision for children and elderly people, a family's use of leisure, etc (*The Listener*, 2 March 1932).

One of the talks was a discussion between William Beveridge and Mrs. J. L. Adamson, about the emancipation of married women (*The Listener*, 6 April 1932). During the discussion Beveridge happens to mention that one of the people who filled in the family form objected to the way wives no longer behaved as many husbands' mothers had

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<sup>118</sup> It collaborated with the Registrar-General in the 1931 Census, providing background information and instructions on completing the form. As a result, public interest was greater than ever before.

done. Adamson countered the objection by stating that women were now citizens and entitled to public life, even if that means disagreeing with their husbands in politics. The debate then develops into an argument about the private and public roles of women.

W.B: They can disagree about things like politics without upsetting anybody. Where one puts a cross on a ballot paper does not matter much. But where one puts the sideboard or the gramophone matters a great deal.

J.L.A: No, no, Sir William, to my mind it is more important where one puts a cross on a ballot paper than the position of the sideboard or gramophone.

W.B: I am sure you are an exceptional woman, Mrs. Adamson. But what about more serious family problems – about the place of living, the use of leisure, and the place for holidays, the education of the children ...

At one level of analysis Beveridge's remarks are straightforward sexism. The family, especially the mother, is located firmly in the private sphere with only a tangential relation to the public sphere. At another level of analysis, Beveridge's obsession with how a family functions through the placement of children and household objects can be understood as a transparent expression of cultural governance. That is to say, women's role is defined in relation to the maintenance of population and hence the nation. The main problem for Beveridge and others was how to reconcile women's demands for greater emancipation with the fundamental regeneration of society.

Accompanying the series was a questionnaire issued to the listening public (WAC A/254). More comprehensive than the census, it was collaboration between the BBC and the London School of Economics. Among other things, respondents were asked to note changes in past and present generations in (a) 'The relations of husband and wife, including such matters as economic dependence of wife, choice of home and friends; (b) 'The relations of parents and children, including such matters as choice of career, choice of partners, and claims to respect or obedience'; (c) 'Family life generally, including such matters as relations of brothers and sisters, pooling of family income, house-work and uses of leisure'. The concluding question asked: 'What are the chief difficulties arising in family life, and what are the forces tending either (a) to bind the family more closely; (b) to loosen the ties between members'?

Revealing questions were also asked about the occupations and earnings of husband and wife. Whereas the husband is simply asked to provide information about his employment, the wife is asked to provide the same information before and after

marriage. The inference is that paid employment is a problem, since she has to explain why she works and for how long, what arrangements she makes for childcare and domestic help, etc.

By April 1932, some 7,000 completed forms had been returned. Reviewing the findings (*The Listener* 13 April 1932), Beveridge saw the forms as ‘a symposium of views about family life and its changes and its problems, by a class of people who are very seldom articulate’, ‘ordinary people talking about the family life they know’. Beveridge calculates that, including past generations, information had been gathered about 18,000 families, 40,000 marriages and 180,000 individuals. Though Beveridge does not explain if and why the forms were analysed, his interpretation is clearly concerned with how families struggle along without recourse to divorce, bankruptcy, charity or crime. The spectre of social disorder was never far away.

Anxiety about the potential disintegration of the family is evident in a *Listener* editorial (6 April 1932) on the survey. It wonders whether economic change has wrought ‘a corresponding alteration of emphasis on moral values’, with ‘loosening of the bonds of family discipline and respect, and some extension of individual liberty or licence in conduct’. The overall concern with such changes was ‘whether the family as a social institution can adapt itself to them and survive unharmed’. More than this, the state may have to intervene so that perhaps

we shall see the State recognise that it cannot allow the disintegration of the family, either from the moral, economic or biological point of view. If there is a movement to deurbanise and decentralise human civilisation – a movement which will be powerfully aided by the new cultural forces such as broadcasting – we may confidently expect that family life will be revived, and parenthood will again become a normal and attractive ambition and duty for most citizens. Thus the changes which we are witnessing may, if properly guided, be forces to enrich rather than to destroy the oldest of human associations – the home.

Affirmed here and elsewhere is the primacy of the family–population couplet as a sphere of socio-political urgency, as hypothesised by Foucault and subsequent governmentality literature. However, it was not uncontested. For example, a *Listener* editorial (3 February 1932) noted that ‘in one or two quarters’ the survey had been termed an ‘inquisition’, using ‘continental police methods’ for identifying criminals and



subversives. Evidently, some contemporary commentators perceived the BBC as implicated in techniques of governance and surveillance.

### **Housing Problems: Architecture as an Embodiment of Power**

Before concluding I would like to consider how housing, particularly the problems associated with slum dwellings, became an object of government during the inter-war period.<sup>119</sup> The reason for this is because the family, with the woman as its moral touchstone, also required a cornerstone, that is the provision of housing suitable for the achievement of respectable family living. I am especially interested in how broadcasting collaborated with public programmes and charitable projects that, as well as wanting to genuinely improve the living conditions of slum dwellers, also sought to ensure a certain allocation of people in space, or, to quote Foucault (2001c: 361), ‘a *canalisation* of their circulation’. In other words, a fundamental question arises concerning the disposition of urban space for socio-political ends. Working-class tenements and the space inhabited by those tenants become increasingly differentiated and functional (Foucault, 1980c: 148-9). New standards were exacted: the three bedroom house, affording privacy for adults and children alike, with kitchen, bathroom, and gas or electricity were built in large numbers by the municipalities and county councils (Mowat, 1964: 229). This spatialisation of slum dwellers was fundamental to making their habits and behaviour more governable. Like the sociological survey, housing reforms were ways of mapping relations between people, both spatially and socially.

Such interventions were also a way of prescribing family morality. This was particularly important in the aftermath of WWI, when it was widely felt that government efforts to reconstruct the nation were largely dependent on effecting a collective urban infrastructure capable of rejuvenating the social moorings of old. For example, the *Army and Religion* report of 1919 (377) urged the government to ‘get on with housing

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<sup>119</sup> During the inter-war period, there were a series of various Housing Acts designed to (i) improve bad housing conditions and (ii) alleviate the shortage of housing accommodation for those who could not afford to buy their own house. The Addison Housing Act (1919) was instrumental in establishing housing as a social service, providing subsidies for local authorities to organise the building of ‘homes fit for heroes’ at affordable rents. By 1922 213,000 council houses had been built in England and Wales. Following Wheatley’s 1924 Housing Act, a further 521,700 were built by 1933. The 1930 Housing Act renewed government subsidy for council housing and accelerated slum clearance (Lowe, 1988: 350-371; Stevenson, 1984: 221-242).



reform, remembering that it is not a mere fad of sanitary specialists, but a matter which involves the very souls of our people'. In short, poor housing conditions were associated with immortality:

... evil housing conditions mean no healthy social life within the home, so that girls and boys are driven to the streets for opportunities of meeting one another ... The same evil of bad housing work is mischief when the boys and girls grow up. Young men and young women will meet either in houses or wholesome public resorts; or, failing these, in lanes, byways and corners, and unwholesome places of recreation. When only the latter are available, evil will usually come of it.

(1919: 372)

Similarly, Edwin Evans (1924: 549-50), then President of the Property Owners' Protection Association of London, argued that 'slum houses and overcrowded areas are a menace to both the health and the morals of the people'. Hence the purpose of building new houses for the working-classes was the hope that it would have a transformative effect on 'the habits of the people'. Housing reforms were as much about shaping a 'people for the houses' as it was 'houses for the people'.

Various BBC talks examined the housing problem, including a series, *Other People's Houses*, broadcast in 1933. The series was largely based on the experiences of Howard Marshall, normally a BBC sports commentator, who visited slum dwellings up and down the country. Marshall gave four of the talks, providing an eye-witness account of slum life in Tyneside, London, Manchester and Glasgow. His accounts were by far the most controversial and provoked praise and condemnation from the press, the listening public and by some of the other speakers. Other speakers, though less sentimental, appealed to the listening public to do all they could to help councils clear the slums and re-house slum dwellers.

One contributor, R. L. Reiss, urged people to be prepared to meet the cost of re-housing as tax and rate payers: not only would it provide employment for large numbers of unemployed building-trade workers; it would also secure better health (*The Listener*, 25 January 1933). The public were also encouraged to make 'careful surveys of bad housing conditions' and publicise the results, thus strengthening the demand for action. In other words, it was hoped that housing discussions would awaken among listeners a stronger sense of civic responsibility. In addition to reminding listeners of 'the old saying, that you cannot expect an A1 population from C3 homes', Reiss concluded his

broadcast by reminding listeners what George V had said in a speech on housing in April 1919:

It is not too much to say that an adequate solution of the housing question is the foundation of all social progress. Health and housing are indissolubly connected. If this country is to be the country which we desire to see it become, a greater offensive must be undertaken against disease and crime, and the first point at which the attack must be delivered is the unhealthy, ugly, overcrowded house in the mean street, which we all of us know too well.

Scannell and Cardiff (1991: 58) argue that the series' significance was its innovatory approach to radio documentary: 'they were appeals to the conscience of the nation, a cry for voluntary effort to mitigate the worst consequences of these social evils'. In other words, programmes like *Other People's Houses* were a means for ordinary people to positively assert and make visible their everyday living conditions. Though this is no doubt true – the BBC did much to politicise the housing problem by bringing it to the attention of the public – what this interpretation fails to grasp is the ways in which the series of talks and the accompanying housing reforms were attempts to effect a disciplinary apparatus, reliant upon techniques of supervision and self-regulation.

For instance, in the new housing tenements, there were endless mechanisms of surveillance: caretakers and managers to supervise and sometimes inspect tenancies and high-rise estates designed to ensure that exits and entries were in full view.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, a characteristic common to programmes such as *Other People's Houses* was their use of confessional techniques, as discussed in chapter one. Thus, despite its apparent empathy with the suffering of slum dwellers, *Other People's Houses*, and housing reforms generally, exemplified an approach which implicitly endorsed a

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<sup>120</sup> One of the earliest examples of household management was the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who, from the late nineteenth century, employed women in the management of their working-class property. A similar scheme was inaugurated by a public utility society in Glasgow, and the main features of its management were resident caretakers, club rooms, women managers, and, in the words of the author, all were 'under the direction of a man of great experience'. The homes were reported to be 'clean and orderly', 'a result due very largely to the sound and helpful supervision of women managers'. Indeed, we are told that re-housed tenants 'come under regular house-to-house visitation'; and those that 'lapse from the category of clean' are transferred to the supervision of 'special lady inspectors' or 'supervising nurse inspectors'. Reports show that, though 'back-sliding occurs despite the supervision' a 'considerable improvement is effected' by such methods. Indeed, the author is of the opinion that 'the standard of cleanliness throughout the schemes would fall rapidly if the supervision were removed'. The efficacy of using women to manage new housing tenements prompted the founding of a private enterprise, the Association of Women House Property Managers, who provided trained women managers for over fifty property owners – public authorities, utility societies and private individuals (*The Listener*, 30 September 1931).

complex of mechanisms to reform and render more governable the conditions and conduct of the inhabitants of slums.<sup>121</sup>

## Conclusions

At the turn of the twentieth century, family life was to be intensified. To regulate a population and its conduct, the private sphere, with the family at its heart, increasingly becomes an object of welfarist strategies. It was made to be more careful and self-conscious about its own internal dynamics and relations, all according to hygienist and pedagogical norms. The family's contingencies, deviancies, and regularities were measured, quantified, and interpreted into techniques of government that sought to simultaneously regulate the corporal activities of individual bodies and the social activities of populations. Consequently, the family was no longer an autonomous social institution comprised of independent individuals. Rather, a whole series of values and privileges emerge that transform the family into an agent for maximising social economy and social order. Mothers in particular were perceived as absolutely integral to enabling a regularisation of everyday conduct and thus targeted as instruments for conveying the norms of the state (healthy, regular and disciplined conduct) into the private sphere. Such developments served to regulate inter-familial relations and intra-familial relations: families would police themselves and each other. This policing of families, government through the family, was instrumental to maintaining a particular socio-political order.

Even at its most liberal and reformist, the BBC was implicated in the contradictions of such welfare reforms, especially in its conception of family life. It sought to regulate the organisation of family life by reinvigorating hegemonic familial ideals and practices, simultaneously domesticating and gendering certain cultural practices, reinforcing

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<sup>121</sup> It was probably because of this that many slum dwellers either declined to be rehoused or returned to the slums after experiencing tenement flats. The extent of resistance to housing reforms was communicated by Cecil Levita, Chairman of the L.C.C., in a February 1933 programme (*The Listener*, 5 February 1933). On one occasion he visited inhabitants of a particular street after receiving letters about the appalling living conditions (though he does not state who the letters were from, one suspects they were not from the people who lived in the street) to make an offer of cottage accommodation outside Central London, only to find that 'one in a dozen accepted', and even then, those that did accept 'eventually returned to the slums'. Similarly, all the inhabitants declined new tenement flats in Central London. Levita was in no doubt that the reason they refused was 'the modicum of discipline required under such conditions'. It would seem that attempts to rehouse slum dwellers was not as straightforward as reformers thought it would be. If there was to be a significant take-up of new housing, it would have to provide tenants with a cultural habitat that was more recognisably their own, rather than one imposed from above.



demarcations between the spheres of public and private, and thereby establishing the home as a site for cultural governance. Hence, much broadcasting during the inter-war years addressed its women audience as mothers and housewives. Amongst the earliest regular programme slots were 'household talks'. Deliberately broadcast at times that reflected the daily timetable and 'natural' breaks of the average housewife, these talks defined women's political duty in terms of their domestic activity in the private sphere, according them little role in the public sphere of politics. In other words, women were exhorted to identify the domestic realm of the home with the political and social well-being of the nation. Understood thus, early broadcasting was one of many terminal effects of a governmental bio-power whose rationale was to regulate and direct a population's behaviour, conduct and hence physical well-being.

Finally, as well as regulating familial relations, wireless also increased familiarity among communities and the nation at large. It made possible a new form of human universality and national identity. Broadcasting was the institution best suited to facilitating this intensification of the private whilst simultaneously maintaining a public sphere around which concepts of citizenship and nationhood could be mobilised. Indeed, the governmental rationality inherent within the BBC's civilising mission was pivotal upon the effecting of a more privatised and individualised way of life; one in which individuals could be more easily regulated in their behaviour and habits, but not so removed from society that they could not be drawn back into the whole for reasons of governance and nationhood, arguably the BBC's core rationalities.



What I have sought to illustrate in writing this thesis is that culture was a strategic arena of political contestation in the organisation of the welfare liberal state during the early twentieth century. It was widely assumed among cultural and political elites that mass entertainment coupled with education would result in good citizenship. Hence the emergence of a multiplicity of interrelated cultural institutions whose principal rationale was to render the populace more amenable to government through the deployment of useful cultural values and practices. Moreover, it has been my contention throughout this thesis that public service broadcasting never materialised in its idealised liberal form. Rather, public service broadcasting was borne out of an ensemble of governmental rationalities and techniques that sought to transform culture into a normalising technology of governance, capable of subjectifying listeners as conscientious and self-regulating citizens with specific national attributes. Hence the rationalities of public service broadcasting and cultural citizenship were intertwined. Both sought to effect discursive practices that addressed the public as ethically incomplete subjects in need of moral and cultural training. Understood thus, the technology of broadcasting was an attempt at effecting a public of morally self-governing individuals, who in their entirety would constitute a social body of disciplined persons.

In other words, public service broadcasting was more than a philosophy or ideology; it was inextricably linked to civilising forms of practical conduct traversed by various modes of power relations. Thus, whilst we see vestiges of nineteenth-century 'conservative paternalism', the Arnoldian culturalist trajectory, and the Victorian public service tradition in much of early broadcasting's practices and regulations, these ought not be thought of as broadcasting's core rationalities, much less its origins. Instead, broadcasting grew out of a combination of existing, and sometimes conflicting, practical rationalities already developed in an array of cultural institutions that both pre-dated and were attendant upon the birth of broadcasting, which were reassembled and redeployed specifically for the purposes of cultural governance in the early twentieth century. We have also seen how these various institutions, though interrelated, at times contradicted one another insofar as they did not all act in the same direction.

So what were these strategies of government and how were they exercised through the technology of broadcasting? On the one hand, broadcasting was an extension of Christian pedagogy and was thus constituted by normative cultural values deemed to be edifying and morally uplifting. These involved the renunciation of harmful pleasures and dangerous passions, such as gambling and drinking. What was relatively new about the BBCs pastoral guidance was that it was largely for secular purposes. Though some of the BBCs internal terms of reference were explicitly religious, its civilising mission was more properly concerned with moral training as a practical remedy, an everyday ethical practice, rather than a theology for the salvation of souls. Hence the equal importance accorded to secular education as a pastoral technology, as seen in chapter four. Indeed, between them, popular education and the BBC gradually replaced the church as the everyday embodiment of spiritual discipline, moral authority, and pastoral guidance.

However, unlike educationalists who had the classroom as a space in which to train and supervise their students, the BBC had to capture and regulate as best it could the private sphere of the home. On the few occasions that group listening was encouraged, groups were organised using pedagogical practices of the school classroom: group discussions were facilitated by an appointed group co-ordinator; meetings often took place in libraries and school classrooms; the wireless set itself was often positioned at the front of the room to denote its position of authority. However, evidence would suggest that such techniques were largely ineffective for broadcasting purposes. Indeed, the reorganisation of broadcast adult education was in response to both the BBC and the adult education movement acknowledging that group listening was a minority activity; the majority of listening was done in the home. The significance of this is that the BBC came to place familial relations at the heart of its civilising mission. The main task confronting the BBC became how to transform the home into a pedagogical milieu in which the listening public could be inculcated in useful cultural values and practices aimed at effecting greater self-reflexivity and self-control. It did this in various ways: its primary technique was to target its female audience as instruments with which to domesticate cultural governance; it also intervened in the inter-war housing problem in an attempt to effect an architectural embodiment of power.

The historical significance of radio broadcasting for cultural regulation was that, whereas Victorian rational recreation was a means of regulating conduct in public, broadcasting represented a shift away from the regulation of public spaces towards the regulation of a public in the private sphere of the home. In other words, public service broadcasting can be understood as an attempt to produce a controlled, privatised use of leisure. Unlike many previous rational recreationalists who sought to civilise the popular masses by subjecting them to a disciplinary gaze that was effected in public, broadcasting sought to effect a more privatised method of cultural governance. The fact that radio was, for many families, the first domestic electrical consumer good is significant in this respect. And herein lies the historical disjuncture between the governmental technique of many Victorian rational recreations and the formation of a public institution that sought to penetrate 'the greatest number of homes'. Victorian social reformers may have aspired to penetrate the household but did not have the appropriate technology at their disposal. Whereas they had to be contented with relocating outdoor leisure from anarchic open spaces to more regulated public venues, the emergence of broadcasting made possible the relocation of rational recreation in the domestic sphere, the site of private and individualised activity. Its status as a technology of mass entertainment ensured that the penetration of the home was not perceived as a direct governmental interference. In short, the couplet of radio and hearth became one of the primary technologies for the domestication of cultural governance.

This last point has some bearing upon the way in which broadcasting was also concerned with facilitating a biopolitical form of power whose *raison d'être* was to police the public's physical well-being. Hence the importance accorded to household talks, particularly ones that addressed public health issues such as nutrition, domestic economy, mothercraft, childcare, etc. All such programmes were aimed at increasing public awareness of body politics. Moreover, many household talks were deliberately gendered. It was the rhythm of women's daily life that wireless especially sought to capture and to regulate in an attempt to effect domestication of cultural governance. In particular, women listeners were targeted as agents for conveying the norms of the state (e.g. healthy, regular, and disciplined conduct) into the private sphere. Much broadcasting during the inter-war years addressed its women audience as mothers and housewives with civic duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, those who spoke to



them were persons in authority or middle-class ladies who could 'assist' women with their housework by sharing their 'expert' knowledge. In time, these experts would become increasingly familiar and welcome guests, personalised individuals with whom housewives were supposed to identify with as models of idealised femininity and domesticity.

The politics of motherhood were perceived as integral to ensuring the physical and moral well-being of children and the family generally, making possible a regularisation of everyday conduct. Wireless was instrumental in providing a link between the private and the public. Household talks provided a rhythm for the daily domestic routine and the necessary instruction for a new generation of mothers and housewives, reinvigorating and reinforcing hegemonic familial ideals and practices. Hygienist strategies, of which household talks were one example, were paramount to the development and refinement of social economy, particularly that aspect of social economy that sought to direct the lives and maximise the utility of the population at minimum public expense. It was becoming starkly clear by the late 1930s that women would once again bear the responsibility for the nation's security. Government was all too aware that an army could not march on empty stomachs; it was important that a nation's population, its men especially, were fighting fit.

Women were thus exhorted to identify the domestic realm of the home with the political and social well-being of the nation. Women's political duty was defined in terms of their activity in the private sphere. The home was constructed as a source of alternative power (see Lacey, 1996), thus perpetuating the myth that there was a space for women to make decisions that could affect the life of the nation. The reality was that women were excluded from positions of any real power; and what political agency they did have in the form of enfranchisement was not sufficient to alter the hegemonic gendered social roles that continued to define women as housewives and mothers. Even though women were now permitted, to quote Beveridge, 'to put a cross on a ballot paper', their principal civic responsibility was still conceived to be one which necessarily involved self-sacrifice in support of husband, family and nation.

Though early-twentieth century domestication and hygienist strategies functioned as an instrument of cultural governance upon each and every family member, the process was



not without its problems. The intrusion into the home, even while exalting the integrity of the family as the single most important social phenomenon, presented a number of contradictions that had to be continually negotiated, not least the undermining of the patriarchal rule of the father, whose authority in the private sphere had hitherto been absolute. Wireless, though itself a propagator of certain patriarchal practices, thus represented a fundamental challenge to the sole authority of the patriarchal head of the house. What father said, now had to be reconciled with what 'Auntie' said. And for the most part, wireless was saying that, in household matters at least, mum knows best. In this sense, household talks were potentially empowering for women inasmuch as they were invested with a 'natural' authority. If they wanted extra household income, it was because they were acting on instruction, and not out of personal impertinence or whim. Such contradictions opened up a 'transitional space' between public and private which women could, potentially, occupy and subvert traditional gendered relations of power. Understood thus, the idealisation of the angel in the house was a means of controlling the conduct of men. Woman becomes man's salvation, the privileged instrument for civilising the uncultured and potentially unruly male worker. Men in turn were pressured into participating more in family life. If they did not, the comforts of home-life, to which most men had by now grown accustomed, could be withdrawn by the wife; he also risked being castigated by his male peers for 'not playing the game'. Just as women were inculcated in the domestic arts, so too were males taught that the ability to support one's family is an essential part of their rites of passage into manhood. Being a responsible family man was now associated with being a respectable male citizen.

Whilst the domestication of cultural governance via the technology of broadcasting was important for all the reasons already discussed, broadcasting's ultimate rationale was to unite the public around a nucleus of cultural values and practices that helped foster a sense of national citizenship, identity and sense of belonging (Cardiff & Scannell, 1987).<sup>122</sup> Of course, broadcasting was itself part of a national media and cultural system that first emerged with the national press in the early nineteenth century, subsequently evolving through the network of Victorian music halls and the arrival of cinema in the early twentieth century (Curran, 2002: 26-30). What was new about

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<sup>122</sup> The significance of this from an historical point of view is that the provincial mentality of Victorian rational recreationalists was replaced by a more ambitious cultural strategy: one that sought to unite the nation.

broadcasting, however, was that the transmitter represented not merely the single voice of the BBC but the collective voice of the nation; while the receiver was the collective populace, the nation, but each addressed individually, personally. More crucially, the disembodied voice of radio expressed the perfect ideal of the nation, of which the collective bodies of the various listening publics were but imperfect material embodiments. And it is in this sense that the BBC became an abstract embodiment of the nation; a new source of cultural authority quite literally licensed to broadcast to and represent the nation (Hall, 1986: 42-44). How and to what extent the BBC managed to successfully speak as the voice of the nation was crucial to the corporation's identity as a national cultural institution capable of speaking to a diversity of social classes and publics.

The previous embodiments of the nation were the monarch and the church, the most traditional institutional symbols of the nation. We have already seen how the authority of the church was increasingly challenged by secular social processes and obliged to co-operate with religious broadcasting as a means of rejuvenating Christian morality. In the case of the monarch, despite pictures in the papers and the occasional royal visit, for the most part it remained aloof from ordinary people and was thus capable of supporting only a limited sense of national identity (cf. Cannadine, 1983). This is not to say that the monarchy and the church no longer figured in public life in the early twentieth century. Rather, both traditions were deritualised, reinvented, and absorbed into the voice of the BBC, thus transforming them into more accessible, everyday social phenomena. We see here a mediasation of traditional rituals. And whilst previous media had served as intermediaries for civic rituals, broadcasting was particularly suited to extending, renewing, and re-embedding traditions in temporal and spatial contexts on a scale that was previously unimaginable. This 're-mooring of tradition' was crucial to cultivating a sense of ordered national identity based on assimilated, shared cultural experiences (see Chaney, 1986; Thompson, 1997: 179-206). Radio made ordinary people feel that they belonged to a national community steeped in historical traditions and rituals; it was as much their heritage as it was the privileged elites. Furthermore, they could participate in national events in new and imaginative ways: sitting in the comfort of their living rooms they were part of one big happy family; their homes an extension of one's homeland, Great Britain. Broadcasts of royal occasions were

especially popular with the public (Pegg, 1983: 191-94), providing for many listeners a sense of direct contact and communal involvement.

Such national unification required the dissemination and policing of common norms. Hence the reason why broadcasting sought to represent the perfect ideal, 'the best that has been written and said'. BBC English was perhaps the most salient feature of this idea of 'the proper'. Correct pronunciation was a major effort of social unification and standardisation, a means of policing of a geographically dispersed and socially fragmented national population. Many in the BBC thought that making the public more speech conscious would result in the nation speaking with one voice, thus mitigating 'parochial patriotism' and 'petty nationalisms'. It was also feared by some cultural elites that the nation's cultural standards were being undermined by pernicious foreign influences, not least alien American values. For these people, Reith's vision for a broadcasting service based on a cultural hierarchy that would educate the listening public in traditional, middle class cultural values was the best means of defence. Broadcasting was widely perceived as an instrument with which to ensure the cultural and social unity of the nation against the threats of regionalism on the one hand and Americanisation on the other.

In constructing the nation, the BBC was obliged to address problems as well as espouse virtues. As the conscience of the nation it had to confront national crises, especially those which posed moral questions. However, once national problems were on the agenda, the difficulty for the BBC was to decide whose voices could and could not be heard, who could speak and what they could be permitted to say. The problem of enforced leisure was one such problem to which the BBC was compelled to respond. However, many of the unemployed's opinions were never broadcast or they were only allowed to speak within the 'moral' parameters of the unemployment problem; unemployment could be discussed so long as it did not become 'political'. The unemployed were to be helped by having their leisure time used constructively. This practical response was part of a wider moral imperative for the employed to get up and do something to help the unemployed. Indeed, SOS messages became a regular broadcast feature, prompting Samuel (1998: 183) to note that, the BBC 'also helped to promote the pleasing idea that Britain was a nation of 'do-gooders''. Public service was no longer a pastime confined to the middle classes: all classes were expected to play



their part in remedying national problems. Such efforts could be marshalled by fostering a more empathetic listening public. 'The individual becomes increasingly capable of seeing himself or herself in the place of the other – in a new situation that may be radically different from his or her own' (Thompson, 1997: 189). In other words, empathy enables individuals to imagine themselves as belonging to an extended community to which they have a civic obligation. And it is in this sense that broadcasting operated according to a rationality that sought simultaneously to inculcate the population in the collectivisation and individualisation of their social and political duties and responsibilities.

The civilising message of the public broadcasting services was both universalising – it was addressed to everyone – and individualising – it addressed each person as an individual in his or her own home, in relation to his or her own problems ... playing its role in installing the little routines of social citizenship and civility into each 'private family', implanting 'social' obligations into the soul of each free citizen.

(Rose, 1999a: 82)

What we see here is the formation of a political rationality which reconstructed and redeployed classic Victorian liberalism. However, whereas classic liberalism had wholly valorised the rights of the individual, the new collectivist liberalism prioritised the discourse of universalism and citizenship, not least as a means of representing both the newly enfranchised masses and a more expansive totality of national interests. What mattered was that citizens function properly within the prescribed democratic apparatus. It was imperative that the masses be taught how to become ideal citizen subjects so that they might better discharge their democratic rights and duties. Broadcasting represented a means through which to mediate the demands of a conservative cultural minority on the one hand and the demands of a newly created mass democracy in need of an educated and informed citizenry on the other. In the case of unemployment, the problem was entered into broader didactical prescriptions about enlightened-democracy and citizenship. The BBC wanted to know how unemployment affected the unemployed, especially in their capacity as citizens of the nations. What the BBC failed to understand, however, was that many of the newly enfranchised electorate, including the unemployed, had a very real knowledge of cultural politics based on their experiences and the material conditions in which they lived.



Yet another function attributable to broadcasting during this period was its efforts to render the listening public as objects of knowledge. This was done in various ways. For instance, the BBC intervened in numerous aspects of social life by organising official investigations in the form of statistical surveys, either under its own initiative or in collaboration with other administrative bureaucracies. As seen in previous chapters, the BBC entered its sociological mode particularly when trying to explore and explain national problems – the problem of leisure, familial relations, cultural citizenship, the decline of religiosity and social moorings, etc. Though not always accurate, wireless licence returns were yet another means of information, as evidenced in the impressive collation of licence statistics and demographic variables by what was then the GPO (see Pegg, 1983: 6-16). From 1936 onwards, the BBC started to gauge public opinion by conducting detailed listener research to assist in the devising of programme policy. However, this was only after much internal disagreement among BBC employees about the validity of such research. Senior BBC officials, not least Reith, were especially hostile to audience research on the grounds that it was costly and, moreover, would result in broadcasting capitulating to what the listening public wanted (*ibid.*: 100-46). The BBC also began inviting ordinary members of the listening public to document their lived experiences by baring their souls before the microphone and thus the nation. The technique devised was one which emphasised public participation, thus allowing the ‘actual material to speak for itself’ (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 146 & 172). Increasingly, BBC talks sought to adopt informal modes of address in an attempt to establish a more intimate relationship between itself and its audience. One of the most notable examples of this shift in policy was the broadcasting of compassionate talks for the unemployed and allowing unemployed workers to speak to the listening public themselves.

Typically, liberal histories of broadcasting have interpreted this gradual change in BBC policy as evidence of public service broadcasting’s fundamental democratic nature and the listening public’s capacity to adapt the medium to suit their own cultural tastes and preferences (see Cardiff, 1980 & 1983; Robinson, 1982: 64-5; Scannell, 1981; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 169-73). Following Foucault and governmentalist studies, I would argue that the changing relationship between the BBC and its listening public – the pioneering of new techniques for presenting talks, the use of volunteers for listener research – was more to do with the need to know, so that power could be exercised

more efficiently and effectively. Inciting the listening public to volunteer information about themselves – the social conditions in which they lived, their cultural habitat, tastes and preferences – was a means of entering their individual lives into discourse. It was a means of getting them to confess. No issue was deemed too trivial for public discussion and debate. All things must be known and entered into public discourse, whence they can be measured, acted on and regulated.

In other words, broadcasting was simultaneously deployed as a technique of subjectification and objectification. As a technology of objectification, broadcasting contributed to the growing documentary apparatus that was concerned with hierarchical observation. Sociological surveys and the like were a means of classifying and individualising populations, measuring what is normal and what is not. That which deviated from the norm was differentiated and, in some cases, excluded as other (see Canguilhem, 1991: 151-80; Foucault, 1991a: 183-92). Often, statistical knowledge was accumulated, problematised, and translated into wider governmental objectives and practical programmes of action based on normative moral values. Classifying people in this way, assigning populations a social status and identity, was also an attempt at limiting their actions, what they could say and think. It is in all these senses that knowledge functions as an instrument of power. Without knowledge it is impossible to govern appropriately. To paraphrase a well known Charles Dickens' character, what is required is 'fact, fact, fact'. It is 'facts' that constitute the means with which to tame chance, uncertainty, and probability (Hacking, 1991). It is 'facts' that render things more knowable and, ultimately, more governable in so far as they can be acted on, codified, and calibrated. It is 'facts' that permit some things to be 'true', giving rise to rules, regulations, and a general ordering of discursive practices.

The full extent of the BBCs civilising mission as an ensemble of governmental rationalities and technologies was perhaps most clearly stated in Reith's valedictory speech in which he proffered an unequivocal summary of the scope of broadcasting's activities and objectives during the inter-war period:

That Broadcasting should be merely a vehicle of light entertainment was a limitation of its functions which we declined to accept. It has been our endeavour to give a conscious, social purpose to the exploitation of this medium. Not that we underrated the importance of wholesome entertainment or failed to give it due place; but that we realised in the stewardship vested in us the responsibility of contributing consistently and cumulatively

to the intellectual and moral happiness of the community. We have broadcast systematically and increasingly good music; we have developed educational courses for schoolchildren and for adults; we have broadcast the Christian religion and tried to reflect that spirit of common-sense Christian ethics which we believe to be a necessary component of citizenship and culture. We have endeavoured to exclude anything that might, directly or indirectly, be harmful. We have proved, as expected, that the supply of good things creates the demand for more. We have tried to found a tradition of public service, and to dedicate the service of broadcasting to the service of humanity in its fullest sense. We believe that a new national asset has been created ... the asset referred to is of the moral and not the material order – that which, down the years, brings the compound interest of happier homes, broader culture and truer citizenship.

(Reith, 1949: 116)

What we see in the above passage is a synthesis of all the rationalities and techniques identified as crucial in this thesis. Ever vigilant, the BBC became the nation's conscience, investigator, physician, pastor, educator, elocutionist, etc. What I have sought to demonstrate in each of the chapters is the way in which various techniques (the development of pastoral pedagogy, various measures of incitement to marriage and good health, the growth of statistics, etc) were played out across a variety of cultural institutions, not least the BBC which served as the fulcrum around which all of the aforementioned discourses and practices intersected: educated citizenship, Christian morality, rational recreation, domesticated leisure, physical and moral well being, public health, etc. In short, the BBC was the embodiment of liberal governmental rationalities and techniques. Presented to the public as a public service, it functioned as 'an instrument of, and not a constraint on, the exercise of freedom' (Barry, 2001: 128). Reith and the like understood only too well the potentialities of broadcasting as a practical remedy for governing the cultural activities of the population. It is no coincidence that the formation of broadcasting was attendant upon the emergence of a professional class of 'cultural physicians' responsible for devising spheres of cultural activity and policy aimed at effecting the reformation of a population's habits and values. The BBC, of course, never envisaged itself as an instrument of propaganda. Its role was to instruct the public in useful cultural values that would serve both to inform and educate but also to discipline and regulate. If broadcasting was to function effectively as a technology of government, it was essential that the audience be active and not passive in its listening, better altogether that the listening public actively participate in the regulation of its freedom, thus forming the necessary habits to conduct its own behaviour.



## **The Limitations and Transformation of Public Service Broadcasting**

Although broadcasting was widely perceived as a technology of governance *par excellence*, it was not without its limitations. Whilst I have tended to concentrate on the internal rationalities and techniques of broadcasting, I have also illustrated the occasions where the effectiveness of broadcasting's civilising mission was contradicted in different locales. To reiterate what I said in chapter one, sites of resistance and contestation are paramount to a Foucauldian analytics of power. It is precisely because of this capacity to 'act upon' governmental technologies and the need to acknowledge actually existing social relations that we also see a series of transformations in the regulation of broadcasting and its rationality. This is particularly so with regards to the BBC which, to quote Born (2002: 67), 'is an institution shot through with contradictions: between centralism and decentralisation, authority and fragility, durability and vulnerability, arrogance and a sense of guilty inadequacy'. As such, public service broadcasting and its institutionalisation in the BBC has been significantly reformulated, and continues to be re-regulated in light of changing government/social relations.

So what are these limitations, how have they beset or transformed the governmental aims of broadcasting? For a start, many listeners perceived BBC culture to be aloof and snobbish; hence much of broadcasting's attempts to mould the listening public resulted in a good many listeners objecting to its paternalist heavy-handedness. The BBC's attempts to uplift culturally the listening public experienced the same difficulties as Victorian rational recreation: a new amusement was adapted to the cultural tastes and preferences of the population at large. Offered as rational recreation, radio would, like other rational recreations in the past, be adopted and adapted by popular culture to its own ends. The mass exodus of listeners to the continental stations on a Sunday was the most obvious display of dissent. We have also seen how adult educational broadcasts were only ever a minority activity and were eventually abandoned for less overtly educational programmes. With regards to the cultural domestication of government, commenting on the increase of home drinking, Rowntree (1941: 363) noted that though wireless was one of the main reasons why working-class people stayed in more, it was also the occasion why increasing numbers of people 'send down to the off-licence shop for some beer and drink it by their own fire-side'. Similarly, Llewellyn-Smith (1935: 249) noted that, whilst wireless had made the home a place that could 'compete with the



public house in sociability and pleasantness', drinking still figured in this new use of leisure: 'Rings of stale beer are indeed frequently to be observed on the imposing cabinet-work of wireless-set tops in working-class houses'. As for the BBC being the voice of the nation, Donald (1992: 139-40) notes that 'the cultural space of the nation' is 'not just where "the people" are spoken, but also where people speak'. The spatial and temporal 'distanciated' nature of broadcasting also meant the BBC's attempts to standardise spoken English failed miserably; the nation continued to be a rich and diverse collection of voices and regional dialects. To paraphrase Volosinov (1973), the English language remained 'multi-accentual'. The ether may have been monopolised by the voice of the BBC but the reality of the everyday day context in which the public listened was one in which there were other voices, noises and cultural practices, giving rise to endless other listening subjectivities. It is probably fair to say that, whilst broadcasting was crucial to furthering the governmentalisation of culture, this development was not without its contradictions.

It was the outbreak of World War II in 1939, a year after Reith retired as Director General, that really marked the beginning of the end of early broadcasting's missionary zeal. Wartime placed new demands on radio: the country now faced a crisis in national security; the threat of a foreign invasion was no longer imagined but a very real possibility. In its programming policy the BBC had to discover and broadcast what actually, as opposed to ideally, constituted the nation's identity. It had to identify with and personify the things for which Britain and its people were fighting if national morale and the war-effort were to be sustained. Contrary to Reith's policy of cultural uplift, public service broadcasting was now defined principally in terms of entertainment, as evidenced in the establishment of the Forces Programme (later to become the Light Programme) and programmes such as *Workers Playtime* and *Music While You Work* (see Briggs, 1970; Cardiff & Scannell 1981 & 1986). Previously abhorred American popular music and light entertainment dominated the airwaves. The 'chaos' of American culture was transformed into a useful cultural practice, something to uplift workers and thus increase wartime productivity. This populist tendency was to prove irreversible, even after the war ended. The prospect of having to undergo yet another period of social reconstruction forced the BBC to follow a path of development less tied to the cultural and political rationalities that had characterised much of the inter-war period. Though intended as a 'cultural pyramid' for listeners to

work their way up through, the BBCs adoption of a new tripartite system – banded into highbrow (Third), middlebrow (Home), and lowbrow (Light) – immediately after the war was indicative of the way in which the BBC was resigned to continuing its output of popular broadcasts and allowing the listener to choose what they would prefer to listen to. The concept of mixed programming was replaced with an increasing number of fixed slot programme schedules. In short, the pre-war effort to impose an homogenous set of cultural standards and tastes on the whole of the listening public was no more.

This change in policy was even more pronounced from the 1950s onwards following the introduction of Independent Television, the attendant rise in disposable income and popular consumerism. Having said that, the BBC continued to inspire a regulatory regime which required ITV also to broadcast public service programmes. Indeed, the institutional influence of the BBC continued well in to the 1970s, providing a touchstone against which conceptions of impartiality, diversity, quality, and public service were calibrated and configured into statutory or discretionary regulatory mechanisms, processes, and codes of practice. The Reithian public service legacy only really abated with the 1980s and 1990s, a period that witnessed what was then the most significant overhaul to the ecology of broadcasting, particularly the infrastructure of the BBC, which was made market responsive in ways which would have been anathema to previous Director Generals but which Thatcher appointee John Birt embraced wholeheartedly (see Born, 2002). Having said this, though broadcasting no longer stands on the shoulders of Reith, it nevertheless continues to be regulated by moral standards such as ‘taste and decency’. This is especially so with regards to the BBC, which the public service lobby still holds up as a beacon for guiding any future regulatory reforms.

### **Reassessing Foucault**

Before concluding, I would like to briefly consider the implications of these empirical arguments for assessing the adequacy of a Foucauldian governmentality framework. There follow general theoretical as well as historically specific observations. First, Thompson (1995: 134) has argued that, when applied to the role of the media, Foucault’s model of the Panopticon fails to take into account the way in which the media render the exercise of power more visible, thus providing the public with a means

of surveillance. 'It is primarily those who exercise power, rather than those over whom power is exercised, who are subjected to a kind of visibility'. In other words, whilst I have argued that one of broadcasting's purposes was to render its various audiences more representable, thus making it easier to govern those mediated publics from a distance, it also follows that power elites must themselves submit to new forms of mediated visibility, laying them open to public scrutiny and criticism. Of course, this type of public accountability depends on the extent to which power elites collaborate with the media to manage their visibility: one only need look at the way in which politicians habitually seek to manipulate the media in an effort to produce preferred readings of events which favour their own political interests rather than the public interest.

Second, it would seem that, though broadcasting enabled forms of 'government at a distance', as a mass mediated cultural technology, it was also liable to a certain indeterminacy. A fundamental feature of broadcasting is the absence of its audience, that is the gap between the place of media production and the place of media reception, making it more difficult to regulate the behaviour of a mediated public than, say, a public in a museum or a classroom where there is more proximity between the public and 'the gaze' of the institutional supervisory apparatuses (Barnett, 1999: 385-7). In fact, one of the paradoxes surrounding broadcasting was that, whilst it was largely conceived as a civilising mission, it was constituted as a form of entertainment. Indeed, most mediated public spheres tend to be based largely on popular entertainment; a mediated public invariably requires the media to engage with popular cultural tastes and preferences. As noted by Simons (2003: 179), the practice of mediated representative democracy necessarily means 'there is a structural and necessary relation between the popularisation of culture and the democratisation of politics'. More crucially, this dialectic involves a degree of risk and uncertainty insofar as it opens up a space for the consumers of popular culture to challenge the cultural capital of political elites. In so doing, it has the potential to radically alter the intention and efficacy of governmental strategies and techniques. 'It is in this disjunctive creativity of popular culture', notes Donald (1992: 139-40), 'that the dynamic between authority and agency is acted out'. Again, attempts to regulate mediated publics and popular culture necessarily mean the actions of political and cultural elites are governed as much as the actions of the public they seek to govern; they must be representative of the public they wish to govern,



which requires them to actively encourage and support cultural values and practices they might not otherwise engage with. As well as regulating daily conduct and practices, mediated signs and meanings must also bear some relation to the public they constitute if they are to be effective governing representations.

Whilst I myself have not conceived of broadcasting as, to quote Simons (2000), a 'political technology of representation', the concept is worth exploring further, not least because it proffers a possible reconciliation between Foucauldian governmentalist studies and a neo-Marxist framework of analysis, a problem I briefly addressed in chapter one and to which I would now like to return. The significance of Simons' work is that he extends the notion of governmentality to include techniques 'of institutionalising popular consent by means of representation', something most Foucauldians overlook, perhaps because an analysis of representations invariably involves considering the ideological dimensions of meaning and signification. In order to make good his paradigmatic shift in analysis, what Simons proposes is that communications technologies govern the public's conduct by means of 'governing representations' according to which the public know some things to be true and some things to be false. Hence the importance of extending a Foucauldian analysis to technologies of communication 'through which knowledge is mediated and through which the reality of the world is represented'. What Simons is trying to do here is to combine 'government with representation', in the sense that we elect to be governed by political representatives, but also, and more crucially, in the sense that the public is 'itself a representation, a mediated construction of audiences integrated through popular culture'. Further, both these notions of representation involve government through ideological hegemony. Unlike classical Marxist ideology critique, however, the emphasis is more upon the practical effects of ideology rather than its effects upon consciousness, thus bringing the level of analysis closer to that practised by governmentalist and their concern with practical rationalities. Thompson makes a similar point, reminding us that:

Meanings regulate and organise conduct and practices – they help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed. They are, therefore, what those who wish to govern and regulate the conduct and ideas of others seek to structure and shape.

(Thompson , 1997b: 1)



The possibility of working between a Foucauldian analytics of power and a post-Marxist ideology critique is further outlined by Hall. Following on from the criticisms discussed in chapter one, Hall (1996b: 135) concedes that 'the combination of regime of truth plus normalisation/regulation/surveillance' foregrounded in Foucault's work 'is not all that far from the notions of dominance in ideology' that characterise his own work. This prompted Hall (*ibid.*) to remark that perhaps Foucault's argument for the discursive over the ideological 'is really polemical, not an analytic one'. Similarly, Chen (1996: 315) suggests that 'the ideological and the discursive, signifying and asignifying, representational and the affective' ought not be thought of as 'mutually exclusive categories'. Fiske (1996: 216) also notes the similarities between Foucault's 'theory of the power of discourse to produce truth' vis-à-vis Hall's 'theory of the work of representation to produce reality'. For example, both writers attempt to overcome 'the traditional distinction between what one says (language) and what one does (practice)' (Hall, 1997c: 44). Hence their concern with examining the materiality of their object of analysis. Whilst this conflation between the discursive and the ideological is something governmentalist contest on the grounds that ideology critique invariably privileges analyses of consciousness, Hall (1996a: 27) is quite clear that 'the problem of ideology' is accounting for the ways in which ideas become a 'material force', an historical moment of practices and rituals that position human beings as subjects. As in Althusser's (1996: 231-6) discussion of ideology, what matters is the way in which ideologies have 'practical effects'. Whilst Althusser still understood ideology as a system of representations, he conceived images and concepts in terms of structures that are 'profoundly unconscious'; 'ideology is a matter of the lived relation between men and their world' (*ibid.*: 232-3). Further, ideology is far from being a mere lie or a camera obscura like inversion of the truth, rather it has a materiality of its own. Again, this is not too dissimilar to Foucault's interest in the way in which discursive practices give rise to material 'truth effects'. The aim is not to reveal some hidden truth or other but, rather, the material effect of how cultural objects are entered into discourse and experienced at the level of everyday practice.

Closely related to the problem of ideology is that of class. Can one talk about ideology without recourse to an absolutist notion of class and class conflict, thus overcoming class reductionism? Drawing on the work of Laclau (1977) and his analysis of the populist appeal of fascism, it has since been argued by various post-Marxists that

political and ideological determinants need not have a 'necessary class-belongingness'. Rather ideological formations and subject positions within ideology can be understood as contingent, historically specific, and a fusing of different social groups. In other words, ideology is 'articulated' across various social relations and subject positions. And this is what gives rise to discursive formations organised around a broad alliance of social forces, not just one particular social class. It is this articulation of social relations and subject positions that also gives rise to but also allows for – in times of social stability and historical conjuncture – co-existent discursive inconsistencies and contradictions (such as secular cultural governance and Christian pedagogy). Thus instead of talking about class struggle one can talk about the way in which competing publics come together to form power blocs and social alliances mobilised around popular objectives at a particular historical moment. Hall also contests the class reductionism of classical Marxist ideology critique, thus emphasising the contingency and impermanence of ruling ideas. Hall again draws parallels between his own work and that of Foucault, particularly 'the Foucauldian notion that it's not only classes that intervene', rather 'one has to rethink an expressive relationship between class and ideas' (Hall 1997b: 31). Fiske (1996: 218) also argues that Hall's appropriation of Gramsci might be used 'to reconnect Foucault's abstracted theory of power not to a class but to an alliance of social interests'. The main difference between Foucault and Hall is that whereas Foucault abandons the question of ideology altogether, Hall (1996a: 44) is concerned that a complete abandonment based on the inadequacies of classical ideology critique is to overlook the more recent and subtle re-readings of ideology, thus throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

If one concurs with the arguments outlined above, it means that the problem of ideology, representation and hegemony ought not be jettisoned on the grounds that they represent vulgar Marxist materialism. The upshot of this is that it opens up a dialogical space and the possibility of extending governmentalist studies to include questions of meaning and signification, all useful complements to Foucault's analysis of concrete regulatory practices. Which brings me back to the 'circuit of culture' outlined in chapter one. You will recall that regulation is but one moment in this circuit, the others being: representation, identity, production, and consumption. Though I have not explicitly addressed each of these processes, partly because I still think regulation to be the most significant, I do accept that cultural theory ought to try and attend to each of

these moments in an effort to better understand how certain cultural meanings, practices, politics and rationalities, emerge and are contested at a given historical moment.

So how does any of this relate to the history of broadcasting? For a start, it would mean paying more attention to the articulation between the ideological rationalities that drive production, programme policy and content vis-à-vis the everyday context in which listeners consume and interpret those programmes. Analysing the ideological make-up of broadcasting representations would also allow greater emphasis on the significance of class when considering a history of the BBC, which was so obviously a defining characteristic, particularly the movement between ‘class interpellations’ and ‘popular-democratic interpellations’ (Laclau, 1977: 100-111), or what Gramsci called the ‘national popular’. However, following the examples of both Gramsci and Laclau, this does not necessarily require an *a priori* insertion of class into governmentalist studies. But it would require that class be more substantially recognised as an historical determinant. To quote Hall (1996a: 42), ‘it is not necessarily a form of vulgar materialism to say that, though we cannot ascribe ideas to class position in certain fixed combinations, ideas do arise from and may reflect the material conditions in which social groups and classes exist’. This is just one example of how a post-Marxist analysis might usefully complement a Foucauldian study of early British broadcasting. Recovering the moment of audience consumption/reception would require using an historical method that Jonathan Rose (2001) has recently termed a ‘history of audiences’. Autobiography is particularly important in this respect, as are oral histories, sociological surveys and opinion polls, if carefully handled. All of these sources facilitate a more ethnographical approach to doing historical research, but need not necessarily negate the use of theory. Moores’ (1988) research into the domestication of wireless and the formation of domestic audiences is instructive in this respect. Of course, this methodological synthesis poses all kinds of empirical and theoretical problems that go well beyond the scope of the cursory outline I provide here. I mention it so that the reader might be aware of how I might, in hindsight, do things differently.

### **Rethinking Public Service Broadcasting**

I would like to conclude this thesis by extrapolating from the above historical/theoretical findings to make some – albeit – brief and tentative remarks on



contemporary debates about cultural citizenship *vis-à-vis* the formulation of cultural and communications policy generally, of which broadcasting regulation is arguably one of the most substantial facets. This is especially pertinent in light of the recent Communications Act (2003), whose parliamentary history has been concurrent with my period of research, and the BBC's forthcoming charter renewal in 2006. As already noted in chapter one, one of the main thrusts underpinning the Foucault effect within cultural studies is the need to extend cultural critique by engaging with and contesting regulatory processes, particularly the formulation and implementation of cultural policy. What follows is thus a brief résumé of some of the key discourses that continue to surround public service broadcasting, the BBC's position within this field of discourse, and how the discourse of broadcasting regulation and citizenship might be made more equitable and inclusive of the public on whose behalf it claims to speak.

Notwithstanding the many instances where the listening public has refused its subject positioning; the gradual abatement of the BBC's civilising mission and the eventual end of its monopoly; the continuing shift in the regulatory environment towards light-touch regulation; recent criticisms accusing the BBC variously of 'dumbing down' and excessive 'political correctness'; the BBC is still held up as one of Britain's great cultural institutions and standard setter in all areas of British broadcasting, widely revered as an authoritative source of information and popular education, trusted world-wide as a keeper of truth and the public interest. For many (for example, Garnham, 2000; Graham, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Pratten, 1997), its public service model still represents the cornerstone of British broadcasting. It is perceived as the most effective agency for cultural and social enlightenment, human development and well-being, and strengthening the democratic process. Like Hoggart, who I quoted at length in my introduction, they continue to base their defence of public service broadcasting on what are – though not always intentionally – conservative versions of social democracy that still imagine broadcasting can effect a universal educated democracy and a common culture. What, to quote Donald (1992: 130-1), 'this emancipatory logic' fails to recognise is how institutions such as education and broadcasting have historically operated as cultural technologies with which to manage populations and individuals. Further, its claims to represent the broader public interest, nearly always excludes social movements and sub-cultures whose cultural tastes and interests are not so easily articulated, much less accommodated, in such prescriptive and general terms.



Though mindful of the contradictory demands now made of broadcasting (such as the citizen-consumer couplet), and the increasingly diverse political, cultural, and geographical identities among its audiences, the BBC itself continues to be guided by public purposes that address the listening public as a unitary cultural citizenry, 'bringing people together for moments of celebration, common experience and in times of crisis', 'supporting citizenship and democracy, guaranteeing access to the full range of information necessary for individuals to make informed choices, whether as voters, consumers or simply as members of society' (BBC, 1998). Yet more recently, the BBC has reinvigorated the discourse of public service with its newly pledged commitment to 'building public value', which in the case of broadcasting is taken to mean, enriching 'the lives of individuals' and 'society as a whole' by keeping them 'informed about events shaping their life and the lives of others'. In so doing, the BBC maintains it can 'contribute to a healthy democracy by fostering debate among all audiences'. Furthermore, we are assured that 'the relationship between the BBC and the public is a special one' and that 'it stems from the fact that we are a broadcaster paid for directly by the public and devoted solely to serving the public interest' (Byford, 2004a/b). The BBC continues to position itself at the heart of national life, as evidenced in two related speeches given by the newly appointed Director General, Mark Thompson (2004a/b), who claims the BBC is still committed to 'celebrating our collective cultural heritage', 'broadening the national conversation', and increasing the nation's 'social capital' by 'seeking to increase social cohesion and tolerance by enabling the UK's many communities to talk to themselves and each other about what they hold in common and how they differ'.

Notwithstanding trends towards the globalisation and localisation of cultures, the master discourse surrounding public service broadcasting is still one that seeks to foster a sense of cultural nationalism predicated upon enlightened citizenship – albeit more subdued and for very different reasons when compared to the BBCs civilising mission during the inter-war period. Such arguments continue to be presented as objective facts about what the public needs, when, in actual fact, they are merely subjective views about what the public ought to want. These discourses continue to address the public as citizens with idealised general needs that require the ongoing guidance of cultural elites best suited to deciding what constitutes befitting individual and collective identity and conduct. In

other words, the discourse of public service broadcasting still functions as a 'technology of subjection' that inscribes individuals with certain civic rights and obligations they must fulfil if they are to realise their 'true' being. To quote Rose (1999b: viii), the listening public are still 'obliged to be free'. Governmentality requires that the public are as much agents as they are subjects of governance in order to avoid the illiberal practice of too much government. It is imperative that the public regulates the exercise of its own democratic freedom, that it governs itself as much as it is governed by others.

This is especially so in advanced liberal societies where contradictory processes of globalisation and regional devolution are constantly reconfiguring the spatial and territorial limits of government, making it increasingly difficult to manage national populations. Consequently, though cultural citizenship is a political priority for most nation-states, government has to account for a plethora of publics and cultures in ways it has not previously had to. Hence the emergence of types of public service broadcasting that are increasingly participatory and serve diverse communities of interest. Even the BBC (2000: 4) acknowledges the demand for better representation and the need to produce programmes 'that reflect the diverse political and cultural life of people across the UK'. Community media are another example of the way in which the public can participate more in the production of what media they want, and thus make positive interventions in the government of culture. Whilst such media still function alongside other cultural technologies aimed at producing citizens capable of participating in the regulation of their own freedom and the communities they live in (Flew, 1997), they also facilitate the possibility of media technologies being transformed into creative technologies of the self, less concerned with didactic self-improvement and more encouraging of types of cultural politics and self-identity that are more properly expressions of the self and a diversity of different cultural values and practices. Such media embody diversity rather than merely representing it (Donald, 1992: 136), in the sense that programmes are made by the same people who consume them.<sup>123</sup>

It is for similar reasons that John Keane (1996) advocates a non-reductionist model of public service media, one that is essentially premised upon a more complex notion of public service and a pluralist civil society in which social movements and community

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<sup>123</sup> Donald actually makes this point in relation to the original Channel 4 model of commissioning independent productions as oppose to the BBC in-house model of production that was.

based citizens groups can make use of more diffused and localised media networks (cf. Myles, 2004). What these alternative forms of media promote is a public service culture whose productive capacities are based upon a heterotopia of competing publics and identities, rather than a political doctrine whose telos is an expression of a universalist democratic ideal, based on normative judgements and homogenising subjectivities. The discourse of cultural citizenship need not necessarily be restricted to a set of protocols and discursive practices that require obedient and civic subjects; there should also scope for unruly and dissenting social movements to advocate their own particular cultural tastes, ethical practices and forms of subjectivity, ones that do not necessarily inculcate virtues that contribute to the collective well-being of the nation or the broader liberal rationality of enlightened democracy.<sup>124</sup> This is not to say that such practices need be harmful to others; rather, it is about the creation, to quote Rose (1999a: 283) of ‘new modes of existence’ that challenge existing *a priori* theories of the subject. Foucault (1980: 81) understood this transgression as an ‘insurrection of subjugated knowledges’ that have been previously ‘disqualified as inadequate’ and ‘low ranking’ when compared to officially sanctioned knowledges. Though he does not say as much, Foucault’s remarks can be interpreted as a valorising of the kinds of local and hybridised knowledges evident in many subcultures. In a like fashion, Nancy Fraser (1993b) significantly expands Habermasian notions of publicness to include nonliberal, nonbourgeois, ‘subaltern counterpublics’ (marginalised social groups such as women, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians), thus effecting ‘a widening of discursive contestation’. Conceived in this way, the public interest would no longer be defined as an all-encompassing ‘we’ but as a multiplicity of competing interests.

Such arguments should not be mistaken for an inane postmodern celebration of difference or unprincipled populism. They are about wanting to imagine alternative notions of publicness and subjectivity that contest present conditions of subjectification and, to quote Fraser (1993b), the ‘limits of actually existing democracy’. It is with this in mind that Simons (2000) suggests that those who wish to challenge and subvert hegemonic ‘governing representations’ must learn to use the media in ways that suit

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<sup>124</sup> Though peripheral to the mainstream debate surrounding public service broadcasting, probably the best example of alternative broadcasting are illegal pirate stations. Not only is the broadcasting itself illegal, recently they have been blamed for encouraging a variety of anti social behaviour, such as drugs, crime, and vandalism (see *The Guardian*, 4 September 2004: 13).



their own ends. An example of how this might be done is demonstrable with reference to feminism.

Perhaps the most striking example is the late-twentieth-century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic, with its variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places. In this public sphere, feminist women have invented new terms for describing social reality, including “sexism”, “the double shift”, “sexual harassment”, and “marital, date, and acquaintance rape”. Armed with such language, we have recast our needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of our disadvantage in official public spheres.

(Fraser, 1993b: 123)

Following Fraser’s example, I want to argue that, whilst ever the process of creating an extended and radical democratic public sphere is possible – but as an indeterminate contingency, not just a normative ideal (cf. Scannell, 1989) – regulatory frameworks, not only in broadcasting, but in all areas of culture, ought to be more participatory, thus operationalising the productive capacities of diverse social communities, movements and groups, as seen above (see Dean, 1999: 207). Generally, cultural policy should aim to be more equitable by further broadening public access to cultural resources. Specifically, broadcasting and its regulation must be not only for the people but also by the people, ordinary people: public consultations ought to be truly public, transparent, and not just the preserve for media proprietors, middle-class reformers, organised interest groups, and government bodies – even though these agencies form an integral and inescapable part of the broadcasting ecology. Conversely, different communities of interest should be more proactive in trying to influence cultural policy for their own various means and ends by attending to the strategic nature of policy discourse and the allocation of cultural resources, thus heeding the call of cultural policy studies for a more institutionally and reformist oriented cultural politics.

Though still encompassed within relations of power, the reformist strategy would be one that is flexible, reflexive, and not made to serve any one particular political logic. Such regulatory mechanisms would make for more active, open-ended, and provisional regulatory processes located in both local and national public spheres. It would mean media institutions such as broadcasting would be governed by what Thompson (1990: 260-64 & 1995: 240-58) has described as ‘the principle of regulated pluralism’. More crucially, it might also create a new kind of dialogical space with which to advance



contemporary debates about public service broadcasting beyond what is essentially a misformulated and backward-looking liberal ideal whose rationale will be increasingly difficult to sustain in light of new media technologies and the current political climate where the governmental usage of financial markets and private corporations would seem to be the preferred technique for managing the conduct of individuals, populations, nation states, and multinational agencies.

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