INDEPENDENT LOCAL RADIO DRAMA:
A CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND REGULATORY EXAMINATION OF BRITISH COMMERCIAL RADIO DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

Title: Independent Local Radio Drama: A cultural, historical and regulatory examination of British commercial radio drama

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BBC radio's post-war years constitute a golden age of successful populist drama and situation-comedy, which was gradually usurped by television. Dramatists like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter reasserted radio drama with ground-breaking, innovative and avant-garde plays, but by the 1970's radio drama occupied a precarious position, not abandoned, but living on borrowed time. Its continued existence on Radio Four was deemed perfunctory or symbolic of the BBC's public service obligations. What happened next was unusual by today's standards for commercial radio. Stations within the newly formed Independent Local Radio (ILR) sector began to produce their own dramatic content: original drama, adaptations, monologues, poetry, situation and sketch comedy. What follows is an investigation into this overlooked canon of work.

The choice to include drama across various ILR stations was a response to cautious regulatory oversight that refashioned expectations for commercial radio into its initial independent form. ILR was local by design and case studies from ILR's dramatic canon are shown to have relied on and reinforced vernacular culture in contrast to the perception of BBC radio drama and light entertainment. The 'Manchester School' ethos in broadcasting was evidently resurgent among its dramatists, highlighting the dichotomy between oral and literary cultures and their spatial or temporal modes. New creative voices, often without a theatrical background and unbeholden to established forms utilised their authentic naturalistic idiolects, in some instances taking atypical approaches to radio fiction, constituting a cultural shift in style and tone for radio drama. Original plays and comedies embraced their regionality, complementary to radio's secondary position.

This thesis comprises case study analyses, archival research, recollections of former practitioners and theoretical perspectives on radio drama. It addresses the following considerations: an examination of ILR dramatists and their production experiences; an application of key theoretical concepts to a selection of ILR fictional programmes; the BBC's reaction to the competition posed by the commercial radio sector, and the extent to which ILR drama played a role in the wider impetus towards reform at the BBC.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIRC: Association of Independent Radio Contractors

DCPO: Deputy Controller Press Office

DGMLR: Deputy General Manager Local Radio

HRD: Head of Radio Drama

IBA: The Independent Broadcasting Authority

ILR: Independent Local Radio

JICRAR: Joint Industry Committee for Radio Audience Research

LAC: Local Advisory Committee

LREPSO: Local Radio Education and Programme Services Organiser

POLR: Publicity Officer Local Radio

RA: The Radio Authority

RDC: The BBC's Radio Drama Company

SM: Station Manager (as opposed to 'studio manager')

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I have also been fortunate in having access to the IBA written archive based at Bournemouth University. Staff at The Sir Michael Cobham Library were particularly helpful in curating the material presented here. Thank you to those working across various archives who made the research process straightforward; staff at the BBC Written Archives in Caversham, the British Library's National Sound Archive and a special thank you to David Govier, project manager of Manchester Central Library's *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* initiative.

I am indebted to the many former ILR and BBC practitioners who were happy and willing to provide their insight like Gillian Reynolds, Roger Wood, and the late Piers Plowright. As an avid listener of programmes by David Dunne, his memories of Piccadilly Radio during the 1980s brought this research full circle for me. Ralph Bernard CBE kindly offered his time, Edward Chisnall helped to fill the gaps in knowledge regarding the late Hamish Wilson's radio career and Tony Duarte provided his perspective as a commissioned playwright. Thank you to John MacCalman for early access to his book, Gordon Griffin for his memories of recording environments and Roger Harvey who provided access to his own personal archive of recordings from Metro Radio. I would be delighted if this thesis helps in some way to return their dramatic work in ILR to prominence.

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Chapter 1: Independent Local Radio Drama

1.1 Rationale & synopsis

This chapter introduces the works of fiction produced by the Independent Local Radio (ILR) sector. It discusses the reasons why this subset of radio drama is worthy of research, with an overview of key points in its history to provide an underpinning context. This is followed by an exploration of the regulatory and cultural backgrounds to the formation of ILR as it pertained specifically to radio drama. The conclusion provides a synoptic overview of each subsequent chapter comprising this thesis.

From its inception as a private company in 1922 and its incorporation in 1927, to the early 1970's, the BBC possessed the sole legal right to broadcast radio in the United Kingdom. During those decades, occasional sporadic challengers appeared like Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandie, followed by the unlicenced offshore broadcasters of the 1960s like Radio London and Radio Caroline. In 1972, the passing of The Sound Broadcasting Act effectively ended this monopoly, expanding the Independent Television Authority (ITA) into the Independent Broadcasting Authority and in October 1973, the first wave of Independent Local Radio stations began simulcasting on AM and FM frequencies. This new commercial sector would operate as a service at no cost to the listener. Although the term 'local' was not defined in detail, contracts were awarded to companies that could ensure delivery of a high standard of programming to their region, with the IBA acting as trustee to provide a balance between the public interest and commercial activity - what we might define today as 'stakeholder capitalism'. In addition to providing assurances on level of service, the selection of station

contractor would also be based on financial circumstances, technical resources and, crucially for drama, the character of the region to be served (Jones 1989).

It was necessary for the new commercial sector to demonstrate integrity and legitimacy in contrast to the unlicenced offshore broadcasters and since radio drama implied prestige (Sterling 2004), its inclusion would lend credibility and status to ILR stations despite its expense in comparison to other forms of programming. Radio drama had been largely abandoned by broadcasters except for the BBC who remained uniquely committed to the production of world-class radio drama, commissioning plays, soaps, serials and light entertainment in recurrent weekday strands. Today, the locus of radio drama production has now widened to include creative independents many of whom work from home using semi-professional or consumer equipment. This in turn has brought a renaissance in *sound* drama through a diverse range of distribution platforms and social media tools. As Dann (2014) observes, according to the 'long tail' theory of economics, dramatic audio programming will always attract an audience given a sufficiently global reach. Indeed, radio drama is now democratised in a way that surpasses the scope of opportunity that ILR could provide local dramatists. This thesis provides a useful parallel to these developments by showing what happened during a similar power shift in broadcasting history when BBC drama and comedy would need to contend with a decentralised independent sector.

Despite radio drama production being relatively cheap, it was the most expensive form of speech programming by ILR standards and quickly became an expensive proposition for programme directors (Murdoch 1981). More ambitious proposals for drama would require some discussion before making any commitment to expenditure (Bernard, personal

communication, 07 December 2020). Yet ILR producers managed to attract significant names in entertainment and widened participation for new dramatists by giving them their first commission. Independent Radio Drama Productions Limited (IRDP), founded by Tim Crook, Richard Shannon and Marja Giego produced multiple award-winning original works for The London Broadcasting Company (LBC) and Capital Radio by nurturing aspiring playwrights. As an early independent production company, they shared the same ethos as their counterparts at the BBC and helped outsiders to forge successful careers. This research has identified at least 150 separate productions made over the course of twenty years, some of which represent multiple individual episodes. A few notable series, which will be referred to later, ran to over 200 episodes each.

ILR differed from the BBC's unified approach, comprising of separate station contractors, with a range of varying internal structures.[1] These station owners formed the Association of Independent Radio Contractors (AIRC) to collectively represent their interests when dealing with their regulatory body the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). ILR operated under a hybrid of the independent television remit, mapped onto the broadcasting patterns of BBC Radio One with strong news provision (Wray 2009). Upon the sector's deregulation in 1990, ILR transformed into *commercial* radio; its core purpose shifting from a public service to a profit-oriented concern, concentrating on curated music playlists and brand identification.

This thesis does not consider ILR a mere precursor to the subsequent deregulated commercial sector. By today's expectations for modern commercial radio, ILR stations did far more; commissioning, producing and broadcasting 'built' programming; documentaries and a broad

[1] I refer to 'ILR drama' out of convenience. This may give the impression of a single coordinated collective of producers. They were in fact disparate productions made by separate independent stations across the UK.

range of fictional content. Unlike the BBC, for most of the time, each ILR station schedule was structured around dayparts rather than formalised programming slots, so plays and comedy would need to fit in on an ad hoc basis. Many practitioners were trained BBC professionals who had transferred across and continued to produce work of a high standard and train newcomers. But the command economy that they were accustomed to did not apply in ILR, with any extraneous production costs usually restricted within the budget of a daypart.

The range of plays, episodic serials and situation comedies residing in the archives demonstrate a particular pattern emphasising four regional centres of creativity. London was served by Capital Radio and The London Broadcasting Company (LBC). In the Northwest, talent gravitated to Piccadilly Radio and Radio City serving Manchester and Merseyside respectively. Piccadilly Radio in particular produced a large proportion of situation comedy and original and adapted plays. Drama from Metro Radio serving Tyneside, Northumberland, and Durham was almost single-handedly produced by Roger Harvey. In Scotland, Radio Clyde and Radio Forth benefitted from the work of actor, presenter and specialist drama producer Hamish Wilson who stands out as a singular creative influence across both stations, his most famous programme being *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) series written by Edward Chisnall.

ILR drama is generally regarded as an underreported curio of the UK's emerging commercial radio sector. The dominance of commercial radio effectively supplanted awareness of this work which is now largely forgotten. Wade (1981) explains that since some of the BBC's best radio plays no longer exist, there is no hope of becoming acquainted with them, rendering an examination of such work impossible. A lack of available research material into ILR also precluded academic attention, that is until the publication of Stoller (2010b) which together

with Wray (2009) constitute the start of a serious investigation into ILR. But these works of fiction remain an unexplored aspect of British radio broadcasting history. As Wood (2008) observes, there is a lack of coverage concerning the common *workmanlike* radio play, the sort of everyday play that John Scotney was wary of, citing Radio 4's inclination towards 'plays to hoover to' (Wade 1981, p.225). These were not necessarily mundane plays, but serviceable since there were and still are so many slots to fill on Radio 4, certainly an ideal form for ILR and its listeners.

The secondary status of BBC radio drama provided an incentive to differentiate from television by 'narrowcasting' targeted niche content. For drama this meant maintaining consistently high levels of dramatic art, commissioning some of the most highly influential playwrights of the twentieth century consistent with its literary culture like Samuel Beckett, Dylan Thomas, Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard. Throughout this thesis, BBC radio drama acts as a common frame of reference to compare with ILR fiction. It would take too long to elaborate upon the profound importance of BBC Radio which has been dealt with ably by authors like Briggs (1995), Drakakis (1981) and Hendy (2007), so it is hoped the reader will accept that BBC radio drama and comedy, with its long successful history and internationally recognised reputation constitutes the gold standard for audio fiction.[2] It is essential to establish this to properly contextualise ILR's fictional offerings which despite being limited in comparison may be of greater significance than previously assumed. The ILR dramatists made enough of an impact on local BBC management to warrant internal discussions[3] on countering with a similar venture. The body of work is also deserving of a serious examination in terms of artistic merit,

[2] BBC radio drama production includes various in-house teams and external companies. Collectively, the BBC represents the largest commissioner and producer of radio plays in Britain; approximately 350 every year. Additionally, *The Archers* (1951) runs to 260 episodes per year (Donovan 1992, p.86).
[3] The archival evidence of these internal discussions is examined in chapter five.

validity and quality[4] and this introductory chapter provides justification for it as a worthy focus of research. It will be supported by a discussion of ILR's cultural roots dating back to the BBC's formative years and an assessment of ILR's impact upon the BBC's plans for reform during the 1970s, set against the wider historical context of UK radio drama that ILR dramatists found themselves operating within.

ILR stations managed to produce fictional programming albeit in a sporadic, unstructured way depending on the capabilities and motivations of the station and its personnel and often represented only the early green shoots of creativity rather than a movement towards an ongoing concern. Both the BBC's Radio Drama department and the Features Unit[5] were better placed than ILR to take creative risks, affording the occasional misstep without too much financial pain, as producer Kenith Trodd observed: "It was fantastic to flop fabulously because next week you could learn from the mistakes" (Seaton 2015, p.260).[6] After the publication of *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969), this would begin to change with audiences opting for reassuring and familiar plays, something that ILR drama producers understood (Crook 1999). ILR drama needed to operate at a cheaper rate compared with the BBC, leading to notable differences in scope and narrative structure, but made with the same spirit and ethos. The BBC was already subject to profound changes that reflected the transforming political doctrines of the time, but ILR provided audiences with a broadened frame of reference; Radio 3 and Radio 4 could now be compared with ILR drama, despite an uncertain start. Comparisons with the

[4] This will be achieved in part by looking at ILR's dramatists, their experiences, key successes and working practices in drama, and through the case study analyses presented in chapter 5.
[5] Fiction was and still is produced across the whole corporation: the Drama Department, Schools, Light Entertainment etc.
[6] Seaton argues that the BBC was a) criticised and attacked by voices that lacked an appreciation of the value it provided, b) misunderstood by pressure groups and c) agitated by press hostility. She discusses the BBC's creative freedom as a double-edged sword, characterising a rigid pattern of commissioning social realist drama that was preoccupied with exposing the plight of Britain's underclass. Seaton cites correspondence between Charles Curran and Margaret Thatcher who considered the freedom to fail by BBC producers a luxury, by warning "I should be happier if you weren't quite so sure all is well" (2015, p.18).

prominence of contemporaneous BBC drama raise important questions concerning professionalism in ILR and conflicting values, ideals and tensions between AIRC and the IBA.

ILR's fictional programming constitutes a brief but revealing detour in British radio history. But rather than continuing to characterise ILR's drama as of only peripheral interest, there is an opportunity here for new independent dramatists to learn from these productions and the developments in the industry that made this body of work possible. Although the canon is relatively small, this thesis cannot be a complete survey of every fictional production from the sector. To encourage further examination beyond this research, it was decided that the scope should provide a comprehensive overview of the culture, history and regulatory matters affecting the production of ILR fiction. The broad purpose is to analyse selected plays and series and to explore the experiences of practitioners. This is underpinned by an assessment of practical regulatory and economic matters with reference to Stoller (2010), synthesised with an analysis of stylistic approaches to radio drama, a key example being *audioposition* (Verma 2012). To address these points, the following initial questions are considered:

1. Who were ILR's dramatists, what did they experience and what is their legacy?
2. What were the key successes in ILR drama and fiction?
3. What made ILR drama and fiction distinctive? What typified ILR drama?
4. What were the working practices in ILR drama and how did they compare with the BBC?
5. How did the BBC react to the new competition posed by drama from the ILR sector?
6. How far did ILR drama and fiction affect the BBC in the long term?

Addressing these questions is a largely local and regional matter concerning the dramatist as a product of their hinterland and formative influences. ILR's remit for localness provided the mandate for playwrights and performers to draw upon their cultural heritage, exploiting vernacular modes of speech and naturalistic accents. Many of the messages, themes, values and motivations behind the original scripts and adaptations explored in this thesis are often influenced by regionality and cultural identity in terms of setting, time period and characters. This is not exclusive to ILR of course. The BBC did not merely offer a simulacra of regional forms. Regionality formed a strong part of BBC comedy and light entertainment which has always benefitted from many of its early stars originating from the Northwest of the UK.[7] Furthermore, *Under Milk Wood* (1954)[8] regarded as a classic of BBC radio, "derived from a model developed in the English regions" (Wood 2008, p.12). Dylan Thomas is inseparable from his childhood in Swansea (Peach 1988) and despite the French laying claim to Samuel Beckett, his recurring 'obsessional Ireland' (Pattie 2010) often manifested as a bleak Irish moorland.

Equally, fiction may flow back into culture as Williams (1975) observed; we live in a 'dramatised society' and since radio drama remains a 'ubiquitous and insistent' part of life in contemporary society (Murdoch 1981) identity can be shaped and reformed by dramatic archetypes and other emblematic character forms. Antonsich and Holland (2012) consider who constructs perceptions of a region, the populace's orientation towards the region and their feelings of attachment to it. Williams' (1954) term 'structure of feeling' also assists in describing the amorphous forms of cultural orientation and values vying for prominence. The

[7] As mentioned in chapter one, the northwest produced Tommy Handley, Arthur Askey, George Formby, Ted Ray and Jimmy Clitheroe.
[8] Produced by the Features Department. Broadcast on the Third Programme 25.01.1954.

theoretical and conceptual components of this thesis will explore these perspectives with reference to geographic concerns (Claval 1987), economic impact (Semian 2016) and political matters (Jonas 2012; Harrison and Grove 2014). Atkinson's (2015) term 'implied' place is helpful in defining regionality as a series of practices that culminate in a place as a knowable character. London, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow are all distinct, backgrounded, but present across ILR fiction. Atkinson (2015) also applies Williams' (1983) structure of feeling to explore the prevailing ideology and worldview of Manchester's culture. Manchester was home to Piccadilly Radio, one of ILR's most prolific and accomplished stations in drama and comedy which exemplified a wider ethos among ILR's dramatists and was highly influential in its expressions of regionality and use of local vernacular culture. As will be discussed later in this chapter, during the 1920s and 1930s Manchester was home to the BBC's North Region where an ethos and approach to radio production was established often referred to as the 'Manchester School' (Smith and Verma 2016). The radio playwright and features producer D.G. Bridson (1971) and producer Olive Shapley (1996), both socially conscious North Region producers, expressed the cultural identities and voices of the north through their programmes. Piccadilly Radio is used in this thesis to illustrate a subsequent resurgence of the Manchester School ethos through ILR's dramatists. Consequently, Manchester is represented somewhat disproportionately throughout this study.

With regards to training, it is important to delineate between practical technical training, traineeships in programme production and the indirect informal grounding that an entertainer or writer would need to experience, although for many, ILR was their first opportunity. For comedians, it is traditional to pay their dues through the comedy club circuit and other live events. However, for prospective drama writers, the route to commissioned work is less clear.

AIRC prepared a paper for the IBA Radio Consultative Committee which summarised the sort of training provided across the sector (IBA 1980). Again, due to the nature of ILR, this meant non-standardised disparate approaches. All stations at that point provided a statement on how they addressed the issue of training, with some more advanced than others. Capital Radio's initial feasibility study led to the eventual establishment in 1980 of The National Broadcasting School, with funding coming from secondary rental moneys. ILR stations had attracted trained staff from the BBC, but the paper relates their collective ambition, recognising the necessity of "finding higher levels of competence" (IBA 1980, p.2). In addition to pressure from the IBA, there was also a growing concern from broadcasting unions, leading to a formal understanding between AIRC and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) to consider training. It was envisaged that the NUJ should begin a national initiative. Additionally, several universities approached AIRC offering external training including Cardiff, The London College of Printing, The Polytechnic of Central London and Warwick University, which prompted AIRC to suggest compiling a register of training organisations. AIRC was also keen to see larger stations invite smaller neighbouring companies and prospective individuals from the community to training events. The widening of access to broadcasting, without the same level of training expected at the BBC, had certain consequences. Plays and sketches were formatted for a non-sequential broadcast flow (Williams 1974) whilst the discretionary presentation style of the music 'jock' meant an undeclared schedule for many fictional productions that could be inserted as freely as a music track. The presenters themselves, unencumbered by established forms also wrote and performed sketches.

As Innis (2008) conceived, radio is 'space-biased': a lightweight medium capable of binding the nation together with ephemeral but consistent messages. The effect of regions speaking to

regions both in the 1920s, 1930s and during the ILR era would highlight and contrast differences between local characteristics and demonstrate common values and traits. Radio highlighted and bridged geographical separation that contributed to the plethora of regional characteristics and cultural differences across the nation. Programme content would be shared around ILR stations providing local dramatists with a national audience and smaller ILR stations with fictional content. The establishment of the ILR drama Programme Sharing Scheme which was formalised by the IBA in 1980[9] (Wells 1984), meant that regions could regard each other independently of a prevailing national orientation or the separated approach of local BBC radio. Regions could *hear* other regions, contrasting local characteristics and demonstrating common values and traits.

Radio drama as a product of vernacular culture, being a natural consequence of the sector's regional situation has inherently political implications, specifically; devolved access in contrast to a narrowing of opportunity at the BBC, increasing autonomy and self-determination for creative voices and a newfound influence over audiences. The more locally focussed designs of John Thompson, Director of Radio at the IBA, under the supervision of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), served to widen opportunity for aspirant dramatists or playwrights who had 'experienced the brunt of exclusion and denial of opportunity in BBC licence fuelled radio drama' (Crook 1999, p.41).[10] Therefore, a consideration of class is required in the form of two parallel commentaries; the dramas themselves in terms of representation, morals, messages, themes and values may be regarded with equal importance

[9] In 1983, AIRC established the more efficient and cost-effective 'Programme Sharing Unit'.
[10] Paul Kent, formerly of Oneword Radio and Plays On The Net recalled difficulty in getting the BBC to commission new talent. "I remember when a Radio 4 controller said to me 'now go out and get me some new writers.' I did. I found six really good scripts by undiscovered talent, but not one was commissioned. When I asked why, he said 'Oh they didn't have a track record!'" (cited by Shakeshaft 2008).

to gaining *access* to broadcasting industries. The Canadian scholar Harold Innis'[11] (2008) overtly political concepts of temporal permanence or spatial ubiquity inherent in media[12] are also expressed in terms of who is commissioned to write and produce radio fiction, who the dramatist is, their observations, the words they choose to give their characters and what to omit. What Franklin (2009) applies to vernacular culture in non-fiction radio, is applicable to ILR playwrights, actors and the public alike; all constitute oral sources. The dialogic encounters and lived experiences of playwrights may also inform characterisation and dialogue. Realist drama, having gained prominence through film and television, found expression on ILR with elements of social realism to be found in, for instance, Ralph Bernard's series *Dying for a Drink* (1978) which contained scripted dialogue taken from recorded actuality of the public.

To form a theoretical perspective for this body of work, we will return to the following ideas; firstly, ILR dramas are shown to fall between two extremes: de facto *national* productions by virtue of a station's proximity to the capital or its comparability to the dramatic output of Radio 4 and *provincial* productions that are shown to have their own distinct aesthetic which affords the opportunity to consider regionality as a discrete generic style. These homespun works of fiction reflect the concerns of Barber (2007) and Ong (1988); themes of regionality, orality, oral culture and oral tradition, as do the ethical dimensions of Avery's (2006) work regarding local/regional vernacular culture as a binary opposition to the unifying nationalist agenda of the BBC (Avery 2006). Secondly, the impetus towards reform in radio drama;[13] if we consider the formation of the BBC in 1922 occurring at the height of modernism exemplified by its

[11] 1894-1952.
[12] One cautionary note: Innis' conceptualisation of oral tradition as a component of vernacular culture requires precision when delineating between radio as either spatial or, in the context archived recordings, temporal, requiring a deeper analysis.
[13] Avery (2006) provides a new paradigm for modernism as an intrinsic part of radio, and concludes that the media has changed our conceptualisation of modernism itself.

concentrated centralised power, overlaid with the influence of the literary elite (Virginia Woolf, T.S. Elliot, John Maynard Keynes), then the foundation of the ILR sector fifty years hence marks an equivalent post-structuralist phase - radio fiction unbeholden to prevailing metanarratives, uprooted from economic stability, decentralised and spread thinly across the regions. A further recurrent theme deals with the intersection of culture and commerce. Hartley refers to Brecht's experiments with public radio to explore "entertainment and democracy, sound and citizenship" (2000, p.153) and the familiar tension between creativity and market forces. James Boyle was famously criticised for "dumbing down" the BBC (Equity Magazine 1999 cited by Deacon 2010), a point that lay at the heart of the claim that radio drama was an ongoing casualty of wider commercial motivations. Likewise, this thesis is concerned with the interaction between art, social gain, showbusiness and the relationship between serious drama and light entertainment.

The terms 'radio drama' and 'fiction' can refer to multiple different forms of production. For instance, the 'dramatized feature' constitutes a work of fiction based on a factual subject, but as with Charles Parker's *The Radio Ballads* (1958) may also be a factual dramatised documentary, containing non-dramatic elements. Likewise, the definition of 'Radio Feature' lacks precision; the dramatised feature is clearly different from a dramatic feature like Bridson's *The March of the '45* (1936). The use of the word 'drama' was characterised by John Thompson as "an omnibus word used rather loosely to cover items ranging over plays of differing kinds, serials or soap operas, theatrical readings, dramatized documentaries, even amateur productions" (IBA 1976b). For Wade, the "bewildering" variety of material consists of a "loose confederation of diverse offerings" (1981, p.218). He observes that there is no "neat and tidy unity" to the diverse spectrum of fictional forms making it possible to write

"practically anything" (1981, p.221). Since there is no single agreement to what may constitute radio fiction or drama, we are left with a far more interesting predicament that requires the capacity to leap between a diverse spectrum of fictional forms.

To describe the multiple forms radio drama may take, Wood (2008) provides a ready overview of definitions devised by the 'Radio Drama Script Commissioning Agreement' (RDA) written in 2006 by a collective consisting of the BBC, The Writer's Guild of Great Britain, The Society of Authors, and The Personal Managers Association. The purpose of these definitions was to ensure the correct apportioning of rights, permissions and remuneration. The term 'play' is used if it is intended as a single dramatic work and is not based on a third-party proprietary source of material. A play may also be part of an anthology linked only by a generic title or theme. The term 'dramatization' is distinguishable from 'adaptation', as a conversion of a 'non-dramatic work'. An adaptation is the conversion of a dramatic work, a novel, stage play, film or television script. These terms are used interchangeably, but the RDA provides these two terms in the interest of precision. The writer would not normally be credited in these situations, unless a considerable creative reworking was undertaken, and both forms may take the form of a single play, series or serial. The terms 'series' and 'serial' have no difference in practice, but are defined respectively as: recurring situations, characters with a resolved narrative for each individual episode, and: a continuous episodic story with the same general situation and characters. A 'soap' is not defined on its own terms but is regarded as a serial without a resolution.

In terms of comedy and satire, this research accepts that there are differing views of what radio drama should be, treating them as varying spheres of influence with degrees of commonality.

'Drama' is used with slightly more specificity in reference to straight or serious plays, serials and soaps. Throughout the thesis, the term 'fiction' is used in a broad sense to encompass the variety of ILR productions including situation and sketch comedy. Hendy (2007) and Wade (1981) make no practical distinction between comedy and serious drama, presenting the Drama and Light Entertainment departments of the BBC together to explore their entwined fates. The coupling of drama and comedy is an efficient way to strengthen the comparisons made between the BBC's and ILR's fictional output, both sharing common ground in production technique and with frequent crossover by performers. Sitcoms and comedy sketches emerged on ILR through Capital Radio (most notably by Kenny Everett) and on Piccadilly Radio. It is reasonable to assume that new comedy talent was partially inspired by the satire boom beginning with *Beyond the Fringe* (1960) and grew in prominence parallel to the alternative comedy scene of the 1970s and 1980s (Peters 2013). The ethos of the Manchester School as an antecedent to ILR drama also applies to the politically motivated new expressions of 'alternative' comedy. Manchester University was a centripetal force during the 1970s that produced writer/performers like Ben Elton, Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson who served to inspire ILR talent. The comedies examined here are distinctly regional and are indicative of class through their use of regional archetypes and vernacular speech, confirming the assertions made in this thesis.

These themes are complementary by design: a concern over the future standing of radio drama in light of the need to modernise; a subsequent democratisation of media with due regulatory consequences and the economics of production and distribution, all of which mirror current debates concerning new social media platforms, access and the role and impact of the media

'prosumer'.[14] Like today's podcaster, the ILR dramatists enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than their counterparts at the BBC and often without a comparable budget and resources to realise their ambition.

Synopsis

Following this introduction and historical overview, chapter two will explore the methodologies employed in radio drama analysis and broadcasting history research which bring a unique set of challenges, previously approached in a variety of ways. This is supported with an evaluative commentary and a discussion on how the methodologies have been applied. For instance, unfettered access to internal documentation can impair the quality of critique suggesting problems with impartiality and detachment. Existing histories also demonstrate how subject matter influences methodology.

Chapter three begins with a review of the pre-existing literature concerning broadcasting history and discusses prominent theoretical ideas, themes and terminology in radio studies to form the underpinning conceptual foundation of this thesis. It is an opportunity to apply key concepts to a largely unexplored and underreported body of radio fiction and to consider how far they compare to the BBC and other established sources of radio drama. The theoretical and conceptual approach taken here is based on a synthesis of modern perspectives in radio studies provided by current key authors. Chignell (2019) provides the requisite context of radio drama's two decades preceding this window of research having passed through its golden age, followed by absurdist and realist movements. His assessment of Giles Cooper's plays has been

[14] It is hoped that this research may be of interest to content producers using new digital platforms. It may also be of significance in a legislative sense as new policies on public service broadcasting are developed.

particularly formative in this analysis of ILR comedy, with regards to the male identity crisis as a recurrent theme. Cooper's plays, set somewhere between surreality, absurdism and realism are a fitting middle ground for a conclusion in the mid 1960s, after which radio drama would expand to incorporate ILR's provincial talent. McMurtry (2019) asks the crucial question as to why radio broadcasters should consider drama given the centrality of visual media? For ILR in 1973, the inclusion of drama was simply a foregone conclusion – a central point in this thesis which McMurtry (2019) expounds by comparing drama's demise in the US with its defiant survival on the BBC.

Chapter four describes the working practices and production processes of producers, writers and performers by drawing upon interviews and correspondence regarding their experiences, recollections and their perceived status as ILR programme makers. The practices of the BBC provide a useful comparison, as stated earlier, two approaches emerged across ILR stations; works of fiction by new, ambitious, creative talent with fresh ideas and approaches and a traditional approach in keeping with Radio 4, through the production of familiar plays. This chapter applies the theoretical concerns introduced in chapter three regarding the effect of providing access to authentic voices, regional dialects, vernacular speech, with a strong connection to local heritage based upon familiarity. The tension between the IBA and the AIRC explored by Stoller and Wray (2010) is also revisited as it revealed a previously tacit resentment towards content and staff funded by the secondary rental fee.

Chapter five comprises a series of case study analyses which examines and reviews a selection of dramas and situation comedies from ILR's canon. This will also draw upon the conceptual and theoretical themes established in chapter three. The parts of the canon that remain in the

archives represent a considerable volume of material, requiring a particular set of criteria to provide an empirical basis. The case studies have been selected to encompass the regions, time-period, genre and narrative whilst ensuring that key dramatists, producers, performers and culturally significant programmes are all accounted for. Although the period of interest takes place over nineteen-years, the area of study is focused on a small subset of ILR programming. The way data is presented and organised has a bearing on how conclusions may be derived and so it was decided not to present the thesis chronologically to avoid a disconnect between key themes, ideas and concepts. However, the case study analyses remain organized by year to demonstrate the growth in styles and approach. More programmes have been listened to than referred to as case studies, but references have been made to many of these throughout the thesis.

1.2 Reflecting Manchester and the Manchester School

In the 1920s, the British establishment had feelings of anxiety over the influence of commercial radio upon culture (Stoller 2010). Accordingly, a principle of unified control over broadcasting was adopted, without the stimulus of commercial competition “shifting authority away from more traditional culture brokers” (LeMahieu 1988, p.179). Culture was to be disseminated through the same universal programme, with only minor variations. By taking a particular phonetic and semantic approach to its national service, a dominant interpretation of British life and culture could prevail, reducing the national character to English, educated, middle-class, and imposing “cultural values on the whole of Britain and the centralisation of these values at the expense of local, regional and national differences" (Williams 1997, p.106). As radio effectively removed the geographical disconnect from the provinces, the BBC’s incorporation preceded a literary approach, subsequently interpreted as either a consistent service for the

betterment of the nations and regions or as O'Connor (1973) argues, the rise of an authoritarian exercise in social engineering.

The history of BBC drama in the regions provides useful connections to the circumstances that led to the possibility of drama on local commercial radio. The production of locally sourced drama across ILR stations was not an outlandish concept, merely evidence of history repeating. The decentralised beginnings of the BBC before its incorporation reflect ILR's later approach to drama which was largely out of necessity as a consequence of being detached from the resources of the capital. Considering that all radio drama was regionally sourced by virtue of the BBC's initial structure, before the local and metropolitan networks of the 1930s (Beech 1968 cited by Franklin et al. 2015), the circumstances for ILR were to a large degree comparable. In 1922 for instance, the use of amateur performers would be of practical necessity. The initial network of BBC stations broadcast extracts of existing plays and drew upon local amateur groups, like 5SC who relayed R.E. Jeffrey's adaptation of *Rob Roy* (1923)[15] from Glasgow to the network. The listing for *Rob Roy* in the first edition of the Radio Times implies the use of local actors, perhaps a repertory company, having "been chosen specially to suit the requirements of broadcasting" (1923, p.23). Unpaid scriptwriting duties were the norm and freelance works for hire were uncommon. On its first day, 5NO in Newcastle-upon-Tyne appears to hold the distinction of broadcasting the first BBC radio play *The Truth About Father Christmas* on Christmas Eve 1922. It was written by 'auntie' Phyllis M Twigg who as a salaried employee was not paid any additional fee (Grevatt 1988). Then on 19 October 1923, 6BM in Bournemouth broadcast a short form 20-minute piece by Mathew Boulton referred to by the Radio Times as a 'dramatic sketch', titled *The Brass Doorknob* (Wood 2008). 2BD in Aberdeen

[15] Broadcast on 06.10.1923, 19:30. 5SC Glasgow.

established its own repertory company to perform adaptations and original plays in the local vernacular (Bathgate 2020). As this thesis will demonstrate, these production matters would be mirrored by the ILR sector; the short form 'vignette', the use of amateur regional performers and the use of pre-existing salaried staff to write additional original content without commensurate or union regulated pay were all characteristic of attitudes towards production.

LeMahieu (1988) provides another parallel to be found in this early point of radio history. Before the BBC's centralisation of power and the embarrassments that led to their requirement for all speech to be scripted (Shapley 1996, p.46),[16] traditional modes of public discourse would be imported into the new medium without modification. Logically one would question the relevance of this to scripted drama. However as will be elaborated, some ILR fiction would not be delineated clearly; ILR presentation was imbricated or even blurred with fictional content and often expressive of a community's vernacular speech, forming a scripted/unscripted hybrid. Another important historical connection is to be found within the stated purpose of IRDP which, as a non-profit company, intended for the creation of drama with a social purpose by commissioning plays capable of inciting thought and discussion on relevant issue-based topics, as Tim Crook explains:

> We innovated the research, writing and production of contemporary short radio plays to generate debate and exploration of social, political and medical themes such as addiction, and homelessness. This involved listeners voting for plot outcomes and contributing their own experiences and viewpoints in response to the setting up of fictional dramatic dilemmas.[17]

[16] This refers to Shapley's experience with Durham miners, instructing them to not swear while on air.
[17] Crook, personal communication, 21 May 2020.

These same motivations run like a thread through British radio back to the 1920s and 1930s. The BBC North Regional Programme, or simply 'North Region' situated in Manchester, covered the entirety of the north from Lincolnshire, upwards to the borders. There, a resolutely left-wing approach to radio programming emerged; the so-called 'Manchester School' (Smith and Verma 2016). Douglas Bridson (1971) and Olive Shapley (1996) relate their experiences and explain how the people of Manchester were highly influential in establishing their identity and voice through North Region programmes. Bridson recalls how his own programmes were influenced by the local culture; he travelled to a Sheffield steel foundry with an early portable recorder to gather sound effects for his experimental piece *Steel* (1937).[18] The local character of Manchester would impose itself on the content of its documentary feature programming and representations in its plays. When writing the script for Shapley's *The Classic Soil* (1938)[19] Joan Littlewood had established a 'continuously looped' dialogue between the local community, the theatre and the audience, which would inform her later career in agitprop theatre (Cleves 2016). The success of Bridson and Gordon Gillard's epic and ground-breaking political verse play *The March of the '45* (1936) is in large part attributed to the Scottish Region production team in Edinburgh, combined with northern accents recorded at North Region.[20] There was no question that radio drama could be sourced regionally. Wood (2008) makes an essential point on this regarding R.C. Scriven's play *A Single Taper* (1948) made in Manchester, describing it as:

> …the most extraordinarily radiogenic piece of drama and demonstrates better than any of the above what can be achieved, on a shoestring budget in a regional programming slot, solely by the power of well-chosen words

[18] Broadcast on 23.02.1937, 20:10. Northern Regional Programme.
[19] Broadcast on 06.07.1939, 20:15. Northern Regional Programme.
[20] Ibid.

> set in darkness. It therefore argues the case for a 'pure' radio drama, a play that simply could not have achieved its effect on film, TV or stage.[21]

The centralised power of the BBC was apparent in its demarcation between London and the regions. But the modernity of the BBC, coupled with an ambition amongst those who sought to express ethical thought, suggests that the power exerted from Langham Place may not have as total as previously assumed. As a progressive, Hilda Matheson recognised the necessity for speech to be accessible to the public (Murphy 2016) establishing *intimacy* as tool to this end.[22] And according to Avery (2006), Virginia Woolf reached out across the 'cultural great divide' (Huyssen 1986) to find common ground between intellectual experimentation and mass culture. So, the BBC actually proved malleable to a range of perspectives.

Outside of London, Reith's restructured corporation consisted of five broad settlements in Scotland, Manchester, the Midlands, the West Country, and the south. This initial arrangement reveals an important implication for ILR drama. Firstly, in the short term there was a clear oversight of the towns and cities across the North of England. Secondly, producers in Manchester considered themselves liberated from London and would not necessarily approach programming in the way that Reith required. Hendy[23] cites the scholar and regulator Charles Siepmann who observed that the further away the BBC outpost, the more bloody-minded the staff were. They had escaped or avoided daily scrutiny from the top brass, Archie Harding, the North Region's Programme Director having been banished there by Reith himself (Bridson 1971). According to Bridson, Harding approached his role with the view that "all broadcasting was propaganda" (1971, p.30) and held the opinion that since the BBC did not attack the status

[21] (Wood 2008, p.25).
[22] She later resigned from the BBC in 1931 over the censorship of views from the political left.
[23] Ibid.

quo that kept Manchester downtrodden, it was tacitly complicit. Harding's anti-establishment instincts came from an ardent leftist tradition. He was an avowed Marxist (Bridson 1971). Bridson, with the producer Olive Shapley and the dramatist Joan Littlewood were all firm socialists, but their politics would be expressed through a subtle, Fabianist approach. During the 1930s, Shapley (1996) demonstrated her political convictions through a strong sense of duty to her listeners, a point asserted by Charles Curran: "good broadcasting came from practice, not prescription" (Seaton 2015, p.17). Bridson came to drama with a strong desire to represent 'ordinary' lives and voices with sympathy and honesty, allowing them to be heard in their most natural and spontaneous way. Bridson, in describing the Mancunian character, cited Harding who found Manchester to be reminiscent of Leningrad. Given Engels' association with Salford, Harding was acutely aware of the suffering, squalor and exploitation amongst the people of the region. His goal was to resist designs on centralisation by ensuring that the BBC in London did not impose its order and orthodoxy on the north. Harding wanted Bridson to reflect the informal, inclusive character of the northern regions and "pursue a policy of engaging people to express their own views rather than giving them spokesmen" (McMurtry 2019, p.84). The overtly progressive use of unscripted regional vernacular speech helped to foster a connection with working-class listeners (Wood 2008) aligning with both Brecht's (Hood 1980) egalitarian wish for two-way communication rather than one-way distribution, and the dispersed regionalised structure of ILR. Indeed, the works of Neville Cardus, Marriot Edgar and the humour of George Formby would later be reflected by humourists at Piccadilly Radio.

In some respects, it is possible to characterise North Region as an example of wholly decentralised influence, but taking Bridson's (1971) account into consideration, we may regard

its role as smaller, but still centralised to a degree since, for listeners in Tyneside, Manchester's North Region was just as disconnected from their lives as London. The BBC carved out a singular part in twentieth-century British life because of the kind of public service demonstrated in the regions, which was then cemented by the war. It was the perfect model, to British eyes at least, for future centrist broadcasting ventures like ILR and Channel Four, a hybrid of private ownership with a public service ethos.

Keeping the Manchester School in mind, a key concern is the degree of authenticity in ILR performances as an indicator of their embrace of vernacular culture, mandated in its remit. The Minister of Post and Telecommunications, Sir Christopher Chataway, who was tasked with overseeing the formation of commercial radio, was sure to codify local commercial stations as an organic part of the local community. This made a significant impact upon what ILR's dramatists would later devise. Hajkowski's (2010) history of the BBC draws upon Anderson's (2006) notion of 'imagined community' when defining the practice of shaping individual communal identities, arguing that "…imperial Britons, quintessential rural Englanders, Welsh…" (Beers 2012, p.479) often saw themselves as pluralistic. Radio broadcasting affected these considerations, highlighting and bridging the geographical separation that contributed to the plethora of regional characteristics and cultural differences of the nation, or as Innis (2008) conceived, a 'space-binding medium'. As previously mentioned, Manchester was responsible for delivering content to the whole of the north.

At this point, it is necessary to consider the impact of Val Gielgud the BBC's Head of Productions and his resistance to 'radioplays'. Gielgud's approach was analogous to the BBC's wider interpretation of its cultural role to cater for a broad national audience. Its strategy, using

literacy to bind the nation in technocultural unity so to speak, was for some an elitist authoritarian prescription. But there was also a pragmatic necessity for expressive clarity; to be received nationally and understood by as wide an audience as possible. Gielgud's direction of the Drama and Features Department[24] was compatible with this policy by favouring classic and conventional theatrical plays for a mainstream, non-metropolitan majority. The use of speech to improve public literacy is as laudable as the preservation of authenticity in dialect, language, speech and lore of vernacular culture. It is not necessarily inevitable for the former to negate the latter either. It would be inaccurate to suggest the BBC, as a modernist movement, sought to extinguish, or at least suppress, the individuality of pre-existing local cultures. In fact Lacey (2018) applies the term 'vernacular modernism' to radio drama as a cultural practice that made use of modernist aesthetics. In this sense, idiomatic and vernacular speech is utilised to communicate the condition of modernity in everyday life (Hansen 1999).

Regionalism, syndication, and the use of local amateurs and professionals were part of the BBC's experimental approach before Gielgud's influence and are central to our understanding of ILR. The BBC artistic director Arthur Corbett-Smith, published a pamphlet titled: *Our Radio Programmes: What is wrong and why* (1926) in which he expressed concern with what he perceived as the BBC's repeated artistic failures, and arguing for regional voices:

> I can find no more vivid illustration, both of the poverty of entertainment work and of the self-complacent attitude under lack of criticism than that afforded by the Great Strike of 1926. Instead of rising to their greatest heights at that moment of national crisis, the BBC stood revealed as an abject failure.[25]

[24] From 1929 to 1963 with some secondments to television.
[25] Corbett-Smith, cited by Wood (2008).

Corbett-Smith defined the kinds of persona required in broadcasting and a need for creative innovation rather than reproducing and adapting previous content. There was a need to address these shortcomings which were indicative of their failure to become a part of the nation's cultural life. Ultimately, it was his position that reflecting the regions was "beyond their comprehension" (Corbett-Smith cited by Pepler 1988). A similar view was taken by Cecil Lewis[26] who took an experimental approach to audio drama by opting to source talent from the cutting edge of British theatre which at that time could be found at London's *Grand Guignol Company* under Jose Levy (Hand 2015). Lewis avoided local reparatory companies, knowing such voices would not work in sound only.

Pickering observes how projected and articulated speech, given its closeness to English Literature, was "once thought of as the proper handling of the text" (2005, p.2). Gielgud however, avoided the radiogenic qualities that made radio drama unique, preferring to present plays through radio, rather than *adapt for* radio since in his view, theatre was the superior artform (Wood 2008). By all accounts, Gielgud considered theatre to be the higher medium to radio evidenced by his reliance upon adapted stage plays and novels (McMurtry 2019). His personal selection for the 1928 *Twelve Great Plays* season included Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov and a commission from George Bernard Shaw (Conolly 2009). Considering Gielgud's standards, ILR drama could hardly be considered elitist. Inevitably, Gielgud's preference for theatrically experienced actors resulted in overacting as though still on stage (Mortimer 2013). But his management of the drama department made a critical impact on the development of British radio drama and so his influence cannot be disregarded, particularly in relation to what BBC audiences were used to by the early 1970s.

[26] Writer, producer, director and one of the founding executives of the BBC.

Charles Parker's *The Radio Ballads* (1958) contain dramatic scenes with properties of authentic oral vernacular emerging from recorded actuality. Dylan Thomas' radio play *Under Milk Wood* (1954)[27], a classic of the medium, was a product of new regional voices within the BBC and was made independently of Gielgud's influence. It is reasonable to infer that most new ILR creatives were nurtured by radio or had an existing BBC career, as was playwright John Arden's experience (Leach 2020). Arden, Thomas and Louis MacNeice were all involved with the Features Department[28] using verse to artistic effect in a similar way to the second wave of German *Hörspiel* which used speech as sound. The use of classically trained stage actors seemed old fashioned in light of other, more ground-breaking works; the deft economical language of Pinter[29] and Stoppard[30] in the 1960s and 1970s for instance, and mainstream audiences had become accustomed to social realist plays on television. By the late 1960's, the reputation for these plays made the BBC a magnet for the burgeoning marketplace of prospective writers. The trend towards modernisation and realism was already underway on Radio 2 with *Waggoner's Walk* (1969-1980) which was comparable in style and tone to Capital Radio's early offerings like *Honey Adair* (1973) and *She and Me* (1973).

Gielgud's nepotistic approach ended fully with his retirement in 1963. The *Caesar's Mistress* scandal, which led to the formation of the BBC Script Unit in 1953, meant that it became possible to submit a play on an unsolicited basis. This emancipatory potential for unknown playwrights appeared to continue and expand with ILR. The BBC Light Entertainment

[27] Broadcast on Mon 25th Jan 1954, 19:25. Third Programme.
[28] The Features Department closed in 1963; however, the avant-garde of new writing and experimentation remained quite safe under Esslin.
[29] Pinter's *A Slight Ache* was first broadcast on Wednesday 29th Jul 1959, 21:15 on The Third Programme.
[30] Stoppard's first original radio play was *The Dissolution of Dominic Boot* broadcast on Thursday 20th Feb 1964, 23:40. The Light Programme.

Department had commissioned two topical sketch comedies: *Week Ending* (1970) for Radio Four and *The News Huddlines* (1975) for Radio Two, both operating an open script policy for new comedy writers. In conversation with Wade (1981), John Scotney,[31] then a script editor for Radio 3, recalled that most of the good plays submitted to Radio 3 were inherently visual and did not make full use of the medium.[32] Scotney's pursuit of quality radio drama reflected a wider internal comparison between Radio Three and Radio Four.[33] He was wary of the routine plays of Radio Four, what he characterised as "plays to hoover to".[34] But in commissioning drama, ILR stations required good serviceable plays, perhaps not commissionable due to the BBC's higher expectations, but not necessarily without value either. Martin Esslin's impact on BBC radio drama also had an indirect influence on certain case studies presented in chapter five containing elements of absurdist theatre (Chignell 2015).

In recent years, historians have begun to re-examine British culture and society in the 1970s, largely motivated by parallels with the financial crisis of 2008. Several reassessments of assumptions made about the period contain what are considered to be mischaracterisations and overly politicised conclusions. For instance, second wave feminist movements made positive strides into the cultural space by being immersed in community activism and not automatically enmeshed in the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity. This was a hopeful time for some women which made "the seventies, in a sense, our delayed sixties" (Segal 2013). For commercial radio drama however, men occupied most of the creative roles although many women did make early progress in other areas of the industry, Gillian Reynolds, station manager of Radio City in

[31] Head of the BBC television script unit and producer of *The Archers* (1951).
[32] This point relates to radio's 'invisibleness' a strength rather than a handicap. This will be dealt further with in Chapter three which deals with the theoretical concerns of this thesis.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

Merseyside, being a prime example. This research has not found many women taking creative positions in ILR aside from acting. Williamson and Kolek (2021) apply homophily theory to explain the pattern of gender imbalance in commercial radio employment. They draw upon Glass and Cook (2018) and Hogg and Terry (2000) to demonstrate how shared male values and perspectives correlate with their appointment to positions of authority in radio. There is a clear difference in content and approach to US weekday radio compared to British independent drama production, nevertheless this evidence supports the explanation that hiring, and talent discovery are homophilous along gender lines and logically, we may also apply this phenomenon to ethnicity. In a comparison of production approaches between the two sectors, it is clear that the BBCs record for commissioning scripts from women was better than in ILR. Juliet Ace, Barbra Bray (as script editor and collaborator), Rachel Billington, Shirley Gee, Carla Lane (initially in local BBC radio), Jennifer Phillips, Elizabeth Troop and Fay Weldon were all successful radio playwrights. New writers like Carolyn Sally Jones, Jehane Markham and Paula McKay were also given their first opportunity by BBC Radio. Only IRDP appears to have been progressive in this regard. *Farewell Little Girl* (1993) written by Anna Hashmi and directed by Tim Crook at IRDP for LBC, demonstrates this unrealised potential. As an expressionistic piece, it exemplifies Chion's (1994) 'acousmatic voice' in its use of the sound medium to create vivid and sometimes surreal imagery, without being incarnate in an otherwise visual soundscape (Crook 1999). Its success as an original work of radio fiction was demonstrated by its selection for an award at the 1993 International Radio Festival of New York.

Black et al. (2016) are wary of a tendency among historians to package history up into decadal blocks which can distort an understanding of multiple complex events that do not conform to

a strict duration. However, there is a self-contained structure to the 1970s, bookended by new Conservative governments, which provides a discrete time span for scrutiny. Stoller (2010b) observes that the beginnings of independent radio reflect the social and political story of Britain during the 1970s. Britain occupied a precarious, liminal position and would experience a gradual, painful transition from civically minded public service collectivism to a strong impetus towards modernisation and an unrestrained commercial economy. The first oil shock in October 1973, the weak pound, rising unemployment and industrial action compounded the social malaise (Sandbrook 2011, 2013). Although these were not the ideal circumstances to launch a new commercial radio station, the three-day week made some ILR stations like Radio Clyde a success. After television closedown at 10:30 pm, people discovered Clyde and its range of imaginative programming. According to producer John MacCalman, Clyde was a revelation for listeners in West Central Scotland, served by a new source of late-night entertainment (personal communication, 23 January 2021).

The passing of the Theatres Act in 1968 was an equivalent pivotal and historic moment to the foundation of ILR, ending the restraints of censorship in British theatre, resulting in a new wave of roving theatre troupes across the UK. This transient fringe had freedom, encouraged and funded by Arts Council grants to experiment and improvise, which was hitherto illegal since scripts had to be approved in advance by the Lord Chamberlain (Stephens 2010). Actors would form and run co-operative agencies outside of the West End's influence, working with schools to bring contemporary social issues and political commentary to the syllabus. The 1960s also saw the growth of alternative or underground theatre and a critical mass of actors embracing method acting, a systematic approach to acting, built upon the methods of Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938), resulting in psychological realism (Allen 1996). In 1963

John Blatchley, Yat Malmgren and Christopher Fettes founded Drama Centre London with a particular focus on Stanislavsky's system. Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop took a similarly radical approach that was indicative of a movement away from conservatoire traditions that had been dismissed by the theatrical establishment, but would prove complimentary to the growth in realist drama.

1.3 Hitch-hiking back to prominence

In the early 1970s, there was a need amongst practitioners who valued the art and craft of the medium to prove that radio still had relevance. New technology coupled with influential cutting-edge sound-based productions particularly from Europe (Gilfillan 2009), bolstered a strong artistic conviction still felt amongst BBC practitioners. In setting the direction for the light entertainment department, David Hatch, member of the Cambridge Footlights and close associate of John Cleese, Graham Chapman and Tim Brooke-Taylor, accurately judged the mood of the times. Consequently, the Light Entertainment department rejuvenated the perception of Radio Four fiction *before* the Drama department could, with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978). Hatch ensured that BBC radio comedy in the 1980s would operate as a laboratory of ideas with a renewed confidence and the freedom to take risks with a number of initiatives to provide opportunity for untested writers, the majority of which came from the Cambridge University Light Entertainment Society (CULES) and the Footlights. There were some exceptions from the Northwest, like writers Rob Grant and Doug Naylor who both attended the University of Liverpool. But this enhanced reputation for radio also had a peripheral effect for ILR and new talent who were encouraged by the rejuvenation and successes of BBC comedy also experienced the freedom to innovate.

Comedy inhabits drama to varying degrees and its exclusion in favour of serious drama would result in an incomplete picture, especially given its popularity on ILR with a number of examples still resonating with listeners today; specifically the continued success of Buzz Hawkins' long running situation comedy series *The Bradshaws* (1983) and the cult that continues to surround Frank Sidebottom of *Radio Timperley* (1986), both produced at Piccadilly Radio. What is key with regards to comedy as fiction, whether situational or sketch based, is that it enjoyed a special licence to exist between orality and literacy. Consequently, this thesis considers comedy's conciliatory role amid the BBC's motivations towards national identity and regional resistance, as it permeates and rises above class distinction. One important point to make is that BBC comedy and light entertainment have always benefitted from regionality with many of its early stars hailing from the Northwest of the UK. Tommy Handley, Arthur Askey, George Formby, Ted Ray and Jimmy Clitheroe were all emblematic of their regionality, with extensive reliance on colloquial humour derived from the Music Hall tradition. During the war, the BBC acquiesced to popularist vernacular comedy primarily through its Light Entertainment department to galvanise the nation and raise morale, arguably a more effective catalyst than the use of authoritarian language (Addison 2004).[35] Continuing into the 1960s and 1970s, the same use of vernacular speech and dialect underpinned *The Likely Lads* (1964) and *The Liver Birds* (1969). To understand the significance of comedy as part of programme content, Stoller (2010b) provides the useful observation that, politics aside, ILR was a product of affluent youth culture and popular music. Producers, DJ's and presenters adjacent to the stand-up comedy circuit would naturally identify with, and move in the same

[35] The argument that ILR drama contributed to the BBC's impetus to modernise does not apply to BBC radio comedy which has always remained relevant, current, and accessible to new talent. In the 1970s and 1980s this was largely thanks to the leadership of David Hatch and Michael Mills.

circles as, comedians and musicians. By the mid-1970s, the practice of sourcing comedy talent from the stage, ENSA and working men's clubs had shifted to universities. Frank Gillard's designs for Local Radio did not take into consideration how society was changing and avoided a language and tone that younger listeners were familiar with (Stoller 2010b). Street (2002 cited by Stoller 2010) also observes, the expectations raised by the offshore broadcasters were not met. While several subcultural movements, principally the anarchic expressions of punk and the 'alternative' comedy scene, began to make an impact on British light entertainment (Smith 2009), *Captain Kremmen* (1976) made its debut on Capital Radio. Kenny Everett's bold and irreverent sense of humour seemed to have aligned with these new emergent expressions of comedy, proving that with the right talent, Capital's success was replicable across the regions.

1.4 Drama without a mandate

Surprisingly for an examination of ILR drama is its lack of a specific mandate in the first place. A stated obligation to produce drama was not enshrined in its remit, necessitating a search for key moments in time when the requirement for drama was overtly stated or implied. The 1972 Act established that 45 to 55 per cent of a station's output should be music based. The remainder of a typical week's programming would consist of local interest news and current affairs, consumer advice, sport, religion, educational content, audience participation and "humour, arts reviews, occasional episodes of drama, consistent coverage of news about local music and entertainment" (Wray 2009, p.53).

Drama was also prohibitively expensive making it rarer. Chapter four examines the budgets for Capital Radio's first slate of dramas for 1973/74, all of which were discontinued due to costs.

There may be a tendency amongst some committed adherents of radio drama to make a premature appraisal of ILR's capabilities equating 'local' to 'unprofessional' based on assumptions around low budgets and limited interest from station owners beyond satisfying their remit. As Tony Stoller recalls, for many ILR stations, drama was too costly:

> … requiring talent it did not naturally have and offering no commercial returns. ILR was never going to come close to matching BBC's drama tradition, skills and establishment, and it never found an alternative approach, at least in part because it never had any real motivation to try.[36]

The formalised requirement from the IBA for ITV to provide drama would appear to reveal a fundamental flaw in the notion of local as opposed to regional media, resulting in the same outcome in ILR; a split between larger companies offering a breadth of programming which included drama, and smaller stations concentrating on limited to simple cost-effective formats, music request shows, local news and phone-ins which appeared to be the cheapest way to include and reflect the community. In local radio, these economic concerns were felt more acutely, raising the question of whether or not drama should even be considered at this level. ILR was to be local; a community-focussed service. But it was clear that only the larger more affluent regional stations could operate on a level that could professionally produce ambitious 'worthy' content. This means that most of the plays and comedies tended to originate from London, the Northwest and Scotland. These stations could in turn syndicate to smaller stations.

The balance between profit motives and artistic expression is a critical consideration when contextualising and analysing ILR drama, since for many contractors, drama was used to lend credibility and status to their station, part of an overall indication of their civic duty. There are

[36] Stoller, personal communication, 2008.

original plays remaining in the archives which tend to be issue-based, made from a motivation to provide social gain. For instance, Ralph Bernard's series *Dying for a Drink* (1978) led to concerns being raised in Parliament regarding alcoholism in the workplace (Wells 1984). Richard Shannon, drama director at IRDP recalls the financial circumstances that they faced in 1987.

> …there wasn't a huge amount of money out there, we couldn't see a way of monetizing it in terms of subscription. We were useful to LBC up to a point because we won many awards, both domestic and international. And for the Radio Authority, or whatever the particular manifestation of the regulator was, at the time, we were very useful, because we demonstrated quality within independent radio in drama terms. But the climate wasn't right, people didn't take it seriously.[37]

In 1960, the entertainer Hughie Green, a stakeholder in the commercial radio sector (Baron 1975), recognised the need to apply the norms of television and treat drama as entertainment, which may well have demonstrated commercial value with more immediacy. McMurtry (2019) also considers the question of artistic merit against entertainment. She draws an early conclusion that radio advertising should be absorbed into radio drama studies which also informs how we might look back at the body of dramatic work produced by ILR and its close association with commercial creativity. There are no easy answers to this dichotomy since the notion of social enterprise hybridised with for-profit ventures is still relatively new. But with regards to cultural economics, Shubik asks a useful question: "Does a society get the cultural institutions it deserves?" (1999, p.14). This raises more issues than can be answered here, but he provides the following list of reasons that we might apply to an argument for the production of drama: the preservation of cultural identity, education for community betterment, local and

[37] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

national pride and subsidised entertainment for profit. The themes of this question may be applied to commercial drama as follows; the creation of cultural products, in this case, 'built' radio programming as opposed to music playlists; social engineering through institutional constructs like ILR; how much value station owners and audiences place on drama, bearing in mind how far radio drama had slipped from mainstream attention in the 1970s and 1980s and the worth of radio as a medium.

ILR was more the product of commercial ambition than technological innovation as with other revolutions in the field. The commercial radio lobby pushed for a new service in the wake of unlicensed offshore broadcasting, but their proposals did not align precisely with the political values in place at the start of the Heath government (Stoller 2010b). The Conservatives recognised the potential of Radio One and since ITV was lucrative, they were receptive to the proposal. Today, economic concerns and the cost of supply are routinely applied to our cultural institutions. But during the early 1970s, the Overton window had not yet shifted away from the political and social expectations of consensus. The subsequent commons debate would therefore deal with the familiar tension between commerce and culture and the position of the new service towards creativity and market forces. As a matter of political expediency, a new radio service could in fact benefit communities, targeted locally, with some of the same spirit and ethos of the Manchester School.

Hughie Green later made the crass suggestion that actors should be employed to present commercial radio news to imbue bulletins with excitement (Baron 1975). Of course, this did not happen, being clearly unethical. Wray (2009) cites the concerns of Labour peers Lord Shepherd and Lord Beaumont of Whitley that prospective commercial radio news and

comment risked "over dramatisation to give it some 'sex' appeal (of) some interest to the public… highly dangerous (to) the public interest" (Guardian 1972). But the possibility of commercial radio drama production would have helped to allay fears over poor broadcasting standards. Green's initial pitch promised to devote almost half its output to light entertainment, underscoring the consideration of drama, situation comedy and other forms of fiction as simply a natural part of what radio did. Indeed, a common argument for stations to be regional rather than local was partly out of necessity in attracting 'actors of ability' to stations of a sufficient size. Also, in parliamentary debate, Ivor Richard, Labour MP for Barons Court, suggested that the purpose of ILR should include providing local amateur dramatic societies the opportunity to produce radio plays (HC Deb 1971b).

Many initial programming proposals submitted by companies to the IBA included a commitment to drama in varying degrees. Given the board of Capital Radio consisted of Richard Attenborough who interpreted his chairpersonship role as 'impresario' (2008), along with Bryan Forbes and Peter Saunders, there was a strong implication that drama would be a component of the new commercial sector (Baron 1975). Capital had applied for the IBA's 'general entertainment' licence for London, which did not necessarily obligate a music-only service (Stoller 2010b). In Merseyside, the shareholders of Radio City included the playwright Carla Lane and the comedian Ken Dodd (Barham 2006). According to Gillian Reynolds, the IBA saw the need for a broad a range of programming, expecting words of substance in line with the existing BBC services (personal communication, 20 April 2009). It made sense for stations to provide a balanced diet of content in light of Chataway's intention for the independent radio sector to provide a public service.

Additionally, the initial restriction to a daily five-hour maximum of 'needletime' was a contentious issue for AIRC. Needletime refers to the amount of music that stations could play each day and was established by the Musicians' Union and Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL). These restrictions meant that it was necessary to produce original content, other than music and so the production of drama and comedy was of practical use (Cloonan 2016). The five-hour daily limit gradually increased, but still applied to ILR stations until 1988. There was also a broader aspiration amongst ILR practitioners to go beyond simple music and chat, producing 'quality' features which included documentaries, as Stoller points out "many, such as John Whitney (Capital Radio), Phillip Birch (Piccadilly Radio) and Jimmy Gordon (Radio Clyde) were actually pretty high-minded about their aspirations for good output" (personal communication, 2008). Although this ambition would vary amongst ILR producers across the fledgling sector (Dunne, personal communication, 12 June 2018),[38] it was generally thought that drama would provide stations with legitimacy, serving to distinguish it from the memory of the offshore broadcasters (Street 2002).

The Bow Group[39] had identified potential problems if it were merely a legalised successor to pirate radio and equally, there would be political damage if it concentrated too much media power in too few hands (Crossbow 1970, cited by Stoller 2010b). The eventual regulator would need to ensure accountability for content, allocate limited frequencies and consider station viability. Chataway had made assurances to the commercial radio lobby, who expected laissez faire freedom to exploit their franchises (Wray 2009), that there would be a new private radio sector. But the structure of the ILR sector would also need to withstand a fiercely partisan political climate. Newspaper proprietors considered commercial radio a threat to their market

[38] David Dunne was a former producer at Piccadilly Radio and worked with Chris Sievey on *Radio Timperley* (1986).
[39] The Conservative think tank. Publisher of *Crossbow* magazine.

share and agreed with the Labour Party's opposition. Labour's distain towards the idea of commercial radio was expressed during the commons debate on the subsequent white paper. But early arguments against the new sector did refer to the production of drama. For instance, Ivor Richard echoed the long-standing fear in British politics of what was considered the vulgarity of commercialism:

> I cannot imagine that Radio Scunthorpe… will offer many plays to the good people of Scunthorpe… If this was a proposal for… the local dramatic society (to) put out some kind of radio play, it might combine popular programming with a greater public awareness of local affairs and involvement of the local community. But does anyone imagine that that is the type of programme that will take place under this scheme?... Are the hon. Member for Hendon North and the hon. Member for Brighouse and Spenborough (Mr. Proudfoot) in the business to make sure that the Scunthorpe dramatic society gets a fair crack of the whip on Radio Scunthorpe or that the local butcher in the High Street gets a fair crack of the advertising revenue. They know as well as anyone else, and recognise it, that they are in business simply to try to get as much advertising revenue on that commercial local radio station as possible.[40]

Norman Buchan, then Labour MP for West Renfrewshire, also cited drama as an appropriate ambition in his criticism of the proposals.

> He said not a word about the content of the programmes, not a word about the music that has been produced in Western Europe over the past thousand years, not a word about speech and drama from Shakespeare onwards. To him, this is a good market.[41]

John Thompson also recalled such apprehensions concerning the import of "inexpensive serials and soap operas from abroad", citing fears about the "indiscriminate use of cheap material originating, for example, on radio in Australasia" (IBA 1976b). The 1972 Sound Broadcasting

[40] HC Deb 1971b.
[41] HC Deb 1971d

Act referenced the requirement for 'proper proportions' of the output being 'British origin and of British performance' (HC Deb 1972) which strictly speaking also referred to the Commonwealth and some stations had expressed an initial intertest in sourcing Australian programming. However, it was always the Authority's intention to place emphasis on local broadcasting in the UK and applicants were discouraged in advance of their proposed schedules. Thompson was open to some imports however, making specific reference to the audiobooks of US satirist James Thurber (IBA 1976b).

A key proposal by John Gorst and John Whitney of The Local Radio Association was published in *The Shape of Local Radio* (cited by Wray 2009) which suggested the kinds of programming content to be made and the allocation of hours per day. Radio drama would fit into a 16.5 per cent allocation of 'other speech' referring to presenter chat and 'built' programming: documentaries and pre-recorded interviews for example, which roughly calculates to 10-minutes per daypart hour excluding news speech. Hughie Green's company Commercial Broadcasting Consultants committed to an allocation of 40 per cent of its output to 'light entertainment' (HC Deb 1971c). Stations did not need to adhere to these suggested allocations since needletime was reduceable in favour of event-programming. For instance, Ralph Bernard's *Dying for a Drink* (1978) received the focus of an entire week on Radio Hallam in 1975 (Bernard, personal communication, 07 December 2020). The production of fiction worked to a station's advantage given limited the amount of music that could be played. David Dunne also points out how short comedy sketches would help in overcoming the copyright restrictions.

> Speech shows of any kind were very useful too as they used up airtime without playing any music. Anything that used up airtime without using

> needletime music was therefore a very useful bit of programming. Late night phone in shows would also eat up time without playing music. ILRs were full of people that had worked at the BBC or on USA and Pirate Stations where comedy and pre-recorded "Funny Bits" were traditional parts of the radio landscape.[42]

Chataway de-emphasized the original commercial impetus of the lobbyists, this was to be *Independent Local Radio*, social enterprise through a public-private partnership. This departure reframed the new sector to favour the indirectly stated possibilities for drama on independent radio as part of a social contract. The two-tier hierarchy of the Independent Broadcasting System consisted of the IBA, and a selection of private companies *contracted* to provide local radio programming. Financing for drama production and IBA operations would of course be dependent upon advertising revenue. But as Stoller (2010b) describes, this typically British compromise would involve performing a delicate balancing act between the contractor's commercial motivation and the maintenance of strict programming standards. Despite the prohibitive cost, the production of plays and comedy would seem to reconcile the need for appealing content with commercial objectives. Excess profits would flow back into the authority in the interest of the system as a whole, redeploying funds to the production of plays. The development of fiction would also require a level of thoughtfulness that could broaden station owner's attention further than revenue, but stations did have to be viable.

In the press, its commercial potential was downgraded, ILR would not mirror ITV as a licence to print money (Stoller 2010b). Contractors would be selected on their connection to the local community in addition to pragmatic factors like financial status, qualified staff and broadcasters of ability with a desire to produce quality programmes, raising questions regarding

[42] Dunne, personal communication, 12 June 2018.

the kinds of drama produced and the sourcing of playwrights.[43] By placing emphasis on authentic local sources, new unknown playwrights and performers emerged with a platform. They would not however pass through the selective processes and experiences of working for a larger broadcaster with national attention. The growth and maturation of this new generation would happen gradually in situ.

As previously stated, drama was not the domain of the BBC in the regions. The intention expressed in the 1971 white paper 'An Alternative Service of Radio Broadcasting' was to distinguish the new independent sector from the BBC's non-metropolitan services, by competing with its national services (Wray 2009) which proved to be influential in defining the philosophy of 'meaningful speech' that made drama a consideration for ILR producers. Chataway's rationale was to foster a sense of belonging with smaller communities, emphasising relevant local content over regional matters to root stations firmly in their locality (Warnock 1980; cited by Wray 2009).

A candid supposition is that the purpose of ILR was to simply break the BBC's monopoly, but in the process, Heath's government was sensitive enough to renew their commitment to the BBC's role as an "effective and essential public service contribution" (Starkey 2011, p.25). It was also essential to devise a model that "could withstand another change of Government" (Stoller cited by Wray 2009). Chataway's chosen path avoided too much political disruption and proved persuasive enough for Labour as a community service. But the ILR companies were not granted their instantaneous market and would have to wait, whilst struggling with the implications of the remit. As Stoller (2010b) explains, they would eventually make that

[43] Ibid.

Faustian bargain in 1990. Yet the production of plays and situation comedy persisted in one form or another across the ILR era, even after the effects of the 1990 Broadcasting Act rippled through the industry. There are also instances of productions that were not necessarily prohibitively expensive like book readings, with key examples from Radio Clyde that were popular and cost effective. They all helped stations to successfully meet their remit for localness and regionality, but even before the sector was created, a proportion of prospective station contractors considered the production of drama antithetical to what they expected to broadcast (Stoller 2010b). Thompson's approach was to leave the initiative up to the licence applicants, issuing a memo titled 'Programme Intentions' that would not specify any required quantities of programme of a specialized nature (IBA 1972 cited in IBA 1976b).

It is important to state with accuracy the extent to which ILR drama made an impact on the wider British radio industry, like for instance how far the productions of IRDP Ltd. demonstrated the potential for a competitive independent radio production company sector. A number of similar commercial interests emerged in the mid 1970s. Thompson wrote of a consortium of publishers producing saleable content of interest to stations (IBA 1976b). They produced a series of demonstration tapes featuring Patrick Allen performing adaptations of *The Cruel Sea* (1951) and *The Day of the Jackal* (1971).[44] Thompson suggested a 'network' purchase of these high-quality productions, which could be financed by secondary rental revenue.[45] The chairman of Radio Clyde, Ian Chapman, who was also the managing director of the publisher Collins, had expressed a similar idea to the IBA, selling recorded productions of popular contemporary titles and classics. There were also scripts readied for production from

[44] Broadcast dates unavailable, but they were likely to have been produced in 1976.
[45] Ibid.

European producers who had begun to use stereo available through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).[46]

Periodical industrial action throughout the seventies[47] contributed to the conditions that finished off consensus-era politics. But just before market liberalism could fill the vacuum, exciting new entertainment franchises appeared. The misery of the political and social realities of the 1970s was starkly contrasted by fresh, vibrant and innovative media. *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) reinvigorated the faltering cinemagoing experience. New technologies like home video and game consoles would change media consumption further, reducing the market share for broadcast programming. BBC radio rose to the occasion with *The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978) which led directly into the commissioning of Brian Sibley's epic adaption of *The Lord of the Rings* (1981). *The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978) took its cue from *Star Wars* (1977) with a rich sound design comparable to new innovations in cinematic audio presentation, Walter Murch's approach to *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Ben Burtt at Lucasfilm being contemporaneous examples. The BBC Radiophonic Workshop and radio producers' experimentations with stereo would serve to revive BBC radio drama further (Hendy 2008).

Having established these developments, we return to our central argument that the competition posed by ILR would contribute to the impetus towards the modernisation of radio drama and reposition it as a commercially viable product. There is no doubt that audio drama still retained its power in the 1970s. Fears expressed in Parliament over the potential unethical use of actors

[46] Ibid.
[47] Two major strikes between the National Union of Mineworkers and Conservative Heath ministry took place in 1972 and 1974. The widespread 'Winter of Discontent' involving private and public sector trade unions lasted from November 1978 to February 1979 under Callaghan's Labour Government. These were followed by the year-long Miner's strike starting in 1984.

and scripted dramatic dialogue (p.44) is an interesting 'tell' that bears this out. We are also compelled to view the BBC from the perspective of ILR, its closed-door policy to a new generation of local creative talent and an apparent lack of verisimilitude in its radio drama, stressing the need for accessibility and mainstream appeal. Moreover, ILR stations produced a more substantial body of work than previously assumed and production even continued sporadically after deregulation. Naturally, without a command economy structure, what was possible in terms of fiction depended upon revenue, the will of programme producers and a delicate regulatory balancing act.

Proceeding on the basis that drama is a useful gauge of quality and legitimacy which coheres public service ideals with entertainment, the issues presented in this introductory chapter concern the establishment of what we would now term a social enterprise. Considering the difficult choices presented by the possible elimination of the licence fee and consequent fears over the abandonment of public service values, there is a case for the investigation and analysis of commercial radio drama. As a social practice, ILR fiction can be said to produce emergent properties of identity formation/affirmation, cultural orientation and belonging. Comedy in particular appears to have produced strong characterisations with authentic vernacular speech. Since there are no easy answers to the question of how to pay for our cultural institutions that are so expressive of British democracy, ILR's dramatic output is tentatively offered as a demonstrated hybrid commercial model for the arts.

The next chapter concerns the underpinning research methodology used to select and explore programmes and to determine how far vernacular culture and regional identity acted as hallmarks of ILR drama and fiction. Next, we will explore some conceptual and theoretical

matters to develop an understanding of how verisimilitude and authenticity in dialogue and performance acted as an expression of renewal and revitalisation in radio drama. The programme case study selection is also presented with a discussion on the use of sound and written archives to support evidence regarding ILR's impact on the BBC, what typified ILR drama and what made it distinctive compared with contemporaneous BBC radio drama. Memory is an additional concern as we consider former practitioner accounts of working practices.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Sound Archives

Broadcasting history research has its own unique set of challenges which have been dealt with in a variety of ways. This chapter will evaluate a range of methods and discuss how they have been synthesised and applied to form a perspective on what typified ILR drama and what made it distinctive compared with contemporaneous BBC radio drama. Taking Hendy's (2007) approach, this project consists of archival research,[48] institutional memorandums, an analysis of case studies from ILR's fictional canon and assessments of the personal experiences of former ILR practitioners. These are combined with institutional histories of the culture, policy and governance surrounding the sector. The period from 1973 to 1990 encompasses ILR up to the point of deregulation. It is necessary to consider the years preceding this period to illustrate the effect of regulatory matters and developments in radio drama leading into ILR's inception. We shall also consider the sector post-deregulation, the effects of which were not immediate for drama since IRDP remained active during the 1990s up to 2002. A key case study presented in chapter five; *Farewell Little Girl* (1993) was broadcast on LBC well into the sector's deregulated era.

Crisell (1994) provides the distinctions required to help define the fictional output of ILR. He refers to radio drama in "applied form - as an element in commercials, trailers, comedy shows and features – and in 'characterized readings': narratives or storytellings" (Crisell 1994, p.146). These are helpful ideas to better delineate ILR's forms of fictional output, ranging from straight

[48] The IBA/RA archive is held at Bournemouth University. The BBC Written Archive Centre is in Caversham.

drama, situation and sketch comedy, single voice monologues and readings. The term 'fiction' is used here in an all-encompassing way and is divided into two broad categories: serious drama, and comedy in the form of situation-comedy and sketches. However 'drama' is reserved in this thesis to refer with specificity to serious plays, serials and soap operas, many of which were also formatted like comedy into short form commercial-length 'sketches', and were often shorter than Radio Four's *The Archers* (1951).

Having been a listener of ILR fiction, resuming the role of audience member sits parallel to my primary role as researcher. The impetus of this research project is the product of listening during my own formative years which have shaped certain cognitive responses, requiring an application of reflective practice. Street (2015) asks profound questions regarding the listening and *relistening* experiences, not just to the sound itself, but the acoustical environment heard at key times in our lives. He describes the purpose of his 2013 survey as a "time machine to unlock other experiences and peripheral sound memories" which "open up lost avenues of personal histories" (Street 2015, p.159). The importance of this cannot be overstated and constitutes our first methodological concern as both a source of inspiration and potential personal bias. Regional identity is also embedded into the listening experience. Dramas made specifically for a local area are shown to have unique and familiar properties that do not necessarily make the intended impression on extraregional listeners characterised by Larson (1995) as a 'surrogate community'.

The synchronic and diachronic contexts in which listening took place have a bearing on how the case studies are analysed. Contemporaneous ILR audiences[49] discovered new drama,

[49] One further point of caution is that the reading of scripts in lieu of access would provide an incomplete picture, since the programme analyses require an application of key concepts in radio drama studies. Recordings are therefore essential.

piecemeal, over many years. But today, these plays are available instantaneously, time-shifted outside the context of a typical daily schedule, forming a complete oeuvre, codified in time. The relative recency of these dramas is beneficial especially since many of the dramatists and producers are still living and despite being written within the pre-internet epistemes of the 1970s and 1980s, the selected case studies are not wholly disconnected from the present. Some dramas are dated and would clearly receive an unintended reaction from modern audiences. *Hassan* (1983)[50] adapted by Roger Harvey for Metro Radio would now be regarded as highly clichéd with a forced 'Arabian Nights' representation of middle eastern cultures and characterisations. Analyses of such case studies deserve an appreciation of the context of production with the benefit of modern perspectives, without straying into the unreceptive extremes of current progressivism.

Bearing in mind that archival access was unavailable during the Government mandated lockdowns during the pandemic of 2020/21, listening in the British Library's sound archive years after initial broadcast, during a compressed time period, presents a different listening experience and mindset than dramatists intended. Bull (2000) discusses the technological auditory situation one inhabits as a commuter, removing oneself socially, passively signalled by the use of headphones. McMurtry explains that a listener "sustains two realities, the mundane, predictable visual one and the more intimate, adventurous aural/cognitive one, at the same time" (2019, p.54). But the notion of being 'elsewhere' within a public place when listening with personal headphones is significant, simply by virtue of not being in the home/car or work environment in which ILR drama was originally experienced. An additional concern is recording quality and the original mode of transmission. Although ILR stations could operate

[50] This was an adaptation from the 1922 stage play by James Elroy Flecker. *Hassan* was also adapted by the BBC in 1925 and was raised as an example during a period of debate regarding the most appropriate duration of radio play (Pepler 1988).

effectively on Medium Wave, the general expectation was to listen in VHF. But productions and off-air recordings may not necessarily be in stereo, meaning that fidelity to the original transmission quality varies across the range of programmes listened to.[51]

The disparate plurality of ILR programme archives is a consequence of the sector's independent nature. The range of stations, each with differing working practices meant an informal, decentralised approach to programme retention. ILR's fictional canon survived by virtue of repeat broadcasts and through AIRC's Programme Sharing Scheme which was established to exchange high quality content around the network (Street 2002). Bournemouth University's Centre for Broadcasting History established the Independent Radio Sharing Archive,[52] the LBC/Independent Radio News Archive and the ILR South Archive which contains a proportion of the material used in this thesis. This research has benefitted from the growing availability of rediscovered programmes within current digitisation programmes. IRDP's programmes are available for listening at the British Library. Piccadilly Radio's drama and comedy archive, some of which is cited here, is currently being digitized at Manchester Central Library's Archives+ Centre as part of the British Library's *Save our Sounds*[53] initiative. The wider *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage*[54] project will include other ILR station archives and will gradually form *The National Radio Archive*. Other repositories exist elsewhere around the regions, with a representative number of recordings preserved in various personal archives of ILR practitioners[55] around the UK, some of which were made available during this research.[56]

[51] I have restored and remastered off-air recordings from my own archive for use here.
[52] This archival project was done with assistance from The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).
[53] More information can be found at: https://support.bl.uk/Page/Save-our-sounds.
[54] More information can be found at: https://www.bl.uk/projects/unlocking-our-sound-heritage.
[55] It is inevitable that potentially illustrative case studies will emerge during and after this project. It may be necessary to consider how far newly available case studies may or may not change the parameters of the thesis as it progresses.
[56] These recordings also required digitising and restoration from the original analogue media.

The programme selection criteria consist of year, locale, and approaches to genre and narrative. These are pragmatic choices to ensure as comprehensive coverage as possible. By encompassing the entire lifespan of drama on commercial radio, we may consider the growth, change and maturation of the sector's fictional output; style and tone exhibiting an increasingly informal delivery, with confident and original expressions and a lessening reverence to existing dramatic forms of genre and narrative. The time-period in question lasts for a minimum period of sixteen years but stretches further as IRDP continued to produce drama into the 1990s. Secondly, the selection is limited to productive regions rather than whole United Kingdom. Drama and other forms of fiction were not viable for smaller ILR stations, many choosing to opt-in to the Programme Sharing Scheme. The remaining ILR fictional canon also contains a number of interesting approaches in genre and narrative structure which diverge from the BBC.

Another consideration was to pay attention to miscellaneous plays that made a particular sociocultural or political impact, or perhaps the work of an author, producer or company of significance.[57] Such dramaturgical considerations could for instance be expressed as a form of social commentary through characters, or a scenario that is in some way reflective of the political climate. Realistically, the selection of case studies will not neatly line up with contemporaneous events, nor will the selection exhibit a simplistic cause-and-effect relationship with political developments. It is however reasonable to expect plays to reflect something of the cultural zeitgeist during their production. It is desirable find those wider cultural connections in terms of style, tone, and audience expectation, given the availability of programmes in the archive. Some programmes like Radio City's *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) are cited throughout this thesis but do not formally appear in the case study chapter due

[57] There are several noteworthy, award-winning programmes made by IRDP for LBC and also by Ralph Bernard at Radio Hallam.

to a lack of availability of full episodes. Some productions lack scope for analysis and there are some sizable chronological gaps in current available archives, for instance, there is an approximate four-year gap between Capital Radio's *Honey Adair* (1973) and Radio Hallam's *Dying for a Drink* (1978).[58] However the pace picks up during the 1980s.

Incidentally, not all works of fiction listed in each of the Independent Radio archives are listed precisely, some with incomplete metadata. This required a degree of guesswork as to the origin of certain productions. There are four plays listed as LBC productions, which did in fact originate at Radio City in Merseyside, with at least one being written by the playwright Willie Russell. Bearing in mind that since a good number of these plays exist as a result of the Programme Sharing Scheme, the listed stations are where tapes likely ended up and not necessarily where the production took place.

It is also prudent to ensure the case study analyses are mindful of key concepts in theatre and drama. Textual hypotheses, performance, production and critical responses are transferrable as long as they stay within the conceptual parameters of radio studies. It is also necessary to consider the dramatist's need to express wider dramaturgical concerns like morals, messages, values and representations of people and places. But such motivations may be in tension with the needs and expectations of station owners since the commissioning of original plays had economic implications for programme directors. In conversation with former ILR producers, adaptations were an appealing cost-effective solution. This tendency to err towards faithful renditions of classic literature, rather than contemporary reinterpretations leaves little room for a comprehensive analysis beyond production technique and performance. It is therefore

[58] Kenny Everett's recurring comedy series *Captain Kremmen* began on Capital Radio in 1974. It was based on his earlier recurring sketch on Radio London.

important to ensure the inclusion of original plays that provide the opportunity for a broader investigation and analysis. The research process also revealed that single voice monologues or 'talking head' style dramas were common for ILR, providing an opportunity to make a close analysis of performance and the voice of the writer. One point to note is that book readings by their nature offer a limited scope for analysis when compared with original work made specifically for radio. Readings, despite being cost-effective for ILR imply a lack of aurality beyond the radiogenic qualities of the voice.

A criticism of ILR drama was its inability to match the creative prowess of the BBC. But there are examples of productions where directors did work with ambition, producing significant work despite technical or financial restrictions. Additionally, situation comedy was a particular strength across ILR stations and deserves consideration in its own right. Short form weekly comedy sketches (particularly from Piccadilly Radio) represent an extensive amount of work across their entire run. In these cases, the analysis of a key episode is supported with an overview of the series as whole.

2.2 Written Archives

Another consideration is how the new dynamic of ILR providing fictional output affected drama at the BBC and the respective working practices and production values across both sectors. Wray (2009) is the first doctoral thesis to make use of the IBA (Radio Division) archive, which has been made easier to traverse with a searchable spreadsheet provided by

Ofcom that outlines every file, numerical classification and section.[59] This research was simplified further with the assistance of staff at Bournemouth University who consulted the database in advance to select relevant documents and arrange for their advance transportation from the archive. Similarly at the BBC Written Archive Centre at Caversham, once an inquiry regarding research parameters is made with an archivist, the researcher is presented with a relevant selection of folio-bound documents that are subject to a number of legal and ethical caveats. As McDonald (2014) observes, historical sources are inherently restrictive and confined within institutional control. A significant number of clauses prohibit the release of some BBC documents. For instance, the BBC's own oral history project contains confidential recordings of former staff recollections. Pre-existing interview recordings are also available from a range of sources; the BBC, the British Library's *Listening Project* and BECTU's[60] *History Project* available at the BFI. This section of the research process had the effect of focussing solely upon an institutional perspective which risks affecting interpretations. For instance, as will be elaborated later, internal BBC memos show with some consistency a concern over ILR drama and a feeling that the local radio network should take the initiative and match their dramatic output. It is important to acknowledge the influence of this choice of material, since there is a tendency amongst academics to overstate reasons, make causal links or to lapse into the insignificant and incidental when translating research into evidence (Corner 2003). In addition, the BBC's records are not always precise and thorough, requiring additional research sources to provide a fuller picture.

[59] The archive consists of letters, reports, minutes, memoranda, policy documents, complaints and government papers. It is divided into the following general sections: IBA General; ITA; IBA Radio Division; Radio Authority. Subject areas are then listed such as: IBA's response to the White Paper; Complaints; Station Reports (Wray 2009).
[60] The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Technicians Union. It changed its name to the present form: The Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union.

2.3 Interviewees & Correspondence

This thesis draws upon newer approaches to history which advocate the use of biography and witness testimony from employees and middle management as significant 'cultural actors' (Mayer et al. 2009). Such approaches seek personal responses regarding the feelings of practitioners based on the principle that subjectivity plays a hand in shaping matters of business, regulation and of course the creative process of developing drama.

The passage of time is also illustrated by the changing forms of radio fiction and recounted experiences of practitioners and the personal meanings behind them.[61] Seaton (2015) proposes that interviews 'animate' archival material and provide an authentic idea of lived experiences, whilst Arendt (1956) proposed that participants in history do not receive the entire story, which places the historian in a detached, but advantageous position. Corner advocates the use of imagination when arranging such elements into a narrative because of the "troubled and challenging" process of organising data (2003, p.274). Bruner (1987) also favoured a narrative presentation to reconcile potentially ambiguous and complex discourses. The accumulation of these approaches allows for the formation of a biographical account of ILR drama's history. A degree of interpretation is required to consider the quality of the feedback gathered from interviewees, since these are varied individual perspectives. As interviewer, the historian plays a part in shaping testimony, through dialogue and co-construction (Etherington 2004, p.81), but as narrator, there is a duty to re-present evidence whilst preserving the integrity of an interviewee's stories. Accuracy is dependent upon the consistency of these biographical

[61] Corner (1998, p.148) describes a "multi-faceted, multifarious" structure composed of; "intentions, aims, purposes, policies, organisational frameworks, modes of operation, professional values and funding".

accounts, balanced with the need to speak freely with due confidentiality in line with ethical practice.

The nineteen contributors, many of whom are now retired, consist of mainly former ILR[62] employees. Some BBC staff were also consulted and, in most cases, ILR staff also worked for the BBC. Since ILR employment structures did not mirror the BBC, job roles are not as well-defined.

Only two women agreed to correspond, a likely consequence of the homophily effect examined by Williamson and Kolek (2021).[63] Initially, interviews with practitioners were intended to be face-to-face. Covid-19 necessitated a change to the interview process. I favoured video conferencing, but communication tended towards email correspondence. Piers Plowright and Hamish Wilson of Radio Clyde both died before additional communication could take place. The interviews were structured conversations, meaning direct and open questions referencing points of discussion, the line of questioning broadly concerning their experiences in ILR and approaches to the production process. Two interviews were recorded and two were memorialised as notes. The key contributors were Ralph Bernard CBE, who produced *Dying for a Drink* (1978) at Radio Hallam in Sheffield, which made a notable impact and was raised in Parliament; Edward Chisnall who wrote the long running series *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) at Radio Clyde in Glasgow; the writer/producer Roger Harvey from Metro Radio; Tony Stoller head of the Radio Authority and Tim Crook and Richard Shannon of IRDP who serviced Capital Radio and LBC from 1987 onwards.

[62] This also includes BBC staff for comparison.
[63] See page 37.

Name	Role	Organisation	Communication type
Bernard Ralph	Producer/Writer	ILR	Interview – not recorded
Cardy Jean, wife of John Cardy [Deceased]	Director	BBC	Correspondence
Chisnall Edward	Writer	ILR/BBC	Correspondence
Crook Tim	Director/Producer	ILR	Correspondence
Duarte Tony	Writer	ILR	Correspondence
Dunne David	Producer	ILR	Correspondence
Harvey Roger	Director/Producer	ILR	Correspondence
Griffin Gordon	Actor	ILE/BBC	Correspondence
MacCalman John	Producer/Studio Manager/Presenter	ILR	Correspondence
Macdonald Spence	Producer/Presenter	Piccadilly, BBC	Correspondence
Monk Stuart	Producer	Capital Radio	Correspondence
Owen Alistair	Studio Manager	Radio Clyde	Correspondence
Piper Roger	Engineer	Capital Radio	Correspondence
Plowright Piers	Director/Producer/Writer	BBC	Correspondence
Reynolds Gillian	Station Manager	ILR	Correspondence
Shannon Richard	Director/Producer	ILR/BBC	Interview
Stoller Tony	Regulator/Station Manager	Radio Authority/ILR	Interview
Street Sean	Director/Producer/Writer	ILR/BBC	Interview – not recorded
Wood Roger	Academic	DeMontfort University	Correspondence

Figure 1: Table of contributors.

2.4 Memory

When creating scenarios and character archetypes, the dramatist draws upon the imagination and also the memory of cultural forms. Street (2015) describes how the storyteller engages with *place*; the grain, timbre and dialect of the voice containing a memory of streets, towns, neighbourhoods and regions. Personally speaking as author, listening to Piccadilly's *The Bradshaws* (1983) and *Radio Timperley/Frank's World* actually inspired this thesis. My own collection of off-air recordings triggered certain nostalgic auditory responses which appear to have been bound to the senses. The reappearance of my childhood bedroom in which listening took place, the tactile response of the record and play buttons on the cassette recorder and the familiar signature cues and character voices, all internalised for decades, reawakening as they are reheard.

As Street[64] observes, stories are a conduit of memory and how memory should be considered in relation to the media raises important political and ethical questions. Of particular concern is the application of vernacular speech and culture to ILR drama coupled with an assessment

[64] Ibid.

of the experiences and legacy of its dramatists, both of which are subject to certain considerations regarding memory. Memory of course pertains to participant recollections, but it also applies to the collective memory of vernacular culture as a source of inspiration to regional dramatists. The conceptual and theoretical chapter will consider the validity of characterising ILR dramatists as 'memory agents' in the context of Halbwachs (2020) *mémoire collective* as a social construct to preserve and perpetuate meaning in much the same way as the folktale forms part of oral tradition. Kitch (2008) discusses this from the perspective of journalism and how it acts as a mechanism with which to create narratives, affirm identity and in writing the first draft of history, should be considered a ritualistic process of memory formation. She expands beyond journalism to elaborate on the intertextual nature of memory formation, which allows for a compatibility with our interest in radio drama. In other words, a dialogism of factors converges in the process of cultural memory formation, which for our purposes refers to diegeses, characters, also changes over time to both broadcasting, scholarly approaches to history and a range of interviewees and written archival accounts. This raises the question as to how far the shared collective experiences of a local co-present[65] radio audience in the 1970s and 1980s might constitute a form of 'mediated' memory (Kitch 2008, p.312).

Neiger et al. (2011) raise questions regarding the media's role in shaping collective identities,[66] asking who has the right to narrate collective stories about the past. They question the media's source of authority to operate as memory agents (Bosch 2016). Chignell (2009) references Hilmes (1997) to describe American radio's ambition of cultural unity by overcoming "huge social, ethnic, linguistic and geographical divisions" (2009, p.82). Conversely, Anderson's

[65] The conceptual and theorical chapter will discuss co-presence and how the presentation and atypical approach to fiction on ILR meant that aspects of radio like intimacy (Crisell 1994), companionship (Shingler and Wieringa 1998) and mode of address, can be applicable to drama.
[66] They are chiefly concerned with serious matters like international conflict and societal transition.

(2006) 'imagined community' is of use in demonstrating a process of regional unification through exposure to local media, which may or may not imply an inverse national disunification. It is important to recognise these ideas in relation to ILR fiction which in its own small way contributed to a reversal of sorts, promoting regionhood perhaps at the expense of nationhood.

Elliott (2005) and Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) discuss how a sociocultural interpretation may be derived from a qualitative analysis of interviewee recollections and correspondence. Elliott underscores the requirement for a "dense, detailed, and contextualized description" by extending "empathy towards an imaginative reconstruction" of research subject experiences (2005, p.37). There are limitations to this type of research which is reliant on the contributor's cooperation, availability and willingness to share information. This extends into the literature review (contained in chapter three) by considering institutional histories with regards to biographical experiences. There are potential problems with the use of memoirs[67] one of which is a need to detect and filter self-serving conclusions, nostalgia or anecdotal assertions. As stated earlier, authorised works may be officiously or legally filtered and remain incomplete when subject to non-disclosure agreements.

2.5 Ethics and biases

There is a potential for unconscious or implicit bias since one's own internalized schemas may risk an objective analysis (Bem 1981). It is necessary to employ strategies to correct the

[67] McGuigan advocates such a structural approach, which is "multidimensional in methodology" (2004, p.7) as does Halloran (1998) who encourages the historian to adopt a multifaceted plurality of methodologies, rather than a single source to verify and justify assertions.

prevalence of gender-bias in language choice (Lindqvist et al. 2019). The difficulty in avoiding a history of ILR drama skewed by a male Caucasian perspective is compounded by the historical fact that the ILR sector was dominated by the same demographic profile (Ofcom 2021). It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to provide an entirely accurate analysis of the lived experiences and iniquities of women and minorities (Pritlove et al. 2019). In lieu of precision, is necessary to point out how the history is exclusionary and to ensure diversity is highlighted where found. It is also important to recognise how the case studies themselves may contain bias or outdated views.[68]

It is also acknowledged that one's personal bias is usually favourable to the BBC and its public service remit, with some misgivings concerning the influence of market forces over commissioning choices. The case studies have served as a corrective with numerous examples of purposeful drama demonstrating social gain, intelligence and depth, whilst carrying legitimacy and validity as works of fiction. There is also a potential for the lens of professional identity to influence questions asked and conclusions drawn; being overly theoretical at the expense of learning about lived experiences and the reality of employment in the sector (Saunders 2018). Additionally, personal and professional connections to the media industry may foster a latent partisan mindset. Dolan (2003) warns of the possibility of institutionally sanctioned use of written archives impairing the veracity of one's research. The main source of material in Briggs' (1965) institutional chronological history came from unfettered access to internal BBC records although in lesser hands, his favoured cause and effect approach to policy procedure and governance could risk partiality.[69] This research has taken place

[68] *Spare Rib* magazine (1972) contains some potentially helpful reviews of local BBC radio drama by noted feminist dramatists, but the British Library's online repository of the magazine is no longer available as a consequence of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.
[69] This was also demonstrated by critical reactions to Seaton (2015).

externally to the BBC and the wider radio industry without undue influence from contacts, mitigating potential bias.

Waterfield (2018) discusses the interview experience and the way they are conducted. The researcher has a high degree of control over the choice of contributors, the questions asked, the programme selection process and the parameters and circumstances of the interview. Moreover, location, tone of voice, facial and non-verbal expressions may all have an effect in terms of accuracy on the responses gathered. Covid-19 resulted in a switch to online communication with non-face to face interviews. The identity of the interviewer may also be a factor. In terms of *perceived identity,* Waterfield says:

> …sex, ethnicity, age, attractiveness, social class, level of education, perceived life experience, or professional background may affect how participants respond to questions. Linked to this is the interviewer's ability to establish a rapport with the interviewee; disclosure, especially on personal or sensitive topics, may relate strongly.[70]

For the researcher, removed by decades, it is important to be aware that a subject's recollections are likely to have some emotional resonance. Certain sensitive issues with the potential for embarrassment or controversy require a degree of finesse when posing questions and drawing conclusions.

Since this area of radio has been overlooked historically, and given that there was no specific requirement for drama enshrined in the remit, it is necessary to search the institutional archives to find evidence where the production of fiction was expressly indicated. Moreover, due to the scarcity of material concerning ILR drama, it is sensible to interview as many willing

[70] (Waterfield 2018, p.872).

participants as possible, then curate the responses. Of course, this is restricted by availability and willingness to participate. As we have seen, the interview sample emphasises, but is not restricted to, individuals involved in programmes referred to throughout the thesis. Having established the methods and approach taken in this research project, chapter three explores theoretical matters and conceptual ideas to form a perspective on what typified ILR drama in comparison to contemporaneous BBC radio drama.

Chapter 3: Thematic concerns in ILR drama

3.1 Literature Review

This chapter will explore the ideas, themes and terminology which form the underpinning conceptual foundation of this thesis. This introductory section also incorporates a discussion of the relatively small amount of literature focussing on radio drama. Until recently, there was only one published text focussed solely on ILR (Baron 1975) followed by a very insightful underpinning chapter on ILR drama by Murdoch (1981). Thankfully academic research into the ILR years has now taken place by Stoller (2010b), Wray (2009) and Starkey (2011). Additionally, new contributions to radio drama by Chignell (2019), Crook (1999), McMurtry (2019) and Verma (2012) with a growing number of academic papers, move beyond early texts to provide a sophisticated and nuanced set of discourses on radio drama. The literature can be delineated into texts concerning history, regulatory policy and theoretical concerns beginning with Arnheim's (1936) foundational work, later applied to drama by Crisell (1994) and Crook (1999, 2020). This is an opportunity to apply these key theoretical concepts in radio studies to a largely unexplored and underreported body of radio fiction and to consider how far they compare to the BBC and other established sources of radio drama.

Hendy's multiple texts (2007, 2017, 2018; 2022) provide a series of highly useful observations that underpin this research, mainly; his discussion of the inclusion of vernacular speech radio from the BBC's North Region in the 1930s, and the later perception of Radio Four's drama output during the early 1970s. He explains how programming that reflected individual communities was consequently at odds with the BBC's designs for a single 'national

community'. This ethos was expressed by North Region producer Yvonne Adamson: "every listener will be my boss and customer… it was my job often to reflect their lives and the life of the region as a whole" (Hendy 2018). Nationally, the BBC functioned with an air of paternalist authority, but its practitioners at North Region remained highly cognisant of their obligations to deliver content to the whole of the north and were consequently as outward reaching as possible in order to represent and reflect towns and cities across the north of England up to Scotland.

> …it was also North Region, more than any other, which developed a distinctive character and style. As the BBC's "National Programme" from London became increasingly stodgy in tone, it was the North that best reflected working-class life in all its variety and richness.[71]

One of Hendy's (2007) most consequential observations for ILR drama in the 1970s concerned productions featuring The Radio Drama Company (RDC), the BBC's own long-established internal repertory group of actors, referred to internally as 'The Rep'. He relates misgivings during the early to mid-1970s regarding overly theatrical, declamatory performances, which were arguably an unintended consequence of actors articulating and projecting their sense of legitimacy and authority as thespians. BBC Review Board minutes from 1976 reveal a nervousness felt in both the Drama and Light Entertainment departments by those who knew such criticisms were valid. The remnants of Gielgud's time became a 'millstone' around the BBC's neck according to Clery (1964) and the consensus both inside and outside of the corporation regarded Radio Four drama as 'jaded', 'predictable' and 'wearing thin' (Hendy 2007, p.185). Review board minutes and press commentary reveal feelings of concern with RDC performances which were perceived as lacking authenticity. Contrastingly, the Features

[71] (Hendy 2018).

Department was unencumbered in this way. As Hendy states, Gielgud was scathing of the sort of 'ordinariness' depicted in *Mrs Dale's Diary* (1948) and *The Archers* (1951) which were "lower than beasts that perish" (cited by Hendy 2022, p.398) and it is reasonable to surmise that his legacy lasted well into Martin Esslin's stewardship given the prevalence of entrenched habits and inherited traditions. It is tempting to simply lay the blame on the RDC, but BBC radio drama's decline in popularity was more complex, especially considering the entwined fates of both The Drama Department and The Light Entertainment Department. The failings of Radio Four drama cannot be entirely Gielgud's fault either, he tolerated avant-garde productions in his own department.

> …they (the BBC rep) were merely the put-upon symbols of a more general failure in radio drama: a failure to fully shake off the conventions of non-realism which had prevailed in the 1940s and 1950s.[72]

But ILR's contrasting approaches highlight a wider difficulty in reform at the BBC with the vestiges of linguistic authoritarianism still detectable in BBC drama. Hendy (2007) cites a persistent desire to look backwards with fixed programme formulae, ideal conditions then for an alternative approach from the commercial sector.

It is interesting to observe how the ILR era coincided with a growth in texts on radio drama; Ash (1985), Drakakis (1981), Evans (1977), Lewis (1981) and Rodger (1982). Hendy (2007) observes a renewed interest in radio drama and a growth in unsolicited script submissions during the 1970s. The increase in opportunity served to benefit ILR and regional talent. He expands upon this by showing how authors new to the medium were discovered[73] via regional

[72] (Hendy 2007, p.204)
[73] "*Afternoon Theatre* carried plays written by, among others, a probation officer, a gardener at Kew, a Dorset farmer, an Uxbridge factory worker, and several teachers. By 1978, one in four editions was a 'first play'." (Hendy 2007, p.214)

or fringe theatres and competitions through the influx of scripts at Broadcasting House and at BBC Leeds.

> Some debuts were, as it delicately put it, 'not quite up to the usual professional standards'. But a less-than-perfect first story or play was deemed worthwhile whenever a writer merited 'encouragement'. This was the kind of patronage that helped secure for BBC Radio the status of being the largest single commissioner of dramatic work in Britain—and, some claimed, the world. If nothing else, the Drama department could claim that if it ever ceased to exist, a very large number of writers would never get their careers off the ground and would consequently be lost to the national culture.[74]

The approaches taken by ILR's key dramatists ostensibly led to a significant response in local BBC, the Drama and Light Entertainment Departments, and in regulatory policy for independent radio. Consequently, the BBC redoubled its efforts to foster new talent, some of whom gravitated to ILR and applied their experience and understanding of fiction as former listeners and increasingly embraced regional vernacular and naturalistic accents. In discussing the successes of The Light Entertainment Department, Hendy provides commonalities also applicable to Radio City and Piccadilly Radio, describing how *The Burkiss Way* (1976) "grew by word of mouth rather than official publicity, a language of its own that could be shared among fans, and a preparedness to exclude through provocation and obscurantism those who simply 'did not get it'" (Hendy 2007, p.190), observations that will be revisited later in chapter five. As of 1980, the BBC was receiving approximately ten-thousand spec submissions, most of which were not of an appropriate standard for what was the UK's "National Theatre of the Air".[75] The previous arrangement between Reith's BBC and its exclusive roster of authors would have, at the very least, protected the corporation from an unmanageable deluge of unsolicited script proposals.

[74] (Hendy 2007, p.214).
[75] This term is either attributed to RE Jeffrey, the BBC's first Head of Drama (Hendy 2007, p.217), or to JC Trewin the drama critic (Wade 1980a, p219). It was later used as the title of a drama strand on the Home Service starting in 1961 (BBC Genome).

Baron (1975) is an early text which provides a cursory overview of the independent sector's beginnings, which were later covered in more detail by Street (2002, 2006) and Stoller (2010b). This is a factual, narrative-based work without analysis and since it was published so soon after the sector's formation, it does not provide a full account of the sector beyond its initial growth. Contrastingly, Murdoch (1981) provides a rare and lengthy assessment of ILR drama which is primarily an analysis of the economic barriers to production, followed by an assessment of audience divisions along social and cultural lines. Murdock makes use of Bourdieu (1977) who addressed the link between class status and the ability to 'read' and appreciate cultural artefacts. The frames of reference passed down within the family, or 'habitus', are foundational to the audience's degree of interpretation, in this case, radio drama falling somewhere between popularist entertainment with wide appeal and sophisticated, perhaps avant-garde, productions. Chapter five examines ILR programmes which require increasingly urbane levels of cultural capital. It is important to again recognise that a natural assumption that interprets vernacular culture expressed through ILR as 'popularist' and BBC drama as 'highbrow' is inaccurate, despite the policy of station streaming by category and expectations for individual programme strands.

Murdoch (1981) provides an early and comprehensive perspective on ILR drama which has been highly formative of this thesis. His chapter serves as an underpinning basis for a discussion on ILR's budgetary challenges and the subsequent effect on station content. It also provides useful information to highlight and distinguish ILR's production processes from the BBC. He provides listening figures from 1977 to 1978 which make comparisons of audience sizes for drama between other forms of media, most notably BBC network radio's provision of over 1000 hours of drama, exceeding that of all British television. 90% of these hours were

commissioned by Radio 4 and Radio 3. He cites Imison's observation that the average audience broadcasts of *Saturday Night Theatre* (1943), which by the early 1980s totalled around 500,000 listeners, would "fill a fair-sized West End theatre for ten years" (Murdoch 1981, p.144). Esslin reasoned that if radio drama required an extra degree of concentration and commitment from listeners, then listeners needed "an absolutely regular diet of drama so that they shall always be familiar with it" (cited Hendy 2007 p.217). Murdoch illustrates how even 50,000 listeners of an avant-garde play on Radio 3 would "be sufficient to make a serious modern novel into a modest best-seller" (1981, p.144). These numbers would suggest that the audience for ILR dramas, even on a smaller localised scale, would be substantial enough to at least match, or more likely exceed local community theatre. Murdoch only goes so far in his analysis, concluding in 1981. He was also interested in plays which were either commissioned and promoted or excluded, and recommended further research into how submitted scripts were treated, rejected, or perhaps commissioned but never produced. It is hoped that this research goes some way in addressing these suggestions.

Although radio has been neglected by broadcasting historians historically, there has always been an intellectual interest in the field of radio drama since its inception. Despite the relatively late arrival of radio as an academic discipline (Lacey 2008), the study of sound in film is also a well-established field. Radio drama's propinquity with literature, theatre, film and television attracted early scholarly analysis and research[76] from the likes of Arnheim (1936), Felton (1949), Lazarsfeld (1940, 1948)[77] and McWhinnie (1959). The Radio Times (1929) also

[76] Previous analyses of radio drama consist of theories pertaining to narrative, genre, performance, theatre structure and specialised theory developed specifically for the sound medium, some of which are: Altman (1992), Ash (1980), Drakakis (1981), Esslin (1969, 1970), Evans (1977), Gielgud (1946, 1950, 1957), Khan et al. (1992), Kittler (1983), Lazarsfeld (1948), Lewis (1981) and Rodger (1982).

[77] These works are primarily sociological, based on audience research and not specifically concerned with radio drama but provide an interesting underpinning perspective.

published early analytical articles about the nature of radio drama.[78] That is not to say older texts remain valid; there is a clear temporal divide. Val Gielgud's four texts on radio drama, which were once conventionally accepted as definitive, contain personal views and despite his pioneering role, are limited in comparison to current standards in radio drama research (Wood 2008). Wood warns of Briggs' (1980) uncritical reliance upon Gielgud's perspective, elevating it to privileged prominence, constituting a received history which he argues served to distort the narrative around the development of British radio drama. Beck (2000b) and Crook (1999) have also discussed the problems arising from such uncritical endorsement. Most published works are by practitioners, with a good proportion being scripts and guides to scriptwriting technique.[79] Wood (2008) argued that most texts lacked a consensus as to radio's potential as an artform and a discreet medium, something which has now been addressed in modern texts. This literature review is also supported by a broader historical context concerning the socio-political mores of the 1970s and 1980s (Sandbrook 2011, 2013; Black et al. 2016) to inform an understanding of the circumstances of programme production and regulation.

Stoller (2010b) provides a thorough step-by-step analysis of the creation and lifespan of ILR and the activities of AIRC. This inside history shows the rationale behind the regulatory steps taken in ILR's conception and growth, as well as the subsequent countermeasures taken by station proprietors. Although the broad scope taken by Stoller[80] does not provide a view on fictional programming, it does provide enough information from which we may extrapolate a great deal. As Chief Executive of the Radio Authority,[81] then a senior member of AIRC and subsequently the managing director of Radio 210 which broadcast to Thames Valley and North

[78] The BBC's Genome archive provides a number of articles that explored the new dramatic medium.
[79] Gielgud himself authored a series of books encouraging the prospective writer to make use of the medium's radiogenic qualities.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Beginning in 1995.

Hampshire, he was uniquely suited to write this history. Although there is always a possibility for unconscious or implicit bias with someone so involved at this level in the industry and its eventual deregulation (Allen 2011), its thoroughness would appear to allay such concerns.

Stoller (2010b, p.40) reminds the reader that ILR started as a typically British experiment in broadcasting and as such was unique and unusual compared with broadcasting models throughout the rest of the world. A decidedly uncommercial approach, ILR was intended to be a force for good, converting advertising revenue into public service programming. The provision of drama as with other worthwhile programming was simply a matter of course to the IBA and would be funded by a levy on station profits. But the dismantling of social liberalism in favour of free market commercialism and the increasing commercial freedoms of the eighties were not experienced by the struggling ILR sector, still in recession. AIRC was increasingly embittered with making levy payments which at that point were in excess of £13 million per year.[82] With misgivings, the IBA managed to relax its grip slightly to allow some mergers and takeovers of stations in financial difficulty. Stoller[83] explains that by the mid-eighties, the IBA received regular requests to defer payments. Initially, AIRC campaigned for an overall reduction of the levy by 25%, but by 1983 the request had reduced to a modest 10%. In May of 1984, the authority deferred payments "for Marcher Sound, Radio West and Radio Aire" (2010b, p.142).

One of the most interesting aspects at this point in Stoller's (2010b) history is the characterisation of individuals within AIRC. He describes station owners as tribal, individualistic, adopting a protectionist stance, goading the IBA with a level of animosity that

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

matched the rancour of the trade unions. The most significant point of interest at this time was the so-called 'Heathrow Conference' out of which came the resolution that would lead to the end of drama production. AIRC convened at the Sheraton Heathrow on June 23, 1984. According to Stoller, the fateful meeting was as expected; intense, filled with emotional bluster and frustration, requiring moderation and mediation, which made the fast pace of accord and agreement all the more remarkable. Stoller describes the conference and its eight points of contention. AIRC became increasingly concerned with the movement towards new national independent radio services and the potential impact this would have upon the existing ILR system. There was concern that funds raised by the levy would be used for the construction of new transmitters for said services – it was necessary for AIRC to secure a *substantial* reduction in IBA rental fees. They complained that they should be able to trade with the same degree of freedom as any other commercial organisation. They wanted minimal interference in advertising restrictions and for the IBA to acknowledge the differences between radio and television marketing. AIRC also sought a relaxation of the controls that prevented ILR from taking advantage of sponsorship opportunities.

As Stoller (2010b) points out, such reductions would be in line with similar controls that were becoming apparent for cable television and other new forms of broadcasting in the pipeline. And most significantly, they questioned the relevance of the IBA, challenging the effectiveness of the regulator. Their role at that point was not as broadcasters in their own right, but as contractors providing services to the IBA. Stoller explains that AIRC was not merely satisfied with simply expressing frustration through confrontational language; the conference would lead to a deliberate and permanent fracturing of their relationship with the IBA, despite the possibility of losing their broadcasting licence. The outcome was a manifesto of sorts which led to the end of ILR drama production for good. It contained a daring ultimatum to the

government and the IBA to either make a robust effort in dealing with unlicensed radio broadcasters or else they would reconsider making any statutory payments. AIRC resolved that independent companies should own the means of transmission; the existing system should come under the direct control of ILR stations. They required the government and the IBA to take full account of the impact of any future national independent service and not use their revenue to build its infrastructure. Programming should be deregulated, which could easily impinge upon the continuance of drama. AIRC also resolved to commission the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) to research the outcomes of a deregulated commercial radio sector and more significantly, consider the relevance of the IBA itself, which was in effect a direct existential challenge to the regulator. AIRC would now lobby for the formation of a new independent regulator, and subsequent meetings with the IBA during the August and September of 1984 did not go well. As Stoller (2010b) explains, in October the IBA surprised everyone, including AIRC, with a press release that appeared to concede ground, in line with the resolutions of the Heathrow Conference. The IBA would now change its administrative structure limiting the number of new stations, contracts would be replaced with midterm reviews and responsibility for advertising, diversification into other businesses and broadcasting hours would now rest with the companies. The levy would be reduced by 10%. According to Stoller[84], AIRC had no choice but to publicly welcome the proposals, but privately seethed - these changes were far from sufficient. Humiliated, AIRC conceded that the report did not propose deregulation and for a while, the IBA appeared to have gained the upper hand. Stoller's conclusion is that the Heathrow conference marked a watershed moment; for the first time, AIRC envisaged that fundamental shift from independent radio to *commercial* radio. It began to deal directly with government, no longer prepared to cooperate with their

[84] Ibid.

regulatory body. This would be a confrontational relationship until the 1990 Broadcasting Act finally gave AIRC almost everything it wanted; the IBA was succeeded by the Radio Authority, but the wary relationship continued. Interestingly for drama, there remained a single source of content. IRDP continued on, unaffected by the changes around them.

> Of course, it didn't stop us. We carried on because LBC were not funding us. We at that point were sustained by sponsorship, arts council public money and revenue streams.[85]

Wray (2009) provides a direct examination of the regulatory developments in programming during the period 1983 to 1984, which was a crucial moment for those in ILR with aspirations to create fiction. In conversation with John Thompson, she cites the IBA's requirement for "programmes not programming" (2009, p.56) beyond simply providing a music service; a preference for individual 'built programming', rather than a continuous broadcast flow of music playlists. Wray also characterises the IBA's definition of 'meaningful speech' (the sort of programming that fiction fell under) as evidence of interference; "an interventionist approach" to regulation (2009, p.55). In other words, drama production was regarded by the IBA as an expression of public service values and by AIRC as antithetical to commercial enterprise. That is not to say fiction was responsible for the difficult relationship between the IBA and stations. Wray characterises the notion of meaningful speech in practical terms as non-musical components like news, weather and travel. She also identifies the strategic need to demonstrate quality in the form of documentaries, features, news programming and phone-ins. For our purposes, Wray[86] provides the evidence to show that the production of drama, coupled with its relative expense was indirectly part of a problem. She, like Stoller, identifies

[85] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.
[86] Ibid.

1984 as a pivotal point for the sector when the Heathrow Conference took place, subsequently turning the tables on the IBA, who began to proceed with far more trepidation. AIRC, now bolstered by support from within the Conservative Government would gain the upper hand in the regulatory process.

In some respects, Starkey (2011) reads as a synoptic overview of Stoller (2010b), however he provides insight into the connections and tensions between BBC Local Radio and the growing ILR sector. This is reflected throughout this thesis through the lens of drama production. Starkey observes ILR's gradual withdrawal from local content, often focussing on the tensions between worthy local content and populist content for profit. There is a case to be made for fictional entertainment as a form of speech radio that can overcome this dichotomy and deliver both. Whether this is in the form of straight drama or comedy, and despite its cost, the right talent was capable of moving the audience from accessible entertainment to more locally relevant programming.

Chignell (2009) provides the term 'localness' which is of use when defining works of fiction and characters that are reflective of vernacular culture. He draws together a conceptual framework based on the practicalities of radio production and theoretical concepts or as Crisell puts it, the "distinctive characteristics" (1994, p.xv) of acoustics, specifically; radio's secondary position,[87] intimacy, companionship and co-presence, soundscape as part of a wider sound culture, and properties that we would characterise as radiogenic._ENREF_45 Chignell (2019) explores British radio's Golden Age, starting in the immediate aftermath of The Second

[87] Radio occupies a secondary position, repositioned as a companion and source of information. Television supplanted appointment listening, resulting in passive listening whilst carrying out other activities. Radio producers changed the medium to follow a time-based structure, signposting and signalling key moments of the day and fitting in around daily life. Hendy (2000 p.182) observes that an inattentive audience becomes increasingly vulnerable to advertising.

World War to the early 1960's, during which the production of radio drama at the BBC was divided between two departments. The Drama Department was shaped by Val Gielgud's exacting standards as a 'national theatre of the air', whilst the Features Department expedited the BBC's movement to ambitious and experimental plays written specifically for the radio. Chignell examines how Martin Esslin fostered the emergence of absurdist plays for the Drama Department, followed by the inclusion of realist (or *naturalist* to align with Henrik Ibsen) plays by the likes of Harold Pinter. But of particular significance is Chignell's analysis of the work of the prolific radio playwright Giles Cooper and the recurring themes surrounding his male characters who were largely isolated, trapped and socially repressed. Cooper's plays and the wider experimental works of the 1950s and 1960s bear a resemblance to the work of certain key ILR dramatists. As will be illustrated in chapter five, ILR contributed, perhaps unwittingly, to a smaller second wave of absurdist radio fiction, as a partial consequence of its close association with the alternative comedy movement.

The term 'technocracy' or 'techno culture' applies to the BBC's interwar period as a modernist organisation both in terms of radio as a mechanical channel of communication and its purpose to reverse social fragmentation through literacy. Additionally, Hartley's (2000) term 'radiocracy' helps towards an understanding of how radio drama is employed in the formation of an 'imagined community'. He uses 'radiocrat' to describe professional broadcasters not solely in the realm of political talk, maintaining that radio drama, comedy and light entertainment are also used to advance the cause of democratic development. It is therefore valid to take the position that ILR's fiction played a role in forming 'taste communities' regarded by Hartley (2000, p.158) as a late 20th century phenomenon; in other words, citizenship informed by identity, culture and lifestyle. In this sense, these plays may be regarded as an expression of democracy.

McMurtry (2019) provides a new sociocultural history of radio drama, broadened to include the use of sound in a range of other fictional forms. She considers the media's sonic history in its entirety, by treating radio and podcasting equally and incorporating sound for visual media including, refreshingly, computer games. McMurtry draws upon Starkey's (2014) point that speech displays inherent demographic characteristics. She also adopts Chion's (1994) use of the term *acousmatique* to illustrate the requirement for naturalism in sound effects to effectively persuade the listener in the formation of a soundscape or *aural picture* (Southworth 1969). She illustrates the point that authenticity of sound derives from the listener's experience and imagination, pointing out the danger of inaccurate dialects ruining a production and so authentic dialects in performance are essential to the listener's perception (2019, p.61). Bearing in mind the accusations levelled internally at the RDC, any inaccuracies in characterisation have deeper implications. As director Hilary Norrish observed, the conveyance of geographic region, social class, gender and age through the use of regional accents is "a deeply political act" (Beck 1997, p.111). McMurtry, like Hendy, cites the letter writing campaigns of Radio 4 listeners during the 1970s who bristled against non-naturalistic performances. This was a significant way in which ILR drama managed to set itself apart and contribute to the impetus in BBC drama to shed its apparent affected and overblown 'rep voice'[88] (whether fairly or unfairly levelled at the RDC) and modernise independently of *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969). John MacCalman, a producer at Radio Clyde, recalls this strong urge in ILR to distance themselves from the formality of the BBC. One philosophical difference at Radio Clyde was a discouragement of the use of the title 'producer'. It was frowned upon as "being very BBC" and the title 'Production Assistant' was preferred.[89]

[88] See page 72.
[89] MacCalman, personal communication, 2021.

There is a relevance to McMurtry's (2019) observations, and the assessment presented here of Piccadilly Radio's vernacular comedies. Familiarity and authenticity were common traits across ILR fiction, particularly in comedy, so a clear distinction can be made between the BBC and ILR in this regard. The trend projected recognisable character forms with a high degree of authenticity, predicated around provincial dialects. Piccadilly Radio made extensive use of authentic dialects in the production of comedy which drew upon certain recognisable local and regional idiosyncrasies. But they tended to derive humour from audience recognition, rather than being a commentary on, or an indicator of, class. Character personas exhibited regional traits; those recognisable qualities of local dialects and the patterns of shared experiences growing and living in the region. The comfortable intimate close familiar bond of the co-present audience, whether or not it was conscious and deliberate, differentiated ILR drama from the BBC.

McMurtry[90] cites others who point out a need for non-naturalistic performances, specifically Lance Sieveking's view that 'pure' radio drama is a non-naturalistic construct, intended to draw wider conclusions on familiarity, dialect and authenticity of voices (p.59). She cites his illustrative point that the medium allows for a steam tractor to speak with a bucolic accent, and dialogue in radio drama therefore has the capacity to leap beyond logic. She also refers to Crook (2012) who, in defining BBC radio drama's deft ability to navigate ambiguity and nuance, describes a playful test of audience expectations. BBC radio drama producers worked closely with authors to place emphasis on narrative-based plays, whilst the technical prowess of studio managers and technical operators provided an advanced level of expertise in the

[90] Ibid.

formation of soundscapes. There is evidence presented in chapter four that shows some ambitious ILR drama producers also attempted to block out audioposition to a limited extent, which was arguably harder to achieve as a consequence of the financial and resource limitations at their disposal.[91]

3.2 Mapping concepts from Film Studies

A recurring emphasis the literature (about radio) review is placed on radio drama's proximity to visual media. The mapping of film studies onto radio drama has been particularly effective in several analytical texts. Arnheim's (1932) early work discusses the qualities and characteristics of sound in harmony with the moving image. In the process of developing an agreed conceptual framework, it is common practice to borrow and adapt certain theoretical elements from visual media theory. McMurtry's (2019) survey of radio drama takes into consideration the latest developments in the field, rightfully placing equal emphasis on the use of sound in gaming and other digital platforms as a next logical step in audio fiction. In this respect, radio drama is more akin to the three-dimensional surroundings within a video game. There is also a key relationship to the stage. Although the settings conjured by the mind are not as easily realised by the material capabilities of the stage,[92] original stage monologues are adaptable to radio with relative ease and have the added benefit of being cost-effective for the producer. Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) has been variously broadcast and adapted for radio.

[91] The positioning of characters with great simplicity in the soundscape is often audible, as is the use of news booths and tiny narration suites, fitting in around everyone else.
[92] For instance, Louis MacNeice's play *He Had a Date* (1944) concerns a man drowning at sea. The play quickly jumps back and forth from his current predicament to moments from his past.

Franklin (2009) suggests an application of auteur theory in lieu of unavailable recordings. Likewise, contributors to Drakakis (1981) and Guralnick (1996) emphasise the individual dramatist over the medium. The use of scripts in place of actual recordings has been ruled out in this research since it would not provide the aural dimension necessary for analysis. However, there is some merit in taking an auteur approach to broaden the opportunity for the incorporation of a range of like-minded dramatists who had similar interests reflected across their programmes.

While Rudin (2011) applies film studies principles by pointing out that a reading of radio drama cannot be achieved 'shot by shot' referring to the sequential nature of montage editing, Verma (2012) freely cites terminology borrowed from cinematography, likening visual orientation, depth of field and the foregrounding of essential elements to the use of acoustics, volume and the blocking of actors in three-dimensional space. He offers the concept of *audioposition* to describe how the audio producer establishes visual action and positioning in the mind of the listener. Audioposition may assist with an analysis of settings, situations and movement in relation to the listener and subsequent implied meanings. Audioposition is a powerful tool for radio drama analysis, being analogous to a blend of *continuity editing* and *mise-en-scène* by placing emphasis on the mind's eye. To digress briefly, mise-en-scène refers to a particular way of presenting a visual sequence to emphasise the beauty, continuity or credibility of a scene. A cinematographer will create or discover the mise-en-scène through elements like set design, movement, framing and lighting. A disruption in any of these elements may spoil the mise-en-scène and deflate the artistic effect. A simpler version of this concept is *mise-en-shot* which concerns the role of the photographer in achieving the same sort of effect with a single still image. The challenge is to consider the equivalent concept through sound only. Rather than coining a term like *mise-en-sonner*, Verma uses audioposition to highlight the imaginary

surroundings that the audience finds themselves in when engaged in a radio play. Verma's usage of the term is applied in the case study analyses presented in chapter five which puts into practice Crook's (1999) corrective to the mischaracterisation of 'blindness'.

3.3 Vernacular cultures

Crisell (1994) maintains that the first code of radio is speech, which is a key theoretical concern with regards to vernacular oral cultures. British radio dramatists quickly recognised and exploited the intimacy of radio, discovering that informality and a direct mode of address produced the outcome of a highly personalised form of scripted dialogue directed to the individual listener (Gray 1981b).[93] If the purpose of drama, aside from entertainment, is to move the audience, provoking thought through the artistry of codifying a moral or message within a production, the regional dramatist commissioned to serve a specific community should necessarily reflect their values and traditions by making use of recognisable cultural archetypes, familiar situations with an authentic voice, either literally through accents or figuratively regarding the authorial voice.

Chapter one introduced the fictional canon of the ILR sector which falls broadly into two distinctive areas. Dramas imbued with linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1977) that were comparable with national BBC radio, may be categorised as conventional plays suited for a mainstream audience. Alternatively, works of fiction that fell outside of what was considered conventional in the 1970s and 1980s were often reflective of traditional vernacular oral material. A number

[93] Grey (1981) discusses how a frugal use of sound is more than sufficient to achieve a great deal with relatively little. She discusses the efficiency of dialogue used to invoke Dylan Thomas's sleepy fishing village of Llareggub, causing the mind to create a place with form and structure with a paucity of sound effects. Radio capitalises on the properties of speech, its tremendous diversity and the emphatically radiogenic quality of direct address, by positioning it on an individual level rather than to a mass audience, with the intention of striking an intimate relationship.

of dramatists joined ILR stations without the education, background or status of their BBC counterparts, possibly leading to lower expectations and a general attitude of dismissiveness regarding the standard of their productions.[94] Others like Tim Crook came to drama from journalism.

It is necessary to establish local radio drama's use of oral vernacular to folklore since there is a danger in presenting folkloristics as an antithesis to modernity. Cohen (2013) for example cites a tendency to regard communities as archaic and resistant to modernism. Accordingly this thesis presents listeners not as passive receivers but holding the potential to be actively involved in the creative process. Furthermore, ILR drama may only be considered as applied folklore, manifest within the public sector. The concern here is with radio production which does not confer the status of folklore proper. Vernacular speech as it pertains to narrative also has a curious relevance to aspects of radio theory that are not normally applicable to drama. The conceptual framework of intimacy (Crisell 1994), radio as companion (Shingler and Wieringa 1998) and discussions on mode of address might seem inapplicable to radio drama. But the unique approaches taken by some ILR dramatists involved scripted, serialised, character-based monologues embedded within longer formats of music and chat. These examples exhibited novel characteristics which constitute an atypical approach when compared with conventional BBC drama production, requiring a careful application of these theoretical concepts and will be duly indicated throughout this chapter.

Since ILR stations were separated geographically with some disparate approaches, this analysis is bound to an understanding of place as entity (Russell 2004), the most prominent being what

[94] ILR widened opportunity, but this dismissive attitude towards ILR's fictional output may partially explain why its drama and comedy has been overlooked.

is understood to be 'The North'. Russell identifies regions as shifting identities and eschews any notion of the North being within a static boundary with fixed borders. He cites Hill and William's point that the North is "as much a state of mind as a place" (1996, p.6). Northern ILR drama and comedy and their associated fictional characters often exhibited elements of vernacular culture as a natural consequence of their location and as part of their mandate to serve communities and widen participation. *The Bradshaws* (1983)[95] was performed with an authentic tone, speech, pace and accent, unlike *The Glums* (1953)[96] for instance which still retained its air of formality as a product of the BBC Light Entertainment department. This is further demonstrated by making comparisons to the work of Tim Crook and Richard Shannon who founded IRDP Ltd in 1997. IRDP was a non-profit independent radio drama production company which predated the growth of independent companies in the 1990s. They cast trained experienced London-based actors to make highly professional sounding plays in line with audience expectations of national BBC radio.

The BBC's early literary culture in competition with regional oral/aural cultures demonstrates an inconsistency between the stated philosophy of a culturally unifying national service and the reality of executive control 'bolstering London's supremacy' (Briggs 1965, p.308). In response, the regions would seek to counter this with the use of authentic regional vernacular speech. Franklin (2009) discusses the BBC's editorial process, which filtered and re-presented oral content in line with the precise enunciation presumed to be appropriate but was also a means of achieving a high degree of control over output and language use. Additionally, scripting in place of actuality precluded authentic speech altogether. Both practices repurposed the remnants of what Innis (2008) defined as a time-biased oral tradition, for the new space-

[95] Created by Buzz Hawkins for Piccadilly Radio in Manchester.
[96] The BBC Light Programme (1953). Originally, it was a sketch as part of *Take It from Here* (1948).

biased medium of radio. As Franklin (2009) explains, the act of scripting segregates the context of original speech from final transmission, whereas the use of actuality mediates interpersonal communication and fosters continuity between context and audience reception. However, these observations are inverted when applied to the process of creating fiction; the art of scriptwriting can integrate context and meaning through dialogue depending on the calibre and purpose of the author, whereas a lack of authenticity in vernacular speech risks segregating the performer from the audience, requiring skilful actors or performances by authentic voices.

There is use for an *impersonal* mode of address in establishing a tone of authority and to maintain a consistency in binding the nation together. The impersonal and the interpersonal are both necessary, as Scannell (2000) observes, there are media structures intended for everyone and there are structures designed as though for *someone* specifically. But the progressive use of literary culture by the BBC appeared to be an attack on the authenticity of natural vernacular speech (Russell 2004). The historical tension between these opposing forces is explained in one of Innis's (2008) central themes; the devaluation of oral tradition and the receding influence of vernacular culture, was an inevitable effect of widespread literacy as the dominant mode of communication. He advocated a balance in society between orality and literacy as vectors of democracy and liberty. Traditionally scripted radio drama in this regard is premediated speech or as Raban (1981) characterises it, a literary medium. Both Raban and McLeish (1994) compare radio with literature as it exhibits literary characteristics to create an image in the mind. But what also must be considered is the author's role in disguising the technical visual cues of scripted speech and the actor's role in projecting meaning and emotion to compensate for intangible aspects of the drama that have no material existence in sound. As discussed earlier, the artificial proclamations of 'rep' actors were a by-product of their experience in theatre and a legacy of the traditions established in Gielgud's Drama Department.

The post-war period saw broadcasters gradually incorporating the idioms of working-class dialects and by the 1970s the British public had become fully accustomed to naturalism (Franklin 2009). The verité of television plays like Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966), the plays of Harold Pinter and the prevalence of kitchen-sink dramas exposed occurrences of histrionic delivery, clearly inappropriate before a microphone. For Innis (2008), such a correction to incorporate artistic expressions of vernacular culture would constitute a positive cultural step. In that regard, the fledging ILR sector can only be framed within the context of the BBC. Audiences had moved on and it was necessary for radio drama to do likewise, with ILR drama as a contributing catalyst.

To apply Williams' point, BBC radio, having prevailed over a large part of British broadcasting, could not remain "total or exclusive" (1977, p.113). Eventually the hegemony would be refreshed. It is reasonable to proceed on the understanding that the legacy of an authoritarian approach to drama meant that by the time ILR was established, dramatists would be motivated to provide a contrast of regional or more precisely *local* cultural accents and expressions.

We therefore have a range of arguments for the creation of locally produced drama and fiction as acts of democratisation; a widening of participation and access to the means of production and transmission through commercialisation, and the renewal of the radio drama landscape with the addition of ILR, which would serve as a counterpoint to regional and indeed national BBC. Consequently, ILR's fictional output cannot escape comparison to the BBC's national output. The question arises; how did these endeavours in radio fiction arise to become 'cultural objects' (Williams 1977, p.95) despite only a minor interest amongst many station owners?

An effect of ILR fiction was the audience's heightened awareness of embedded expressions of regionality, a reflection of themselves as a community. As an expression of vernacular culture, it is underpinned by what may be termed 'cultural memory' (Sturken 2008) which exists outside of formal historical discourse but retains its cultural meaning.[97] In this respect, ILR fiction and its characterisations are considered a cultural form to reinforce memories. Durkheim explained this as a societal need for continuity with the past through which identity is bestowed on individuals and groups (Misztal 2003). Likewise, Halbwachs (2020) argued that memories are tools used to establish identity, meaning and significance in cultures (Nicolas 2006). Collective memory and cultural memory are separate terms, the former being a formal strand of historical research involving "surveys and oral history collection", contrasting with the latter "public manifestation of mythology, tradition and heritage" (Garde-Hansen 2011, p.38). Cultural memory however "implies not only that memories are often produced and reproduced through cultural forms, but also the kind of circulation that exists between personal memories and cultural memories" (Sturken 2008, p.74).

It is possible to apply Sturken's definition of memory formation; 'cultural negotiation' - a fluidity between the personal and the cultural and a shared view of the past, to the creation and consumption of drama. This is exemplified by *Bessie* (1984) a four-part serial produced by Radio City in Merseyside about the life of Labour MP Bessie Braddock. It begins during the final days of her life and is told in flashback. When she arrives in Liverpool, a cab driver simply says, "Jump in Bessie love". She is so well known to everyone in the city that even the cabbies know where home is. The playwright Ray Herman further demonstrates his cultural credentials by mentioning specific well-known places in Liverpool. 'Scotland Road' for instance, known

[97] Wang (2008) further argues that collective memory is embedded in public discourse to form and sustain a community's identity and to ensure its continuity and cohesion.

colloquially as 'Scottie' Road, is of historical importance to the city and has particular meaning for older Liverpudlians as the intersecting neighbourhood home of many of its working-class families. The suggestion of place, accent, dialogue and a few simple sounds demonstrate the notion of collective memory as a social construct to preserve and perpetuate meaning in much the same way as the folktale forms part of oral tradition passed through the generations.

3.4 Narrative structure

Narrative, story structure and the use of narrator are additional concerns requiring some qualification since they affected the practicalities of production, scheduling and programme format. Many productions were brief, short-form daily or weekly instalments with durations of 5 to 15 minutes, some of which were reformatted as 30 (Gilvary 2004) or 60-minute weekend omnibus editions. IRDP's adaptation of *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1988)[98] was devised to be modular. It could be divided into forty instalments of five-minute episodes, with an option to broadcast four one-hour omnibus editions. It was also possible to reconfigure the episodes into discrete 10-minute packages. According to Shannon this approach was derided by some who thought the format could not work. Capital Radio had already experimented with the format in 1973 and deemed it unsuccessful.

> …we were doing something different with five-minute episodes, unheard of, couldn't be done, hugely successful. People really like that small bite, and then the catch-up model worked. But you know, we never set out to do that. We were going to produce Samuel Pepys's Diaries in Archers length 15-minute episodes. Two weeks before the broadcast, the editor said, 'oh, no, that's not going to work on LBC. It's five minutes or nothing'. And Tim and I had to take a take a deep breath and think 'well, can we re-edit to make

[98] Published in 1825.

> this work?' And actually, it worked really well because there was something interesting happening every five minutes.[99]

The experientiality of ILR narratives is also of interest. Many works of fiction were not formally scheduled and would instead be played amongst music and chat at the discretion of the presenter within a typical daypart. These factors are shown to have influenced narrative structure, genre, style and tone. Radio City's *Scully* (1974) for instance saw a range of differing structures. Through the course of the character's growth, Scully remained the same, but the narrative was presented in different ways, from sketches slotted between music and commercials to a longer situation comedy, then transforming again on television to incorporate conventions of social realism and melodrama.

Intriguingly, Huwiler (2005) refers to the positioning of sound signals in acoustic space as an additional narrative function operating on a higher level of discourse. Her narratological analysis describes a division into two different 'levels'; the initial practical level of storytelling and an additional layer where a higher discourse on meaning and purpose takes place, with listeners being quite capable of distinguishing between the two. Since this predates Verma's (2012) use of audioposition, she uses the term 'focalization' to define the aural point of view, with the listener able to locate their acoustic position. Huwiler[100] deconstructs sounds within radio dramas as non-verbal signals which can actually perform any narrative function as flexible storytelling devices, aural elements like music, sound effects, reverberation, fade ins and outs, unrestricted to a fixed repertoire. In Saussurean terms, sounds are 'arbitrary and conventional' and can perform varying roles, even replacing a conventional narrator. Huwiler[101] suggests that total silence is yet another sign-system that is used to indicate

[99] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

meaning. She argues that sounds, even the voices of characters, are storytelling devices capable of signifying more than just character traits. She cites a German play *Die Klassefrau* (1973) which takes a similar approach to Kurasawa's *Rashomon* (1970) in the use of non-realistic sound elements to distinguish two differing perspectives of reality which remain plainly intelligible to the listener.

In this regard, use of sound and dialogue as functions of narrative may be of relevance as cultural signifiers (Barthes 1972). The verisimilitude of locally produced stories and regional character types speaks to the shared experiences within a culture. Without venturing too far into the complexities of psychology, 'cognitive narratology' (Fludernik 1996; Thomas 2015) provides an insight into the psychological states of a community to describe the structures found in narratives across cultures. Works of fiction from the northern cities of Liverpool and Greater Manchester[102] made by Radio City and Piccadilly Radio, operate as a product and reflection of their community, and perhaps even foster empathy amongst external communities. A voice may for instance indicate gender, age, social and regional background as well as its usual character function within a story, which in turn indicates subjective perceptions on the part of the audience.

3.5 The 'fictional ILR presenter'

Staying with Merseyside and Radio City, in 1974 station manager Gillian Reynolds commissioned aspiring playwright Alan Bleasdale to write and perform a series of single voice monologues titled *The Franny Scully Show* (1974), a recurring form taken by many ILR

[102] This includes Salford.

dramatists. It was presented in such a way as to appear to be simply another music-based hour. This was an effective way to exercise the ambition to create drama and comedy and do more than simply play music, with the benefit of budgetary savings. Bleasdale's Scully is both reflective and reinforcing of the Liverpudlian[103] character. Bleasdale embeds certain meanings and codes in the dialogue and performance for the listener to recognise. As with his later television series *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1980), *The Franny Scully Show* (1974), featured an unemployed young man excluded from school, who was emblematic of working-class Liverpool in the years immediately preceding the Toxteth riots. The character of Scully bears comparison to the plays of Kingsley Amis, John Osborne and the social realist teleplays of Ken Loach which inform a set of archetypal characteristics from Liverpool's culture: an increasing tone of desperation, talkative and frenetic with a singuar dialect that emerged from a confluence of intonatons from Ireland, Wales and South Lancashire. According to Belchem, these characterisations are emblematic of the reimagined "lowly Irish, 'slummy', reckless" (2007, p.322). Belcham characterises the cultural usage of this sort of character as both a restatement of working class pride and a vessel for critique, usually simplified as inverse sobbery. He argues that the "dubious tricks, ploys and survival techniques" (2007, p.323) that are characteristic of Scully act as a balm for the hurt caused by Liverpool's economic misfortunes. For Russell (2004) however, the effect is a detrimental "disabling stereotype" (2004, p.272)

Bleasdale's creative approach was cognisant of the fact that his character was being listened to on air. Conventional narratives consist of characters addressing each other directly, performing to each other. However the narrative of *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) is delivered through *presentational acting,* addressing the audience directly, bringing the listener into the

[103] The term 'scouser' is often used colloquially in Liverpool and across the UK to describe a certain type of Liverpudlian.

mind/world of the character (Elam 2007). His scripts were a blend of direct address, monologue and informality, speaking lines that were seemingly prosaic but concealed the underpinning satire. This mode of address lends itself particularly well to the enclosed sound-studio environment, the fourth wall very much intact. Evans (1977) also discusses the subconscious impression of being spoken to personally which has the profound effect of retaining the listening audience.

Ultimately, what appears to have emerged is best described as a 'fictional radio presenter' subgenre of the dramatic monologue. The fictional presenter is a term used with specificity in this thesis, however the notion idea of a fictional character as radio presenter is nothing new. 'Aunt Sammy' was developed in 1926 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the syndicated programme *Housekeeper's Chat*. Later in 1947, the character *Lonesome Gal* was devised and performed between records by actress Jean King and syndicated nationally. ILR had a number of instances where on-air personas often blended together, resulting an unclear demarcation between the presenter's role as a 'DJ' and as an actor/performer. This approach to drama and comedy was taken by Piccadilly Radio, Radio City, Radio Clyde and Radio Forth. Hamish Wilson on Radio Clyde would often segue into readings of classic literature and being an accomplished actor, he would intone his readings with meaning, imbuing words with character and applying pace and gravitas which would line up seamlessly with his primary role as presenter. In the case of Tim Grundy's comedy series *Umbridge* (1985),[104] a balancing act was required between his fictional characters and the expression of his usual on-air persona of individual idiosyncrasies and modes of speech, whilst conforming to station policy. *The Andy Wright Show* (1987)[105] was written and performed by Chris Sievey, who created the character

[104] Piccadilly Radio, Manchester.
[105] Ibid.

of Frank Sidebottom also featuring in the Piccadilly Radio situation comedy *Radio Timperley* (1986). *The Andy Wright Show* (1987) was a serialised comedy drama based around the life of a presenter on Piccadilly Radio. Between music tracks, his life would intrude into the show. Sievey, as Andy Wright, wrote scripts in the style of links containing the illusion of spontaneous thought, idioms, and figures of speech to foster an informal and intimate relationship with the listener. As the show progressed over the weeks, Andy's home life gradually intruded onto air. Initially, the first month of editions provided no hint that this was anything other than a regular music format daypart, other than Andy being a somewhat odd misanthrope. There was no clue that this was also the comic persona Frank Sidebottom who could be heard elsewhere in Piccadilly's schedules. All shows were pre-recorded as live by producer David Dunne and played out on Sunday mornings, to accustom listeners to the show in preparation for a subversion of expectations.

> And so it went. Around week four, Andy turns up for a show with one of his kids as his wife has had to go out and Andy couldn't find a babysitter. During the course of the show, his son kept interrupting and with the help of sound effects, accidentally breaks some of the studio equipment, leading to "The Boss" coming in and telling him and his producer (me) off.[106]

Each week the chaos would increase, whilst satirising the role of DJ with send-ups of various on-air personas. Dunne recalls one chaotic 'episode' involving an outside broadcast with a sponsor, which, being a local pet shop called for extensive use of library sound effects. His real-world family (wife Paula Sievey and children) would also come to the studio to perform as Andy's fictional family.

[106] Dunne, personal communication, 12 June 2018.

Hutchby (1991) provides a useful definition of the fictional ILR presenter genre by discussing modes of address. These differing modes of speech are distinguishable by degree of organisation, level of structure and cultural conventions. An overview of these modes would include formal and informal speech; personal speech, contrasting with public or precise institutional speech (usually reserved for factual news programming); expert speech and imperfect mundane everyday speech. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) underline the difficulty in defining a comprehensive concept for radio speech given the plethora of styles it can take; from elaborate, scripted language to unofficial, unrehearsed or improvised content. There are other less precise forms of dramatic speech, scripted improvisation being one example. This also has significance in the context of audience reception, as Scannell put it: "broadcasting speaks from one place and is heard in another" (1991). Crisell (1994) explains that the resulting gap needs to be bridged by a particular mode of address to reduce the separation between addresser and addressee. In terms of engagement and reciprocity between speaker and audience, the performance of scripted speech requires a simulacrum of 'mundane' conversations to imply a private conversation with the listener. This has implications for the generic codes and narrative structure employed by the playwright. It is also inherently contradictory since radio drama is ultimately non-participatory, its intimacy leaving the listener with only the impression of interactivity. But it is useful to preserve the idea that in simulating mundane speech, programmes like *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) and *The Andy Wright Show* (1987) remain self-consciously public performances. Monologues by Bleasdale, Buzz Hawkins and Sievey all replicate the impulses of ordinary speech and spontaneity, seemingly addressing the concerns levelled at the RDC identified by Hendy (2017). As with Bleasdale, the contemporary radio drama writer must consider the structure of their written vocabulary with the radio performance in mind. The main concern when writing radio drama is the need to embed visual descriptors without compromising naturalism, or perhaps maintaining a consistent world in

which the narrative takes place. Timothy West illustrated how not to do this with his satirical script *This Gun That I Have In My Right Hand Is Loaded* (West 2003).

The process of concealing information within dramatic dialogue requires specialist skill. Drama and comedy are of course pre-recorded and consciously performed based on such crafted dialogue, but there is an important similarity here to 'broadcast talk' (Scannell 1991) which takes into consideration the listeners who are, essentially, overhearing an on-air conversation. Broadcast talk has the appearance of informal everyday talk between on-air personas, interviewees and callers, but is scripted, sometimes rehearsed and articulated with the listener in mind: a paradoxical 'planned spontaneity', which moves the presentation of non-fiction material closer to the realm of fiction. As we have seen, during the initial consultation period for commercial radio, the entertainer Hughie Green advocated for ILR news bulletins read by actors to liven up dry delivery. We may regard the rendering of presenter-led music radio as a somewhat artificial construct, blurred at times with the ILR 'fictional presenter' genre. The everyday 'ordinariness' of such scripted speech, with the effect of a shared experience and sense of participation as scenes unfold, make the case for *intimacy* and *co-presence* as additional factors in a reading of these case studies. These examples of 'as-live' pre-recorded works of fiction, retained a sense of liveness, employing rhetoric associated with spontaneity. This illusion of spontaneity as though we are listening to a genuine studio-based presenter is advantageous to scripted drama, heightening the verisimilitude as it leads into the unknown. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) suggest this requires a collusion between the producer/presenter and the audience, mirroring Coleridge's willing suspension of disbelief.[107] They draw attention to an unspoken agreement between listener and broadcaster to create the

[107] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, 1817.

illusion of spontaneity and intimacy. An odd side effect however, subsequent to the initial action of joining or connecting spaces, is a narrative divergence at the point of an inciting incident shifting from the supposed 'realism' of the radio studio to a scene taking place within a wider diegesis. In the case of Sievey's character Frank Sidebottom, this is then subverted for comic effect. But by not providing scheduled timing for fictional content beyond the presenter's daypart, there is an indistinct flow in and out of these dramatised segments.

The question remains, how do these examples of fiction establish a sense of intimacy and co-presence felt by ILR listeners? Surely 'intimacy at a distance' is somewhat contradictory in terms of local radio? Distance may be measured in non-physical ways, like for instance how far the listener may feel included in their community. How isolated an individual might feel may not necessarily correspond to their geographic location, which is especially relevant since these conceptual themes are psychological in nature. Karathanasopoulou (2014) discusses the effect of listening to analogue stations in the 1970s and 1980s as the radiophonic white noise of interference washes in and out during and in-between stations. The weakness of a long wave station is for instance evocative of *distance* as a signal reaches out to the listener. The limited bandwidth of a medium wave station suggests a *restriction*. The limited fidelity which obfuscates music and subtlety in sound effects and extracts frequencies from the voice, is, as Karathanasopoulou[108] observes, an aesthetic matter situated somewhere between mainstream theory and the avant-garde. Yet an awareness of this is only truly perceptible in comparison to high fidelity broadcasts and recordings. Although British VHF broadcasting started in 1955, it only gathered pace in 1973, meaning the majority of listeners were accustomed to listening to medium wave broadcasts at home on older sets when ILR began. Indeed, a number of off-air

[108] Ibid.

recordings on standard cassette used in this research also lack a degree of fidelity. As Karathanasopoulou[109] proposes, there is aesthetic value in the interference and so despite transmission quality impeding the analysis of drama, particularly when attempting to analyse audioposition, it has not precluded a thorough analysis.

From 1984 to 1988, Hamish Wilson managed to foster a sense of intimacy through the timbre of his voice and immediacy to the microphone. His evening readings of classic literature on Radio Clyde avoided the use of received pronunciation by assuming a patriarchal air evocative of a Dickensian period drama. He delivered what was a conscious performance, but with a direct address and register best suited to late night radio. Wilson would step out of his performance and revert to his natural accent to bookend the beginning, end and intervals leading into and out from commercials. In doing so, he reinforced the illusion of a mutual conversation reflecting on the preceding passage. Essentially, Wilson was an authentic on-air persona who drew upon his skills as an actor to deliver in a close, intimate way so as to draw in the listener. He neither assumes the role of a character by detaching from his own persona, nor is he playing the role of a radio presenter as was the case with Bleasdale and Frank Sidebottom.

There is an overlap between what we know to be the ‘persona’ presenter who consciously projects fabricated emotions (Horton and Wohl 1956) and a performance by an actor delivering lines as part of a dramatic production. Stachyra (2018) goes a step further into an exploration of interactions between live presenters and their callers. She references Sternberg’s (1986) analysis of intimacy comprising emotional support and sharing of personal facts. This has an

[109] Ibid.

indirect relevance to how characters are received and how they manifest in the minds of the audience. Chris Sievey's alter-ego Frank Sidebottom clearly resonated with his listeners in this way, rewarding them with intertextual references across other media. Sievey provided a form of two-way mediation with his audience through a fan club, a fortnightly comic publication and frequent in-person appearances. These ancillary elements were analogous to the *Little Orphan Annie* (1930) 'secret handbook' or *Captain Midnight's* (1938) 'decoder badge' - a range of visual media validated by listening to Sievey's comedy series. Another example of interaction took place during an episode containing the promotion of a competition. The winner was invited into Piccadilly Radio to participate in a subsequent episode playing the role of a competition winner. Such creative choices assume the existence of a cause-effect relationship established through authentic dialects and the blending of fiction with the recognisable codes and conventions of radio presentation. There is a playful and harmless 'parataxic distortion' (Sullivan 1953) evident in these examples, planned by performers and dramatists and reciprocated by listeners which is evident in their willingness to suspend their corrective knowledge of the dramatic construct. Peters (2010) expounds the potential pathological danger when removing the dividing lines between character, presenter and the intersectional zone where the fictional presenter and the presenter delivering fiction reside. He states that this is not just a problem for those with a disorder that makes them susceptible to the voices of media personas. In rationalising a voice without any experience of the person themselves, the listener necessarily creates imagery to fill the space. Bonini et al. (2019) discuss the cognitive unreliability in reconciling both the imaginary and the factual and in seeking out the emotions of the listener, what is at stake are the real emotions of listeners.

In a fictional world, the listener is a participant and in addition to a sense of the co-present audience, they also have a virtual co-presence with the characters. Moreover, the aural illusion

of face-to-face communication in regional radio benefits from an increased accessibility afforded by the use of vernacular speech. Piccadilly Radio's *Radio Timperley* (1986) and Radio City's *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) create the impression of company "as if" at home or positioned alongside these fictional characters (2017, p.299), a process made easier by the use of familiar registers of vernacular speech. Frank Sidebottom constantly addresses the listener, directly acknowledging their presence whilst the fictional scene takes place around him. Bonini et al. cite radio presenter Grzegorz Chylinski's observation that the emotional involvement of the audience "can turn into a close relation as the stimulus is systematically reapplied" (2019, p.103). The lack of any near-instantaneous audience feedback should not be taken as evidence to the contrary. As Lacey (2018, p.167) observes, this powerful interaction resonates with listeners, but any reciprocation to prove its effect may be delayed or indirect. One strong indicator of this occurred in the wake of Chris Sievey's death in 2010. Listeners formed such a strong interpersonal bond with his fictional persona, that fans commissioned a bronze statue of Frank Sidebottom in his hometown of Timperley.

These fictional personas serving a dual role as presenter, are recognisable forms of comedy. As reassertions of vernacular culture, there is a distinction between a celebration of regionality and a knowingly self-referential parody. It is as though Hawkins, Sievey and Bleasdale all acknowledged the historical nature of standardised English of the BBC as a necessary cultural primer, before ever more localised platforms could be established, paving the way for their own nuanced deconstructions of regional vernacular culture.

3.6 ILR drama as an invisible medium

Both Crook (1999) and Raban (1981) reject the term 'blindness' as a concept, arguing its unsuitability; radio drama provides a "world in possession of its senses" (1981, p.81). The terms 'blind' and 'blindness' do retain some usefulness, however. Arguably, it is in the reception and reading of radio drama that blindness might reside. Thus, the term blindness (as opposed to 'deafness') is of better use when defining the level of sophistication on the part of ILR audiences in their interpretation of radio drama (Bourdieu 1991). Gray (1981b) argues that radio drama productions are staged in the minds of the listener and not in a sound studio. Through the concealment of the dramatic construct, 'invisibility' is converted into a positive advantage. Radio drama creates impossible vantage points, providing new perspectives and new insights. In this regard, the listener acts as set designer, stagehand and in fact the theatre itself.[110] This is in accordance with the idea of collusion between broadcaster and audience - an implied bond to maintain an illusion (Shingler and Wieringa 1998). The absence of a visible component is therefore a considerable asset. Crook's (1999) lengthy philosophy of sound theory stresses mind-generated imagery as a corrective to the notion of 'blindness'. By redressing what was considered an 'understated literary form' (Hamblin 2001), Crook goes some way to explain the limited appreciation for ILR's dramatic output, which required a capable listener, able and willing to apply a degree of interpretation. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) accept the term 'invisible' to affirm their view that memory is naturally visual, with sounds and words less likely to be remembered in favour of images, arguing that the plot events of a radio drama tend to be more difficult to recall than of a film or play. They also mirror Crisell's points by opposing the need to compensate for its non-visual nature arguing that radio is informed by the visual world; it speaks to a visually aware audience having experienced images and vision in order to read a radio programme. Esslin (1971) makes a similar point

[110] Ibid.

using silent cinema, which of course excelled in pure visuals: slapstick, beauty and fearful imagery. Esslin aligns with Verma's ideas on the connection between the medium and the mind:

> Concentrated listening to a radio play is thus more akin to the experience one undergoes when dreaming than to that of the reader of a novel: the mind is turned inwards to a field of internal vision.[111]

As mentioned earlier, Radio City's series *Bessie* (1984) demonstrates these points in the following ways. The first episode begins in what sounds like a chamber filled with men bleating in accord. This is in all likelihood the lower House of Commons, although it is not expressly stated. Bessie is disoriented and upon leaving she is barely able to cry out: "A train to… to… Liverpool!" A montage of sound begins; the screeching tires and idling diesel engine of a cab is bisected with the sound of a train in motion. The same idling cab continues underneath, but now a different driver with a northern accent speaks. We have been transported instantaneously. To those unfamiliar with Liverpool, Bessie has simply arrived. However to Radio City's audience - the local community - this evokes the image of a very particular place: this is Skellhorne Street, a taxi rank opposite the Crown Hotel at the corner of Liverpool's Lime Street Station. Radio can suggest and evoke the appearance of signs, settings, costumes, a sense of place and the listener will automatically produce an ideal image unique to their mind's eye. The buildings are covered in soot, pigeons scattered around and a smell of diesel fumes. These are not alluded to aurally, but Atkinson's (2015) term 'implied' place provides a definition for a series of essentialised practices that culminate in places of 'knowable' character. In much the same way as Thibaud discusses how a Walkman may superimpose voices over "the sonic

[111] (Esslin 1971, p.7).

aggressions of the city" (2015, p.330), similarly the soundscape of the play may be thought of as overlaying the wider sound culture of Liverpool.

The introductory scenes devised for *Bessie* (1984) are highly indexical of the time period being depicted. The distinctive rattle of an Austin FX4 hackney carriage engine, a particular sound of the past which no longer forms part of our sonic landscape, is *re-auratised* (Bijsterveld 2013, p.32), consequently reducing the potential for significance by age.[112] *Bessie* (1984) makes use of cultural memories to enrich the sense of audioposition. Lewis (1981) observes radio drama's effortless ability to transition rapidly in space and time, a constant state of flux between speech and unspoken thoughts and from consciousness to subconsciousness. Bessie and the listener are transported from Euston Station to Liverpool Lime Street Station in a single moment simply by the whistle of a steam locomotive, demonstrating the mind's effortless ability to transcend space and time by mere suggestion. The ability to visualise radio drama may be regarded as a skill on the part of the audience; to decode imagery presented within a soundscape. Most radio producers recognise and anticipate the range in levels of listenership, but for today's commercial radio there is a higher propensity for distraction, perhaps listening in when driving or during manual work and so programming is designed deliberately to accommodate its secondary position. The spatial and temporal flexibility demonstrated here gives access to the inner recesses of the mind and as such are pertinent to the field of neuro-linguistic programming particularly in its application to the production of radio commercials. By inhabiting the mind through drama, NLP may play a role in influencing things like regional identity and the character of their target listeners.

[112] Shingler and Wieringa (1998) discuss this in the context of sound that falls outside of the listener's experience.

3.7 Audioposition

In 1993, LBC broadcast an IRDP production titled *Farewell Little Girl* (1993).[113] The half-hour play written by Anna Hashmi and directed by Tim Crook, concerns a woman experiencing a nervous breakdown. For the most part it is performed as a single voice monologue to explore unwanted intrusive thoughts of morbidity by the main character, which eventually manifests as a fugue state. There is a literal sense of the external world and a fantastical internal place in her mind as memories and childhood fantasies combine, with the listener occupying an intermediate locus where most of the play takes place. Here the woman assumes a direct mode of address to the listener through her interior monologue. She is positioned with prominence, flush against the microphone, later with varying distances. Initially, it appears to be an external soliloquy spoken out loud. It then becomes interior speech; ponderous on an extradiegetic level, providing a stream of consciousness from the mind directed to herself, then reverting back to the listener. Both the exterior and interior spaces involve interactions with other characters, whether that is her concerned friend or an imagined fairy godmother. But only the intermediate function of her monologue exists between the woman and the listener raising questions like; is the woman aware of us as listener? Do we occupy the role of confidant, or is she talking to herself? In order to answer these questions and to understand how the director and author realised the play aurally, we must apply the concept of *audioposition* as a primary analytical tool.

What constitutes radio drama theory is based to a large degree on the putative influence of the BBC and a consequent bias towards British playwrights (Guralnick 1996), which provides a critical contrast when investigating commercial radio drama. But this is not to depreciate the

[113] See chapter 5.8.

huge importance of American radio drama. Verma (2012) examines and enhances radio drama's prevailing metonym 'theatre of the mind' firstly by his use of audioposition which is analogous to mise-en-scène (Beck 2000a). He provides highly focussed appraisals of key texts, with a detailed analysis of the listener's audioposition around and amongst spatial and temporal parameters formed in the studio. This has practical implications involving the acoustic standard of recording facilities and also relates to the post-production effects work that took place using multitrack recorders.

Verma's analysis is underpinned by Douglas who cites Lazarsfeld's (1940, 1948) studies of how radio affected the American psyche leading to an 'evolution of consciousness' from the 1930s to the 1950s (2004, p.129). Inevitably the power of performance, soundscape and mode of address were bound to American social and political anxieties of this era. Verma (2012) maintains that American broadcasting institutions retooled radio from a theatre of the mind to a weapon with which to impose belief systems. In doing so, he explains how American broadcasters melded listeners into a national audience, demonstrating how the development of the practicalities involved in representing images through sound, led to an understanding of how to place images *in* the mind of the listener. Verma further explains how themes of isolation, imagination and fantasy emerged, maintaining that the American mind was both a product and a reflection of radio: "radio drama necessarily became a theatre *about* the mind" (2012, p.3). He concludes that the aesthetic choices of a dramatist are linked to the moral ambitions of the play, which continued into the 1950s with stories of invasion and panic paralleling the Red Scare.

Conceptualizing the shaping of identity through radio drama raises the question of how ILR's fictional output may have contributed to a subsequent reinforcement of regional identity. It is

necessary to juxtapose an analysis of audioposition with a knowledge of the circumstances surrounding production, and the experiences of the creative minds behind it, as demonstrated by Verma's reading of MacLeish's first radio play *The Fall of the City* (1937). MacLeish's play is an allegory of contemporaneous American politics during the New Deal era, also a commentary on detached elitism and a portent of fascism. Verma's analysis however goes much further by reasoning that the creative choices made for audiopositioning were a product of the technocratic movement of the 1930s, MacLeish and director Irving Reis being proponents of a political stance consistent with the play itself. Chapter five takes Verma's approach and applies audioposition to make close readings of selected ILR case studies providing a commentary on the state of radio drama, and the social and political climate of Britain during production. An analysis of audioposition in local and regional radio drama should at least reveal some sort of *alignment* or orientation. Crisell (1994) provides a conceptual basis to assess how far quality is dictated by such spatial information and environmental indicators. He refers to 'proxemics' apropos the physical position of the characters relative to one another and 'kinesic' or non-verbal communication which at first may seem impossible to impart through radio. Crisell suggests that performers *ostend* - expressing outwardly through body language, perhaps through mime or voice to the listener's imagination which then deduces, or perhaps invents, kinesic expressions of meaning. Additionally, Crisell uses the term 'transcodification' to describe the process of substituting visual signifiers into aural ones. For instance radio's equivalent of the proscenium curtain is a fade in/out effect. As Drakakis explains, radio drama language is a "mediating system of 'sound-signs' which both parties agree will conventionally represent particular kinds of experience" (1981, p.30). Crisell cautions that this term is often misinterpreted as the substitution of an icon with a symbol as one would expect in the domain of semiotics. He clarifies that sounds and their visual source are indexical; both aural and visual

codes equate as intrinsic properties (1994). Crisell explains that transcoding involves signifiers of equal importance, aligning with Crook's (1999) appeal to refrain from 'blindness' as a term.

In chapter four, we will explore the IBA's written archives and examine the recollections of former ILR practitioners to understand the circumstances in which these productions took place. A good proportion of these memories actually relate to this discussion by demonstrating how an analysis of audioposition may reveal the limited resources available to ILR producers. As Shingler and Wieringa (1998, p.56) put it, 'space is created acoustically' and the restrictive facilities available to dramatists affected what was possible in terms of creating a sense of place and space aurally.

Chapter 4: Producers and dramatists

The previous chapter dealt with the thematic concerns that we will apply to our analysis of ILR fiction. Part of this involves the concept of audioposition as an approach to production that consciously situates the listener within a scene in relation to the action. It is fair to say that the environment of a BBC studio with the support and time given to planning and experimentation, is conducive to this sort of production technique. This chapter is an exploration of the contrasting circumstances that ILR dramatists worked within, with the use of IBA archival material, to piece together an overview of each station's objectives for drama. Approaches to production taken across ILR stations are examined by drawing upon the recollections of former practitioners. Budgetary matters and the commercial sector's relationship with Equity are explored as factors determining the scope and creative possibilities for dramatists.

4.1 The studio environment

The conceptual tools referred to, like audioposition, cultural signifiers of genre and narrative, mode of address and intimacy are key to our understanding of the parameters producers worked within in the ILR sector. ILR's budgetary restrictions are not necessarily aurally detectable to the average listener and a commensurate amount of creative freedom afforded to ILR professionals produced a high standard of work, which in turn lead to a distinct emergent aesthetic. The economic circumstances imposed across ILR, compounded by other factors including the devalued pound, affected the scope, scale, style and tone of dramas produced, limiting any ambition for high levels of aural detail. It is also important to remember that for each of the stations that actually produced fiction, only one drama producer would be employed.

These conceptual underpinnings are of course only subject to the parameters established by individual productions, which informed how much post-production was necessary. Piccadilly Radio's *Radio Timperley* (1986) and *The Bradshaws* (1983) both defined their own limits which did not require sound-saturated experiences.

Fictional productions were subject to pragmatic factors like the size and shape of recording rooms and studio facilities. In architectural terms, drama provides "multiple sensory details, spatial context and the relationships … with its surrounding world" (Karathanasopoulou 2019, p.117). What Meszaros (2005) calls 'aural geographies' is similarly defined by Crook (2012) who defines the use of sounds and 'atmospheric tracks' in a cinematic way, again citing mise-en-scène as comparable to our understanding of audioposition:

> It punctuates the identification of location, context, world, time and can also constitute characterisation and support characterisation. An atmospheric track belonging to the world of the story that is known to and immerses the participants of a narrative, but sometimes it can exist in a parallel world only known to the audience.[114]

Karathanasopoulou (2019) helps to conceptualise this idea further by applying the sound environment invoked by a radio play to architecture. She applies architect Peter Zumthor's approach which advocates a reading of the immaterial sensory details in a space, to an analysis of Andrew Sachs' *The Revenge* (1978).[115]

[114] (Crook 2012, p.16).
[115] Broadcast on 01 June 1978, BBC Radio 3.

An additional factor in such an analysis is the nature of individual ILR stations and the attitude of contractors towards the types of content made. Most ILR facilities were only designed for music links, news speech and interviews. The majority of ILR stations consisted of single 'self-op' studios within an acoustically treated room. In some cases, this may have only been a cubicle. The director Richard Shannon of IRDP Ltd. recalls the limited amount of physical space available for drama at LBC:

> In the early days, we did do some things in news booths. It was hilarious. You'd be handing a script through the door, you know, barely enough room to swing a cat, never mind having three actors in there.[116]

Bernard[117] also recalls the small studios at Radio Hallam measuring sixteen by fourteen feet, one containing a mixing console occupying half of the room with an adjacent news booth for voice work and another containing a piano, making any designs for audioposition difficult without extensive post-production (personal communication, 07 December 2020). Hamish Wilson's performance of *The Facts in the Strange Case of Monsieur Valdemar* (1985)[118] is often marred by the sounds of his colleagues, footsteps and a squeaky studio door. These remain recognisably professional sounding productions however, largely due to the professionalism of Wilson himself. A trained ear can 'hear the budget' so to speak, with an application of audioposition analysis techniques, or simply as a consequence of modern playback technology, but such acoustic factors impinge on the listeners ability to 'hear space'.

[116] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.
[117] Bernard, personal communication, 07 December 2020.
[118] Edgar Allen Poe 1845.

4.2 Programming proposals

The IBA archive[119] contains extracts of programme planning proposals made by the first ILR applicants between 1973 and 1975. As stated previously, the IBA did not specify a requirement to offer drama, however the majority of prospective station licensees provided a response to the question of how they would approach the production of fiction. The preliminary memo[120] titled 'Programme Intentions' established that the IBA would not:

> …specify any required quantities of programme of an educational, religious, informational, children's or other specialized nature, though it will scrutinize applications to see what plans applicants have to provide a range of programming including the above elements, with a particular relevance to the needs and opportunities of local life. At some future date the authority may decide to make quantitative requirements in particular fields of broadcasting, if the needs of the service then make this desirable.[121]

Drama production, or at least a minimal acknowledgment of the local cultural scene was a recurrent objective across most applications except for BRMB[122] in Birmingham and Radio Trent serving Nottinghamshire. Neither applicant provided any initial programme proposals for drama, whilst Swansea Sound only suggested coverage of the Welsh arts scene. The remaining proposals appeared to acknowledge the arts with positivity, placing a specific emphasis on drama and using language that indicated their potential role as patrons and stakeholders in local culture.

A good proportion offered realistic assessments of their limited resources, precluding competition with the BBC. Proposals received by the IBA ranged broadly, some offering

[119] Based at Bournemouth University.
[120] This was published on 12.06.72. The original document is unavailable but is cited in full in IBA/692 03.06.1976.
[121] (IBA 1972).
[122] BRMB is an American style station callsign and not an acronym. BRM (Birmingham) & B (Broadcasting).

honest but sparse non-committal suggestions and others showing a development of programme ideas in substantial detail. LBC's only stated foray was titled *Once Over Lightly* (IBA 1976b), a series of topical comedy sketches equivalent to Radio Four's *Weekending* (1970).[123] The proposals also expressed a common interest in developing working partnerships across ILR stations to finance and create drama. But there was a notable banality to a proportion of the responses, an empty rhetoric suggestive of an initial lack of interest in the IBA's cultural remit that would later widen amongst members of AIRC.

Plymouth Sound's brief proposal stated that if they had financial success, they would consider a 15 min serial about a "dockyard or service family" and a drama that would be in some way reflective of local history by perfunctorily suggesting "that famous game of bowls to the blitz and beyond" (IBA 1975c): an unconvincing statement by BBC commissioning standards. Likewise, Portsmouth's Radio Victory suggested a dramatisation of the life and times of Nelson "to a background of cracking spars, roaring canon and the clash of cutlasses" (IBA 1975f), evidentially a facile product of expediency in the completion of a bureaucratic exercise than a genuine programme proposal. Victory was both self-deprecating in its abilities and cognisant of the value of a thriving local arts scene. Their proposal began as follows:

> Greater Portsmouth is no Mecca of culture, but it is no desert either and the arts are well represented... Local radio must be an open door to people of creativity, and we shall encourage their involvement in every way possible.[124]

[123] In 1974 LBC broadcast readings from Anthony Trollope's *Palliser* novels (1864-1879). Industrial action in 1974 delayed airing of the final episodes from the BBC Television adaptation. LBC rather ingeniously filled the gaps with Michael Jayston performing the missing chapters (IBA 1976b).
[124] Ibid.

Victory suggested partnering with external organisations to devote a weekly slot for creative programming including "perhaps eventually, drama, through sponsored competitions".[125] They indicated a potential link with the Chichester Festival Theatre, "Occasionally we shall record excerpts of plays and also part or entire concerts at the Guildhall and other venues, possibly in cooperation with the local authority" (IBA 1975f). Victory also mentions a request from local schools to provide serialised readings of set texts in local examinations. Although this initiative appears in the documentation with no development amounting to little more than a footnote, Victory did make good on the promise by broadcasting readings of Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860), in preparation for the local schools' O-Level examinations.

Radio Clyde and Radio Forth submitted proposals that appeared less tokenistic, without the classist overtones of Victory and Plymouth, indicating an authentic approach to representation. Radio Clyde's initial proposals appeared rather limited, its proposed schedule expressed an interest in commissioning a thriller, a 10-minute serial for weekdays, an additional serial aimed at 'a female audience with network potential' (IBA 1973f) and a series of 10pm book readings. By 1975 John Lindsay, the IBA controller for Scotland, was prompted to write to John Thompson to relay feelings that Clyde was ignoring drama as a necessary area of programming, although there was no requirement for such formats. Lindsay was careful not to demand full productions, however.

[125] Ibid.

> …there should be a continuing thread of recognition of Drama in Clyde's output, be it in terms of Drama readings, discussions and critical appraisals of the current dramatic scene in Scotland etc. The more Jimmy Gordon seems bent on taking an opposite view, the more does Charles Johnston dig his toes in and bang on the door. I have now suggested he bang on yours with a view to getting some London backing for his views. It really is, I think, a bit much for Jimmy Gordon to take up his present posture re Drama, while at the same time he chortles happily and publicly about the great success of Clyde as an ILR station.[126]

This is an early indicator of opposing attitudes regarding drama. Within the IBA, it was recognised that drama should exist and be acknowledged in some way, as a necessary part of a station's output and as part of a community's cultural life. Six years later, Radio Clyde commissioned Edward Chisnall to write the long running ILR series *The Bell in the Tree* (1983),[127] directed by Hamish Wilson.

Radio Forth provided a broader specification than Clyde which demonstrated an affirmation of the "unique dramatic possibilities" of radio (IBA 1975d). Forth would become one of ILR's most prolific producers of drama largely because of Hamish Wilson who worked for both stations. Forth's initial specifications envisaged a 'lively' thriller or comedy, a 'supernatural hour', poetry, and expressed an interested in broadcasting syndicated content by advocating an openness to outside material. These slightly more substantial proposals took the opportunity to assert how far the station valued the medium: "The absence of visual images liberates the imagination of the listener and allows him to confound space and time".[128] Dramatic content was considered a long-term objective, but at this early stage Forth was clearly inspired by the prospect of creating its own drama, seeking to be reflective of "local accents and attitudes". By

[126] (IBA 1975a).
[127] *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) by Edward Chisnall was directed by Hamish Wilson. It was broadcast on Radio Clyde, starting on Friday 30 December 1982. Duration: 10 to 15-minutes approximately x 260 episodes. It was broadcast three times on weekdays throughout 1983. Series two comprised another 260 episodes and broadcast throughout 1990.
[128] Ibid.

the mid 1970s, IBA dispatches mention a number of Radio Forth successes, including numerous 19th century gothic adaptations like *Dracula* (1897),[129] *Frankenstein* (1818)[130] and a serial about Deacon Brodie, prefiguring his inspiration for *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).[131] They also appointed a poet in residence, producing verses to order. By 1976, Forth was the only ILR station to successfully negotiate a local arrangement with Equity; a fee of £20 for a full day and £15 per half day, signalling their financial commitment to drama production (IBA 1976b). It is important to note that AIRC had not reached a national agreement with Equity at this time. Thompson also observed that in 1973, Equity's proposed fees were high, prompting some companies to doubt the value of drama to ILR.

Pennine Radio's disclaimer that they would be unable to produce professional drama within its first three years of operation was a consideration based on their projected profits, aside from the opportunity to apply for financing from the IBA's rental fees (IBA 1975b). Otherwise, they offered a reasonable set of proposals that would provide access for local amateur dramatic groups to record and broadcast their performances. Bradford is cited in their proposals as a centre for experimental theatre, which, if not requiring additional postproduction work, would have proven a cost-effective approach to drama provision. Other initiatives were proposed to encourage locals to give book readings, and invite schools and youth groups to write and perform plays incentivised by a competition with prizes. Radio Orwell provided a general statement that suggested their patronage of live drama in cooperation with Ipswich Borough Council if financially viable (IBA 1975e). But by 1976, Pennine, Orwell and Downtown[132] had not made any significant progress.

[129] Bram Stoker.
[130] Mary Shelley.
[131] Robert Louis Stephenson.
[132] Based in County Down, Northern Ireland.

Capital Radio's[133] ambitious specifications for drama constituted a serious commitment to the commissioning of new drama and the provision of new outlets for dramatists. Their proposals expressed a clear intention to be reflective of London as the centre of the theatrical world. Capital's programme plans began with a prediction of radio's likely future model of independent production, anticipating a limited use of production houses to provide serial drama which would necessarily be of a high-quality. Capital envisaged a series of drama documentaries, a weekly Sunday matinee and a daily fifteen-minute serial during the morning dayparts in consideration of the station's segmented schedule format structured around commercial breaks. Capital stated a requirement for capable talent that could root drama in reality, set within recognisable parts of London: "We may take the traumas of a family in a high-rise block of flats; they will be involved in the issues and diversions of the day… [they] shop at typical shops and for work typical firms" (IBA 1973a).

Capital's positive disposition towards to drama was also accompanied by audience assessments that typified the endemic biases of British culture. What remains in the archive proceeds on a crude division of gender by oversimplifying the tastes of women, with the following patriarchal assertions:

> [Women] are escapists, or they are not sufficiently cold-blooded to enjoy drama which, if taken seriously, would represent alarm and despondency. This is what gives them their bias towards stories about hospitals and against stories about guns; towards local issues (where they can see plainly what is at stake) and away from foreign news (of dubious implication); towards happy endings, but happy endings to sagas which are as grittily tough as they know real life usually is.[134]

[133] Dated 16th October 1973.
[134] Ibid.

Piccadilly Radio exceeded Capital Radio's written proposals, using strong ambitious language for its programme planning. Their proposals were moderated by a sensible recognition of BBC Radio's excellence in drama; "We cannot hope to compete directly" since it was "clearly beyond the resources of a single independent station" (IBA 1974b). The wording used in its documentation is particularly reflective of Manchester's character. For instance, it was necessary to desist from: "po-faced presentation and stately accommodation repugnant to Northern Taste" and to highlight the "popular regional suspicion of culture by de-culturising presentations".[135] With regards to our understanding of regionality, a peculiarity of the Manchester psyche is its borderline satirical overzealousness in extolling the virtues of the region:

> The River Irwell has a better claim than the Nile, Indus, Tigris or Euphrates, to be the epicentre of current world civilisation. Every Lancastrian's firm belief that history was created on his street or at worst just up the road.[136]

Piccadilly emphasised what they considered to be a regional lack of interest in the arts as a 'cultural weakness' and sought to address this by positioning the station as a promoter of local arts, with specific reference to drama and theatre. They envisaged dramatists' focus on local historical events like *The Siege of Manchester*[137] and referred to 'several dramas and musicals on railways'. They sought to explore the feasibility of cooperation with local theatre groups and planned to run short story and poetry competitions to attract local authors who would read their work on air, a successful initiative noted by the IBA in 1976. They even went as far as suggesting the position of 'Station Laureate',[138] appointed from a pool of the best local storytellers and poets. One very accurate observation of the Mancunian character was their

[135] Ibid.
[136] (IBA 1974b).
[137] This took place in 1642 during the English Civil War.
[138] An overstated title to describe the position of residential poet.

expectation that they would inevitably attract "McGonagalls with Rochdale accents"[139] amongst which would be found the occasional genius (IBA 1974b).

One curious suggestion was to broadcast the audio soundtracks of television drama as a catchup service. They cited Granada Television's *Coronation Street* (1960) and *Crown Court* (1972) which implied an ambition to synergise with their ITV counterpart. The ITV franchise holders did of course promote the independent radio stations in their region; however, such a venture would have wide-reaching implications not least with regards to intellectual property rights. Piccadilly's proposals signalled an awareness of these kinds of obligations and fully appreciated the issues raised by networking agreements for their own original productions. But their proposals clearly demonstrate a commercial vision for providing home-grown material to markets in the UK and abroad. While other station owners did not foresee any potential profitability, Piccadilly further envisaged the potential for cooperation with publishers to commission books and even suggested adaptations of existing books before or immediately after publication as a form of promotion (IBA 1974c).

Metro Radio[140] also made the same suggestion as Piccadilly of repurposing soundtracks from television series, bizarrely suggesting the US animated series *The Jackson Five* (1971) produced by ABC television (IBA 1973c). There appears to be no suggestion of how they would go about buying the rights to US content, but a likely intention would have been to forge a closer association with Tyne Tees. Metro's proposal expressed a belief that it should instil a love of literature in its younger listeners:

[139] William Topaz McGonagall (1825-1902) generally regarded as the worst poet in British history.
[140] Serving Newcastle upon Tyne.

> We believe that radio could do so much to awaken in young minds a new fascination and interest in literature. Passages of prose, and poetry, studied for examination purposes and not always appreciated for their true beauty, would take on a new meaning and colour when read aloud by professional broadcasters. Northumberland and Durham have many well stocked libraries more young people might well develop the habit of reading through increased exposure to the spoken word, when some of the programming is derived from the good use of literature in spoken and dramatic form.[141]

Metro's list of drama programming suggestions is also notable for its attention to genre. *The Wednesday Afternoon Mystery*[142] was Metro's thriller, a common suggestion similarly made in other proposals. They anticipated an association with theatres in the Northeast to provide edited versions of stage productions, although a flaw in this undeveloped idea may have been its impact upon ticket sales. The proposal included a 'Rehearsal Night' programme, comprised of clips from amateur productions and backstage interviews.

> We imagine that there would be full-length drama productions on a syndicated rota basis but supplemented by our own productions. The aim would be to make Metropolitan Broadcasting's own radio drama contributions of a high professional standard. The accent would be on local authors and regional settings for both Northeast and, with the IBA's approval, syndicated transmission.[143]

A daily 5-minute pre-school story was to be scheduled during the awkward-sounding 'women's programme time' which appeared to combine BBC Television's *Watch with Mother* (1952) and *Woman's Hour* (1946). This became *Timber Top* (IBA 1973c)[144] which, according to Thompson's report, ran for a long period and attracted local interest, but not in syndication. Their proposal also expressed an interest in importing a series, perhaps a western, professionally produced for radio. The repeated suggestion that this could be sourced from the

[141] (IBA 1973c).
[142] This series was not produced.
[143] (IBA 1973c).
[144] It is not clear if the title was inspired by the BBC Television children's series *The Woodentops* (1955).

USA appears to pull the proposal away from its local and regional focus, naively perhaps towards the allure of Hollywood. John Thompson would later discuss foreign imports in an internal IBA report (IBA 1976b). The interest in westerns and a cursory undeveloped ghettoization of women listeners is indicative of the sexist male-dominated media of the 1970s.

However, Metro Radio's flagship serial *Metropolitan Line* (1974) would seek to reflect working class life in Newcastle, which would be accompanied by a serial of "national appeal for networking". Metro Radio also received a special mention from Thompson for their production of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888), broadcast to coincide with the 1975 Newcastle Festival. Given the local area's connection to Scandinavia, this choice was a particularly well-judged expression of local history. Considering Strindberg's association with the *Théâtre Libre*[145] in Paris, which sought to increase opportunity for new voices in drama and produce plays avoided by the mainstream, the production was emblematic of ILR drama as a whole. Strindberg, taking his cue from Henrik Ibsen and Emile Zola,[146] was an advocate of naturalistic theatre and so *Miss Julie* (1888) was a product of this socially oriented realist phase of European drama. Both the Théâtre Libre and ILR drama as whole would suffer financially.

Radio Hallam, serving Yorkshire, promised "as much entertainment and dramatic production as is available locally and through syndication" (IBA 1974a). Under the subheading of 'lively arts' they offered to highlight amateur and professional theatre that mirrored the "self-expression of our citizens". They could envisage the production of an exciting play of general

[145] 'Free Theatre'.
[146] Zola's manifesto "Naturalism in the Theatre" was published in 1881.

interest for early evenings that "listeners may anticipate hungrily throughout the day" on the condition that costs would be shared amongst ILR stations (IBA 1974a).

> In the popular press, the word culture has often carried rather elitist overtones, but we are very definitely concerned to present local culture in all its aspects as something alive and of concern and interest to listeners. At the same time we do not underestimate the difficulties of presenting excerpts from local dramatic performances, especially amateur ones, since they will be compared with the admittedly excellent dramatic programmes of the B.B.C. In this field, our criterion will be quality rather than quantity.[147]

From this statement, it is possible to infer a feeling of apprehension by Radio Hallam towards how they should present amateur and local theatre. This was a realistic appraisal of what they *could* produce, mindful of inevitable comparisons to the BBC and acknowledging there would be an issue with how to present such material.

> The ability to produce full length plays is beyond our resources. If however they were produced elsewhere for network broadcasting, they would be of interest to us provided they did not conflict with our idea of a local service.[148]

Radio Hallam was willing to cater to small (influential) audiences by providing book readings and poetry that had the likelihood of scoring high on the appreciation index. This affirmation to the IBA of their willingness to earn goodwill as well as profits is reflected in the dramas produced by Ralph Bernard. To their credit, Radio Hallam was prepared to pay for his series *Dying for a Drink* (1978). But this also demonstrates a difference in philosophy to stations like Piccadilly Radio. Radio Hallam's use of the dramatic message to make a social point contrasts

[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.

with Piccadilly's interpretation of drama as an opportunity to create entertaining works of fiction to generate revenue.

Radio City's programme proposals proudly boasted their good fortune benefitting from Liverpool's large concentration of talent and community involvement. Their ambition for drama was only matched by Piccadilly Radio in Manchester. Both stations are geographically close and share the same market which crosses a number of cultural boundaries. Where Piccadilly's recognition of Manchester's culture derived from its city and industrial heritage, Radio City's selling point was the archetypal Liverpudlian; "…we have the Scouser himself: lively, informed, highly articulate and never at a loss for a bright thought and the phrase to express it" (IBA 1974d). Radio City had devised a remarkable outline of their plans for fiction. They specified the commissioning of famous writers associated with Liverpool, and unknown talent looking for an opportunity to establish themselves in the industry.

> Our aim will be manifold; to produce new drama for radio and, in particular, to foster local actors and authors; to broadcast new short stories and poems. The Everyman, Playhouse and Royal Court theatres are members of our group and we are equipped and determined to make radio plays an important part of our output. From the start of broadcasting, we propose to broadcast one radio play each week; at least a quarter will be our own productions and of these a substantial proportion will be by local authors. Since Merseyside can claim Alun Owen, E.A. Whitehead, Neville Smith, Eric Coltart, John McGrath, Carla Lane, Myra Taylor and Eddie Braben as nationally established writers who come from (and in some cases still live) here, it will quickly be seen there is already a vast pool of talent to draw on. We also hope to encourage local writers of less fame, or even no fame at all, to write for our play spot, our weekly short story spot and our arts magazine programme.[149]

[149] (IBA 1974d).

This was a remarkable commitment in comparison to other ILR companies, even outshining Piccadilly in its ambition. A serial already in development was titled *44 Stanley Road* (1974), a fifteen-minute thrice weekly evening serial, with a weekend omnibus which followed the day to day lives of a Liverpool family, its ideals, hopes and fears.

> …daughter's boyfriend, son's progress at Polytechnic, Dad's job anxieties, the ever-rising mortgage rates. The in-laws out at Kirkby and mother's bewilderment at the changes in the modern permissive society.[150]

Radio City's substantial proposal included *Book Shelf* (1974), an arts review series which would necessarily contain dramatized components widening opportunities for local actors. They anticipated sponsored competitions for new plays in the form of a local theatre festival in partnership with the Merseyside Arts Association. There was also to be some experimentation in broadcasting plays from Liverpool's theatres to encourage increased attendance. All of these measures suggest a city-wide collaborative attitude of sharing, indicating a far less apprehensive approach to working in partnership with local theatre than for instance Hallam's tentative suggestions. They later produced a notable drama documentary *The War Years* (1974) which achieved some local acclaim (IBA 1976b) and as will be discussed later, they achieved success with Alan Bleasdale's comedy *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) which was later adapted for television.

4.3 Thompson's 1976 Report

In 1976 John Thompson produced a report concerning the state of progress regarding drama across the ILR system (IBA 1976b). It was issued to IBA members to review factors that had

[150] (IBA 1974d).

thus far affected production, suggesting a call to action in light of the points raised. Thompson provided a description of the attitudes amongst members of AIRC towards drama, asking the reader to keep in mind the general objectives for ILR. He recognised Radio Forth as by far the most ambitious ILR station for drama at that point, citing the favourable press received for their latest serial *Mary Queen of Scots* (1977). which was projected to run to over 130 episodes, mirroring the scope of Radio Clyde's later ambitious series *The Bell in the Tree* (1983). The report also initiated a discussion of the level of priority to be placed on drama in ILR by asking "how much relative importance should be attached to 'drama' on a new self-financing local radio system?" by way of comparison to Independent Radio News (IRN), local news provision and community engagement (IBA 1976b). He restated the opinion that critics of radio in the national press tended to be preoccupied with drama and devoted too many column inches to it. He reminded colleagues that the approach to drama in ILR's development was left to the initiative of the applicants in their preliminary programme intentions.

To restate the research methodology, the definitions of fiction here are broad, encompassing drama which may take multiple forms like soaps, serious plays, single monologues, situation and sketch comedy and poetry in some instances (IBA 1976b). Thompson's report was an initial step towards a clearer policy for drama on ILR, based on his assessment of how far companies appeared to be fulfilling their stated commitments to production. This assessment would be dependent on "its comparative relevance or social value within the ILR service, in relation to the other priorities" (IBA 1976b). Thompson was cognisant of the economic problems faced by companies, but the question remained how significant drama should be to self-financing stations and the likelihood of attracting an audience. Thompson requested that IBA members keep in mind the statutory obligations of ITV to create drama, despite some

arguing that television had overtaken radio as a primary 'storytelling medium', in contrast to what the ILR companies themselves claimed as their objectives.

Thompson's internal discussion on drama provision was necessary because a number of stations seemed to be struggling to meet their stated programming intentions. Some saw the promise of drama and comedy as profitable which aligned with an ambition amongst producers to be creative. The lack of success by some station owners coupled with the expense of actors and writers, would prohibit ambitious productions and serve to disincentivize the idea of 'built' programming (Reynolds, personal communication, 20 April 2008). Others who started out with goodwill towards the idea of making fiction experienced a shift in perception, regarding drama as an expensive obligation for the purposes of demonstrating worthiness. Another group had an entirely different perception of what ILR should be, broadcasting nothing more than the most cost-effective content, as former Hallam producer Ralph Bernard explains:

> It was nothing to do with whether the format would be successful in getting an audience because it simply was at a time when 'the BBC did drama, didn't it?', 'Commercial radio plays pop music, doesn't it?' and anything else would be too expensive to run.[151]

The report made comparisons to BBC radio drama audience research, concluding that plays most appreciated by audiences were suspenseful detective stores and comedies, illustrated with undisputed classics like *Dick Barton – Special Agent* (1946), adaptations of Agatha Christie and Edgar Wallace, *ITMA* (1939) and *The Navy Lark* (1959).

[151] Bernard, personal communication, 07 December 2020.

> It may be that in the future the Scullies, the P.C. Plod's and the John Gormans of ILR will reach a larger audience; but for the present it is for question how far single ILR stations will have sufficient resources to produce this kind of material.[152]

4.4 Practitioner experiences

All of these views eventually coalesced around the perceived iniquity of the rental levies leading to the Heathrow Conference (Stoller and Wray 2010). Yet Piccadilly had envisaged potential success. Producers and presenters wanted to go beyond music and chat and such ambition lent distinction to their station. Interviews with ILR dramatists and practitioners point to a common motivation beyond their job description, to produce popular, accessible drama, many of which had a sincere social purpose and general appeal. David Dunne recalls how those at Piccadilly had an innate drive to do more.

> I think a lot of us working in radio at that time also felt that we should be doing more than just DJ/Playlist. Because we were local, we could also draw upon talent based in and around Manchester and with three successful theatres, plus the BBC and Granada based in Manchester, there was a lot of talent about.[153]

Despite what was considered to be the heavy-handed control of the IBA (Stoller 2010b), programme proposals did not pass through the sort of rigorous commissioning processes and procedures one would expect at the BBC. Decision making over programmes to be made was handled in-house with programme directors who were ultimately answerable to the IBA. Directors would meet with producers, who may also have been presenters, to discuss ideas. Producers would suggest programmes conversationally to programme directors (or station controllers depending on the size of the station) who usually approved an idea almost

[152] (IBA 1976b).
[153] Dunne, personal communication, 12 June 2018.

immediately, without judicious self-regulation (Chisnall, personal communication, 15 February 2021). According to Roger Harvey at Metro Radio in Newcastle, the commissioning process was left entirely up to his judgement. He wrote many of his own plays, with a few unsolicited scripts and proposals from external writers, most of which he recalls were unsuitable for production. The selection of adaptations came from his own knowledge and tastes. He would simply suggest a book or play to the programme director who would then approve. This independent approach was also taken during the production process across most stations without subsequent oversight. At Two Counties Radio (2CR) in Bournemouth, Sean Street recalls proposing a feature about Welsh slate, blending drama, poetry and music but which lacked any convincing connection to the Dorset region. He justified the premise by reasoning that the people of Bournemouth had slate on their rooftops. The programme was approved, with slight scepticism.

> I never had such freedom as I had in ILR. I would never have it again, without being scrutinized by management. But ILR was a business plan ripe for redesign.[154]

Richard Shannon of IRDP also claims to have experienced a considerable degree of autonomy, echoing Street's sense of freedom afforded to him by the ILR system.

> It was the most exciting period of my creative life without doubt and being able to wake up on a Monday morning and say 'I'd like to do *Heart of Darkness*'. 'Oh, should we do that?' 'Yes, let's do it.' As opposed to now, as an indie, we're pitching to the BBC where hardly anything gets through. And that freedom and autonomy is something I really miss.[155]

[154] Street, personal communication, 10 August 2018.
[155] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

2CR began broadcasting in 1980. Its first programme controller John Piper, who had left a successful career at BBC Solent a year earlier, recognised a clear responsibility to provide meaningful content. Piper approached his former colleague Sean Street, who he recalled, had ambitions in feature-making. Street recalled Piper was very keen about promoting talk radio, which was compatible with the IBA's remit for intelligent speech. Street began with *Focus* (1980), a 25-minute Sunday night slot to discuss and reflect upon spiritual matters but avoiding overbearing preaching or dogmatism. It was networked around ILR stations through the Programme Sharing Scheme and Street would often play programmes shared by other ILR stations as part of 2CR's overnight sustaining service. Street claims *Focus* (1980) developed a popular following. It was to be reflective of all faiths, a format which would be replicated by the BBC in the form of *Something Understood* (1995) on Radio Four.

The production of fictional content at 2CR was as Street put it 'a one-man show'. The freedom afforded to him by 2CR also came with a lack of concern about the content he created. He was simply useful in that each of his programmes met the regulators requirements for quality programming. He became 2CR's Features Editor, covering meaningful speech dealing with religious programming, drama-documentary, readings and in doing so, he would earn the station credit with the IBA. Some of these drama-documentaries adopted the techniques first pioneered in the late 1950s by Charles Parker. Street applied music and dramatic fictional performances within a factual context, to produce features in the tradition of Parker's *Radio Ballads* (1958).[156] In 1986, he was given a large evening slot to produce and present a special programme about the life of J.R.R. Tolkien with a retrospective of his writing. It made

[156] First broadcast on the BBC Home Service starting on 2 July 1958.

extensive use of local amateur actors, containing readings and scenes woven together over a 90-minute period.

Street came to radio as a trained actor from the Birmingham School of Speech and Drama. Almost immediately upon leaving Radio Luxembourg in 1967,[157] he found his first radio job in Paris at ORTF's[158] English Language Service. Street performed in drama-documentaries translated for English listeners and sold to broadcasters in the UK and USA. Upon returning to the UK he joined BBC Solent in 1970 as technical operator. He describes an acute awareness of the lack of opportunity for advancement and a number of hard-working station assistants who suffered nervous breakdowns. Street felt that his ambition to make features would not go anywhere whilst in local BBC. He became disillusioned and six years later, had given up radio until he was hired by 2CR's new controller John Piper, also formerly of BBC Solent. It is important to note that 2CR did not hire professional actors. Since Street's usual late evening time slot did not carry commercials, it did not contribute to the station's overall revenue as non-profit programming. Street sourced talent from local amateur dramatic groups that did not require a fee based on Equity membership.

Programmes ran from 10pm onwards until late at night. This pattern was replicated across ILR, using these late and overnight slots as a catch-all for quality speech content. But Street was aware of a wider sentiment that speech programming on 2CR was provided under sufferance. He recalls an occasion when a news journalist openly voiced resentment by comparing workloads, leaving him feeling beleaguered and isolated. The individual was dismissive of Street's purpose at 2CR, which was necessary under the remit provided by the IBA. But his

[157] A year before the Jericho demonstrations took place.
[158] Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française.

work could not become appointment to listen programming without first raising the audience's awareness. There was quality speech content worth committing to aside from the 'jocks', but that message was not communicated. He maintains that he was aware of his appreciative, selective and committed audience. He knew that listeners wanted this sort of culturally relevant quality speech and that they could find it on 2CR. Interestingly, he did not believe that these particular regional audiences would necessarily gravitate to Radio Four as an alternative, a point shared by Carter (2003, p.5) who cites the same assessment by the IBA, since stations were required to cater for children, religious groups and the elderly. The audience did not migrate across to ILR as much as expected. Hendy (2007) observes how only listeners in Glasgow, Liverpool and Swansea favoured ILR over national BBC as result of deemphasising London, in favour of their own strong regional identities. Any rivalry resided on medium wave between ILR and BBC Local Radio. Street eventually returned to the BBC[159] in a better position under John Hyatt on *Age to Age* (1989)[160] the new history strand for Radio Four.

Roger Harvey's experience at Metro Radio in Newcastle is remarkably unusual compared with other stations. He took a junior position in 1978 writing commercial copy but was quickly promoted to producer, delivering a range of adaptations and original plays. He describes himself at the time as quiet and unobtrusive but with an enthusiasm for radio drama which was recognised by station managers. Harvey was already established as a writer having been commissioned by BBC local radio to write an adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* (1977). His pitch for an initial 30-minute pilot, followed by a continuing occasional series over a three-year period included his own original single plays, serials, literary adaptations and short story readings. Although Harvey is dismissive of his skills at this early point in his career, lacking

[159] At BBC Bristol.
[160] Street's first edition was broadcast on 08 July 1989.

on air presentation skills or even a flair for sales, Metro was receptive to his proposal to "spice the output with intriguing plays and stories". In its first year, Metro produced two locally set soap operas, replete with Geordie accents, *Metropolitan Line* (1974) and *Slatey Drift* (1974). Both were shortly cancelled. It was accepted that drama would lend "quality to the station's reputation" and "entertain with 'something different'" (personal communication, 10 April 2017). Consequently, Metro Radio was prepared to give him a free hand in writing and producing drama.

The pilot episode of this strand was *The Reunion* (1979) an original play by Harvey starring Ian Bannen as a race car driver who, after a crash, recounts his life as a ghost. Although the narrative is structured as a single voice monologue, it contains fully dramatised scenes with a range of performers including Kevin Whately. According to Harvey, *The Reunion* (1979) proved to be a long, painstaking production lasting throughout the Autumn of 1979. Nevertheless, he has positive recollections of the production. He describes going to great lengths to develop his envisaged soundscapes by deploying a recording engineer to record sound effects and ambience at Croft Motor Racing Circuit in North Yorkshire. Harvey also recorded the sounds of an Aston Martin belonging to one Metro's advertisers. Brian Lister, a former BBC studio manager edited and mixed the play. Despite the use of facilities that were configured for commercial production, Harvey characterises his approach as comparable to later BBC productions that emphasised verité and realism by treating the recording process like a film production; location work, thoughtful framing and blocking of scenes and extensive mixing and editing. Harvey explains that his influences came mainly from films and music: "I always tried to use the mic as a movie camera".[161] Such approaches to recording were a new

[161] Ibid.

and unusual experience for the station, and Metro certainly deserves credit for allowing Harvey to go to these lengths and for displaying such an atypical level of tolerance not generally experienced in other ILR stations. He describes the cast as gracious and charming, however on his recording day, Bannen had some difficulty imparting the script. He was essentially a television and film actor and was not used to performing solely by speech. This necessitated a more extensive process of blocking his position relative to the microphone. Harvey states that Bannen's "edgy, downbeat and sometimes eerie performance was exactly what I had hoped for".[162] The entire process certainly provided Harvey with a steep learning curve because once complete, Metro rejected the finished product.

> …the Programme Controller refused to broadcast it on the grounds that Bannen's performance was 'too low-key' and that in places the sound quality was 'unacceptable'. The day I was forced to tell Bannen and his agent that the play wasn't going out still counts as one of the lowest points of my long career.[163]

Harvey and the production team disagreed with that assessment of their work and despite a suspected ulterior motive behind the decision, production on Harvey's other plays would continue.

> … if I wanted to keep my job and make something of this ongoing opportunity, I realised I would have to swallow my grief and present my next proposals with a smile. This must have worked because they were accepted. A large budget was assigned, and I was appointed Head of Drama.[164]

After this, plays would become more reflective of the local community. He made two selections for serialisation that were reflective of the region, James Kirkup's *The Only Child* (1980) and

[162] Harvey, personal communication, 10 April 2017.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

Kiddar's Luck (1980) by Jack Common, which Harvey argues would not have been selected for adaptation by the BBC at the time. Both serials starred the Tyneside actor Edward Wilson who became director of the National Youth Theatre. Given his shock at Metro's rejection of *The Reunion* (1979), Harvey describes his relief with the positive reception received from audiences who he maintains were motivated to write into the station to express their gratitude. The two serials were followed up with an adaptation of the W. Somerset-Maugham's short story *Mister Know-All* (1980).

Harvey asserts his view of station management's repeatedly myopic failure to take advantage of these successes. He cites his dramatisation of E. M. Forster's science fiction *The Machine Stops* (1982) which garnered critical praise in the press which in his opinion, may well have won an award had Metro not vetoed its entry. Likewise, he points out that the raised awareness of Metro's output provided by the Programme Sharing Scheme captured national press interest. According to Harvey, a number of critics began to make inquiries of their local stations to see if they also intended to mount their own productions; "the critics recognised Metro Radio productions as very expensive and high-quality work of a standard comparable to anything being carried by the BBC" (personal communication, 10 April 2017). He recalls asking the programme controller to take advantage of this newfound interest to promote the station by emphasising the "showbusiness and glamour" of his productions, but they failed to capitalise on the momentum without so much as a press release. He provides an example that exemplifies Metro's prestige and quality as a consequence of paying celebrated professional actors, in the hiring of the veteran actor Nigel Stock to narrate Harvey's two-part adaptation of *The Speckled Band* (1981), essentially reprising his earlier television role as Doctor Watson, as Harvey recalls:

> [Stock]…climbed down from the train in Newcastle Central Station dressed as Dr. Watson. He proceeded to deliver a word-perfect performance of the story, giving full rein to its splendid narrative drive and gothic atmosphere. Stock required no direction nor scarcely a 'take 2' in the studio; over dinner he entertained me with a fund of 'actor' stories.[165]

Harvey considered his most satisfying production to be his two-part production of James Elroy Flecker's *Hassan* (1983) which featured another well-established cast including Clive Champney, Denise Welch, David Easter and Vincenzo Nicoli which, again, necessitated a substantial budget.

In the wake of the Heathrow Conference, Metro closed its drama department. The station underwent a re-branding exercise in favour of music, news and sport. Harvey's last production was an adaptation of his own novel *The Silver Spitfire* (1985) which was divided into 13-parts and starred Gordon Griffin. This involved excising over half the book to accommodate script runtimes which combined to a total of 40,000 words. *The Silver Spitfire* (1985) went on to success as an audiobook read by Griffin. An abridged version appeared in hardback, then in 2009 the full version of the story was published in paperback (Harvey, personal communication, 10 April 2017).

Radio Timperley (1986) known alternatively as *Frank's World*[166] was a situation comedy featuring the character, Frank Sidebottom, written and performed by Chris Sievey and produced by David Dunne at Piccadilly Radio. According to Dunne, this was an enjoyable collaborative creative process, including other voice performers, friends and even family who were quite happy to contribute, although the comedian Caroline Aherne would record her lines

[165] Harvey, personal communication, 10 April 2017.
[166] *Radio Timperley* (1986) was broadcast during The Phil Wood Show (1986) usually on Wednesday nights between 7pm and 10pm and then repeated on Saturday mornings between 8am and 11am during Saturday Express (1985) hosted by Chris Evans. As previously stated, original fiction was usually inserted at the discretion of the presenter.

as Mrs Merton in situ at Piccadilly. It was common practice was for Sievey to write and record segments of the show in his home studio. He performed his own songs and went even further by creating unique sound effects, multitracked and mixed ready for insertion. Sievey then brought these separate elements into Piccadilly on quarter inch tape for additional recording, editing, and mixing by Dunne. Sievey provided exact specifications for Dunne to apply during the editing process. In other areas, Sievey found it difficult to delegate and needed to be in complete control of everything regarding Frank. In this regard, Sievey's work with Dunne was comparable to Kenny Everett's approach on Capital Radio.

Frank was irascible, perpetually 35 years-old in a state of Jungian age regression, living with his mother and a collection of home-made puppets. Although the primary concern here is radio, it is necessary to acknowledge the highly visual nature of what was in effect a cross-media character. Listeners who were unaware of Frank's actual appearance would have been surprised to see his stage performances and comic strip appearances. The primary aspect of his character was a beach-ball sized fibreglass head painted with a stylized cartoon face reminiscent of *Betty Boop* (1930), with outsized unblinking blue headlamp-eyes (depicting a permanent look of surprise), bright unmoving red lips and precisely painted side-parted black hair. Frank was a real-life cartoon character, accompanied by 'Little Frank' a scaled down cardboard puppet version of himself with the same disconcerting glare. Frank's head was not to be discussed – it simply existed. Frank had other tacit expectations of the audience to be learned quickly: to him his hometown of Timperley was of international importance, as was his self-proclaimed status as a superstar musician. The goal was mischief, to confuse the uninitiated.

Under the head, Sievey wore a diver's nose clip to disguise his voice with a raspy nasal tone reminiscent of Mr. Punch. The non-naturalistic voice alone suggested that nothing in Frank's

world was conventional. The head is often detectable on radio as labial plosives caused by the proximity of Sievey's mouth to the fibreglass interior, audible through a small aperture in the mouth. The producer David Dunne confirms that Sievey wore the head in the studio and stayed in character during recording sessions (personal communication, 12 June 2018). Sievey's real unmasked voice appears as occasional ad hoc characters, but Frank's true identity remained a well-kept secret. Frank also had the advantage of appealing to two separate distinct demographic groups. The character appealed to children through his appearances on Saturday morning television and in comics written and drawn by Sievey himself.[167] He also played to an adult audience in comedy clubs, pubs and student union venues. It was precisely the same character without modification; youngsters found his childlike world appealing and for adults it worked as a knowingly ironic 'in' joke. Sievey was prolific in releasing records and cassettes under the persona of Frank Sidebottom and these songs also made their way into the show. Frank's music may be described as a fusion of George Formby and cover versions of 1980s indie pop music. From a commercial perspective, Frank Sidebottom was an effective intellectual property, proving a renewed potential for synergies between radio drama and comic publishing, despite being so far removed from radio's golden age.

IRDP successfully managed to sustain the production of regularly scheduled dramas on commercial radio. It was established by Tim Crook, Richard Shannon, and Marja Giejgo as a non-profit company to promote radio drama and expand opportunities for new writers. IRDP organised a series of festivals and competitions which resulted in the commissioning of plays by new writers who would not otherwise have had the chance to hear their work aired on the radio. They remained in operation beyond the 1990 Broadcasting Act, with contributions to

[167] *'Oink'* comic was published from 1986 to 1988 by Fleetway.

LBC lasting until 2002. IRDP was notable for broadcasting content every day, in five-minute episodes, followed by an hour-long omnibus during weekends (Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019). They began producing content for LBC which was predominantly a news and current affairs station. Capital Radio had applied for, and been granted, the 'general entertainment licence' for London which was a brief that lent itself more to the production of drama. But Crook was able to negotiate a position within LBC's format of news and current affairs because of his established role there as a news broadcaster. According to Crook, the approach taken to their four-part adaptation *Pepys* (1987) and their other early series *Tales from the Courts of Law* (1987) were written in a historical journalistic style.

According to Shannon (personal communication, 07 June 2019) IRDP's breakthrough was a consequence of LBC's requirement for drama to be formatted as five-minute segments to minimise the risk of waning audience attention, with another item following shortly thereafter. IRDP's relationship with LBC came with no guarantee that further productions would be commissioned. Starting with their adaptation of *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1825) which acted as a pilot, Shannon describes how he and Crook had no idea if the drama slot would be permitted to continue. The sliced narrative approach resulted in an enormous opportunity for LBC to raise its profile. Overnight, Shannon had duplicated multiple copies on cassette for press review. The Financial Times gave Pepys a sterling review which was of particular importance being a publication of significance to LBC's shareholders. The positive press continued as a result of garnering numerous awards, and it was necessary to maintain this high standard in order to keep LBC's constantly shifting management team satisfied.

As part of their sponsorship arrangement with the London Arts Board, IRDP devised a production model which involved a broad range of outreach work to community centres

running workshops on how to write for radio. Crook recalls the purpose behind these outreach projects:

> …going out to all kinds of locations, writing theatres, schools, universities to do active audio drama writing workshops. We produced a book and cassette pack. The mission was inspiring a younger demographic and cosmopolitan London writing community that radio drama was much more experimental, political, social, and relevant to them than what they were used to hearing on the BBC.[168]

This took them to more prominent places like the Theatre Royal Stratford East, Hampstead Theatre, and The Royal Court. Crook and Shannon would set a task for the attendees to write a five-minute introductory scene intended as a pilot for a longer play. They would select the scripts they considered to have the most potential and would actually commission, produce and broadcast them. IRDP also paid for the full-length piece. The dramatist Paul Sirett was one such discovery. His submission became the comedy *Vissi D'Arte* (1991) involving a group of unemployed singers who infiltrate The Royal Opera House to kidnap the stars and take their place on stage. IRDP also developed strong relationships with other ILR stations. Shannon commissioned young Irish writers through Downtown Radio in Northern Ireland, directing plays during the late period of the troubles.

All the performers hired by IRDP also worked at the BBC, some of whom were established names like Steven Thorne, Gerald Murphy and Edward Petherbridge. Shannon claims the actors found cubicle recording a novel and fun experience. Actors invariably enjoy the radio experience and in Shannon's view, they enjoyed the pace, variety and demands that were placed on them. For their adaptation of *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1825), IRDP used LBC's

[168] Crook, personal communication, 21 May 2020.

parliamentary studios which were comparatively spacious. This however led to a clash in usage after which they were only provided with access to much smaller studio spaces.

> I remember something that did disturb the actors, we had to get out of the studio, because the SDP and the Liberal Dems were falling apart, and they came in to give interviews. I remember being walked literally past David Owen as he was being ushered into the studio.[169]

IRDP also experienced some difficult moments that could have resulted in severed ties with LBC. They opted to deal with some difficult subjects, one of which was a play concerning male rape. In an act of self-regulation, Shannon recalls both he and Crook warning the weekend editor that this particular play was a hard-hitting subject which necessitated the use of explicit language as a matter of accuracy. Upon discovering the slot was for a Sunday lunchtime they expressed doubts over its suitability and offered to excise certain parts. The editor decided against this, and the result was catastrophic, with LBC suffering the ire of the Radio Authority. Crook is highly practiced in politics and as LBC's Legal Correspondent for many years, he was able to steer through the crisis and so IRDP prevailed.

> One of the things I love about being in the theatre is, in a company you feel part of family. IRDP for that period was definitely my family. We used the same actors again and again, although we always made a point of introducing a completely new person who'd never done radio. So there was a little bit of training and mentoring always going on. And some of these relationships with the actors I formed have gone on and I still see them and use them in other contexts.[170]

Producer John MacCalman worked as a production assistant with the comedian Craig Ferguson who performed on Radio Clyde as his comic persona *Bing Hitler* in *The Night of the Long*

[169] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.
[170] Ibid.

Skean Dhus (1986). Ferguson was at that point part of the British alternative comedy scene before his later stand-up comedy career in the US. MacCalman and Fergusson produced many short-form comedy sketches that could be dropped in as part of longer shows. They also produced a live album at the Tron Theatre during the Edinburgh Festival. MacCalman began in ILR as a result of his involvement in the IBA's initial public consultation period. Listeners in the Glasgow area were asked what they wanted from a prospective radio station. On his own initiative, he worked with a small team to prepare a written submission containing ideas which was acknowledged by the IBA. Subsequently, they arranged for him to meet Jimmy Gordon and resubmit his proposals in person. On the strength of that meeting, Gordon offered him a job as a Station Assistant.

> It was all very new, so we had to make it up as we went along. Tony Currie described me as producer, presenter, technician and general dogsbody I had to learn how to operate all of the studio desks, as not all the presenters would be able to self-operate.[171]

MacCalman characterises the IBA as "incredibly enlightened" in its measures to redirect profits into worthwhile programming. He recalls the IBA requirement for stations to spend at least 3% of net advertising revenue on live music. Radio Clyde opted to invest in a multi-track studio which would also prove beneficial to drama production and a mobile recording studio which could be deployed to theatres to record live performances. This meant that Radio Clyde would eventually have three main live studios with a fourth dedicated to news presentation. In addition, there was a separate non-live production studio for commercial production. The central-most studio was funded by the 3% obligation and contained a separate control room with a multitrack recording desk and an adjacent performance room for music and drama. But

[171] MacCalman, personal communication, 23 January 2021.

despite the excellent facilities it became quite natural to work excessively long hours through the night just to complete a production according to MacCalman. For instance, during the production of *The Bell in the Tree* (1983)[172] the writer Edward Chisnall was also employed as a lecturer but managed to work around his schedule to be present in the studio for most of the recording days. John MacCalman also worked with Hamish Wilson who, in addition to *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) directed many other full length drama productions like Paisley-set *The Slab Boys* (1979) based on the novels by John Byrne.

The first series of *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) was commissioned by station director Andy Park to coincide with Glasgow's *Pride of the Clyde* celebrations. It broadly dealt with the history of Glasgow and the west of Scotland at home and abroad over a period of two millennia. Chisnall drew upon his own background knowledge as a historian and made use of primary and secondary sources. Initially in 1981, Chisnall approached Alex Dixon, a producer at Clyde with whom he had previously worked, writing lyrics and other original materials for a number of Clyde programmes. Chisnall had established a reputation at Clyde as a reliable writer and as an artist. His work as an illustrator also played a supporting role in his pitch. He proposed a series of short episodes in style of a daily cartoon strip, like Capital's *Honey Adair* (1973), which was in keeping with the notion of a close association between ILR and investors from the press industry. In preparation for the pitch, Chisnall devised a short-form episodic format of 10 to 15-minutes, each episode consisting of two scenes. The programme was then referred to Park, who then set up a working relationship between Chisnall and drama producer Hamish Wilson. Radio Clyde had established its drama unit in 1979 and was headed by Wilson until

[172] "We cruelly referred to *The Bell in the Tree* as 'the shouting show' as many of the actors seemed to spend their time shouting." (MacCalman, personal communication, 23 January 2021). This was another instance of the tendency amongst actors to 'confront the microphone'.

the early 1990s. Previously, Wilson had been Radio Forth's Arts and Drama producer since 1975.

Chisnall conducted his research by gaining access to the Glasgow City Chamber archives. Underneath the chambers lies a network of tunnels where original council proceedings from the 16th and 17th centuries are stored. Chisnall based his stories on these primary sources, meaning that these episodes are essentially dramatisations of Glasgow's historical record. "These had to be read in the auld Scots and a bit of Latin, a very rich source of just about everything" (Chisnall, personal communication, 15 February 2021). He also had a carel permanently reserved at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. His intention was to appeal to a wide a section of the community and so he deliberately worked humour into the factual historic details.

A creative choice was made to incorporate pre-recorded and live spot effects whilst laying tracks which meant that at their peak efficiency, Wilson and Chisnall managed to record two episodes per day. In the initial discussion with Dixon, it was agreed that the scripts would be performed by a limit of two or three actors. Chisnall recalls the casting process involved a large number of Scottish actors who were happy to provide even a simple cameo. The original year-long series of *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) totalled 260 episodes and was broadcast three times a day during the year. It won a bronze medal for World's Best Radio Drama Series at the New York Radio Festival. In 1983, Chisnall received The Radio and Television Club of Scotland's award for Most Lasting Contribution to Local Life. In Barcelona, *The Bell in the Tree Two* (1990) won a Silver Pegasus at the 1990 Los Premios Ondas, collected by Chisnall and Jimmy Gordon. Chisnall also wrote four books based on the series.

The second series was directly commissioned in 1990 by station owner Jimmy Gordon[173] for Glasgow's year as European City of Culture. The additional 265 episodes brought the series total up to 530. It was produced by Findlay Welsh at Radio Clyde's new purpose-built studios in Clydebank and Teacher's Whisky provided sponsorship. The new series took on a slightly different format, by including a recurring character called 'The Traveller' played by Russell Hunter who provided a consistent thread throughout each episode. Chisnall took inspiration from the concept of 'promenade theatre' a technique that takes the audience around a theatrical environment with individualised segments each containing different performances. In this case, Chisnall moves the listener aurally to significant places in Glasgow like The Burrell Gallery and the Glasgow Transport Museum where characterisations of actual historical figures emerge. His work is now archived in the Glasgow Room of the Mitchell Library at Glasgow University at their request. Excerpts from Chisnall's *Bell in the Tree* books were given to the British National Corpus.

4.5 Budgets

FRANK:	Look at what I've got in me shoe. Look at all that eh? All that money eh?
LITTLE FRANK:	Ooh there must be a million pound!
FRANK:	Not far off Little Frank! Now, you know I'm in showbusiness, I've been saving me concert money, radio money and me 'Oink Comic' money, all that sort of thing… and guess how much I've got?
LITTLE FRANK:	A million?
FRANK:	Near! Twenty-eight pounds and eleven pence…[174]

[173] Lord Gordon of Strathblane.
[174] Sievey 1987.

The BBC operated with a clear distinction between creative practice and administration. But this disconnect was not mirrored in commercial radio, which nevertheless still sought to demonstrate quality. ILR did not have standardised budgets either and there was an inconsistency between job roles and production team structures, suggesting a degree of individual creative authorship within each production. Before Equity and the IBA formalised an agreement, payments were discretionary and there is a likelihood that only a small amount of money would have been allocated to most productions. A proportion of these performers sought to prove themselves, over delivering for very little recompense. The ambitious *Rose A Ring* (1973)[175] was made in house boasting a large cast of eight for £319 per episode. *Famous Courtesans* (1973)[176] was a comparably sized series with a cast of six and used an external studio at a cost of £123.50 per episode. In 1973 John MacCalman's annual salary as a new producer at Radio Clyde was £2,200, approximately £28,000 in 2021. He recalls recording commercial voice overs[177] to supplement his salary, since the IBA prohibited presenters from making any form of endorsement. For the rest of ILR however, it is realistic to expect production budgets of under a hundred pounds, perhaps even only covering expenses. According to David Dunne, show fees at Piccadilly Radio were low. Chris Sievey would not have been paid very much for *Radio Timperley* (1986). Dunne is certain that additional contributors would not have received any payment. There is a difficulty in obtaining from interviewees even a rough memory of fees paid to performers. Time is obviously a factor, there is also the possibility of embarrassment. The IBA archive contains itemised breakdowns of costs for Capital Radio's earliest experiments with fiction (IBA 1973b). *She and Me* (1973) and *Honey Adair* (1973) cost £67.50 and £92.50 respectively. *She and Me* (1973) was overseen

[175] Capital Radio. Four weekly 20-minute episodes.
[176] Capital Radio. Three daily 12-minute episodes.
[177] MacCalman recalls commercial production for Clyde as an opportunity to be creative, using drama-production skills. One script had the opening line: "I'm speaking to you from inside a wardrobe at Carrick Furniture House". He stood inside a wardrobe with the door partially closed to record the voice over (personal communication, 23 January 2021).

by an in-house producer whose cost was absorbed into their salary and so not presented as an itemised cost incurred on the budget. *Honey Adair* (1973) had its own director listed as part of the production budget. The studio fees for both productions, each staffed by technical operators, were comparable at £25 and £30 each per episode.

The wording of these budgets is of particular interest. "In-House Studio" and "Studio" are itemised with different price points. "Studio" refers to the hiring of external production facilities separate from their own studio, with itemised breakdowns of each individual service provided. Ian Edwards, a former producer at Capital Radio, remembers one of the external studios hired was Scorpio Sound based below Capital Radio in Euston Tower (personal communication, 23 February 2021). There were a number of Capital Radio productions made either internally or externally in this way. *She and Me* (1973) specifies the use of Capital Radio's in-house studio, five pounds cheaper than the itemised charges for *Honey Adair* (1973). The cost breakdowns for each were as follows:

She and Me		**Honey Adair**		
Writer	£5.00	Writer		£17.00
Cast (2)	£31.00	Director		£10.00
Script	£3.00	Cast (5)		£27.50
Staff	£3.50	Studio:		
In-house studio	£25.00		Tape	£3.00
			Editing	£17.00
			Recording	£10.00
			Typing and music	£8.00
Total:	£67.50	**Total:**		£92.50

Figure 2: Comparison of budgets on Capital Radio (amended from IBA 1973).

A telling aspect of these budgets is the practice of assigning an additional fee to their own internal facilities and staff. Typically, actors would be hired on a freelance basis, as would the scriptwriter in most cases. But the listing of staff and studio fees indicates an exercise in internal

cost management by making external price comparisons. Roger Piper[178] characterises this practice as 'kite flying', in other words, evidence for the IBA to assess how well stations were meeting their remit (personal communication, 25 February 2021).

Without exaggerating the significance of these documents, it is interesting to contemplate that in adopting this arrangement, Capital Radio may have unwittingly demonstrated an internal marketplace model. It is conceivable that this sort of practice would be of interest to those with designs to supplant the command economy structure of the BBC. Whether by accident or design, these budgetary arrangements resemble a prototype form of Producer Choice, predating John Birt's reforms by two decades. Realistically, these archived budgets were likely to have been used as ammunition to justify the end of drama production on Capital, rather than touching upon McKinsey's[179] 1970 recommendations. Having experimented briefly with several types of these serials, Capital discontinued production having not attracted any critical acclaim or a sufficiently sized audience (IBA 1976), but production would resume a few years later with *Capital Playhouse* (1984).

What is not clear from this document is how much content these costs represent, or the length of each series. Capital's early serials usually ran to a duration of only five, ten or fifteen-minutes each. Episode one of *Honey Adair* (1973) runs to just over four-minutes. A full day of studio work could therefore represent a week, perhaps even a month of episodes. It is reasonable to infer that these costs represent recording blocks providing enough editions to last from launch day in October to the end of December, after which the series was cancelled. Within weeks of its launch, Capital Radio was in debt by one million pounds. The Heath

[178] Former Capital Radio studio manager.
[179] McKinsey Inc. the management consulting firm.

Government had declared another state of emergency, followed by the three-day week and Capital's chairman Richard Attenborough, who recalled being in his shirtsleeves vacuuming studio carpets in the early hours of launch day, was compelled to offer his art collection as collateral to obtain a bank loan (2008). It was entirely right for ILR stations to remain fiscally conservative, and drama was deemed prohibitively expensive even at this early point. However, the use of shorter vignettes or sketches would continue as an enduring format across ILR, a fact observed by John Thompson who wrote that "the brevity of episode is usually likely to be necessary in any 'drama' broadcast" (IBA 1976b).

Since ILR stations took so many atypical approaches to creative fiction, there are no consistent budgets that typify costs. ILR's most expensive production is likely to have been Radio Forth's production of *Mary Queen of Scots* (1976) with an estimated overall production cost of £8,000 (IBA 1976b). This cost was amortised over 130 episodes of ten minutes each. The scriptwriter would be paid £3,250 over the duration. At Radio City in Merseyside, Gillian Reynolds signed Alan Bleasdale to write and perform *The Franny Scully Show* (1974) with a repeat for £75 per week.

> It was scheduled at lunchtimes on Saturdays, and it was a huge success (sometimes I played Scully's gran.) It was cheap (because Robert's salary as a producer wasn't counted in) and it was very effective.[180]

The rate was at her discretion, since at that stage there was no formal deal arranged between ILR and Equity or The Writer's Guild. In Sheffield, Radio Hallam also saw the value in financing drama. Ralph Bernard joined in 1975 with the desire and motivation to tell culturally relevant stories with the provision of social gain:

[180] Reynolds, personal communication, 16 December 2020.

> …if you put a proposal to the IBA, for a meaningful speech programme, then you could get secondary rental money to pay for it. So there was actually some reasonably forward thinking by the IBA.[181]

He went as far as commissioning writer Jeremy Sandford, who had previously written Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966), to script the five-part drama *Dying for a Drink* (1977).[182] Hallam liked Bernard's proposal and paid for the series which cost £2000, somewhat lower but still comparable to a contemporaneous BBC drama budget. This too was regarded as highly expensive by most accounts gleaned from ILR dramatists who often lacked *any* funding. Gillian Reynolds recalls this difficultly in balancing minimal financing for fiction:

> If the budgets were small, the will to make such programmes was intense. I put some (drama) into our original schedule because I knew our audience would respond to them. The trick was balancing the cost against the impact. It is easy to underestimate the difficulties of balancing income against programme costs and, in commercial radio that is the major computation. It is therefore much, much easier and cheaper not to include scripted speech in any form. In other words, if it is not regulated for within the 'mixed programming' remit it won't happen, neither will features or documentaries unless supplementary forms of funding can be found.[183]

It is helpful to keep in mind the value placed on radio drama by the stations and their owners, balanced against their primary concern of station earnings. An additional motivation was to demonstrate quality. This served to raise the wider societal value placed on radio drama. A recurring observation amongst practitioners was that fiction needed to demonstrably *increase* profits and if it didn't, it couldn't realistically be capitalised on. Reynolds continues:

> Believe me, if commercial radio as a whole could have 'capitalised' on it (drama), they would have. Unfamiliar programmes need time to bed in on any kind of radio (BBC included.) If these programmes are expensive there is less time allowed for them to make an impact. From the point of view that

[181] Bernard, personal communication, 07 December 2020.
[182] Broadcast over an entire week in 1977.
[183] Reynolds, personal communication, 16 December 2020.

> promotes the ethos of public service broadcasting, the production of fiction for radio has not been able to find tenure within a commercial business model Personally, I didn't think they got either the proposition or the product consistently right but that's just me as a listener.

Stoller also held the same view that "ILR's heart never was in drama, it just didn't fit ILR's strengths: localness, popular appeal, low-cost production" (personal communication, 2008). But Tim Crook of IRDP proved capitalisation and profit *was* possible:

> Every one of our drama formats throughout the IRDP association with LBC between 1987 and 2002 generated audience growth wherever they were scheduled. The success of these productions was such that we attracted more funding from LBC. We found we could sell our productions in cassette form, and NPR in the USA began buying our output and offering co-production budgets.[184]

Companies wanted to demonstrate intellectual credibility in ways other than just news and chat and it was always necessary for fictional content to reveal or reflect the character of the community (Dunne, personal communication, 12 June 2018). For instance, Radio Clyde's owners recognised the respect and status provided by Hamish Wilson who took the cost-effective approach of reading classic gothic literature during his late-night show. Wilson's value was a result of his training as an actor and experience in television, which translated into prestige for Radio Forth. His dramatic delivery was an essential component of the programme's success. In this instance, status was attained with economic pragmatism rather than by the development of original scripts or extensive stages of production and post-production. Perhaps to the more cynical of contractors, this amounted to little more than seeking a necessary house-point with regards to the IBA. But it was adapted dramatic content, nonetheless. Wilson proved that stations could demonstrate cultural provision, even if their efforts only amounted to the

[184] Crook, personal communication, 21 May 2020.

occasional instance of ambition. This would imply that station owners and management developed both a qualitative and personal view of the effectiveness and worth of its fictional content, given the shortcomings of JICRAR[185] data before 1992 (Stoller 2010b). Martin Esslin, the BBC's Head of Radio Drama from 1963 to 1977, said this regarding budgets:

> In planning a radio play we think in terms of hundreds of pounds. On television one thinks in thousands. In the theatre one thinks in tens of thousands. In the cinema one thinks in hundreds of thousands. Really, then, we are the most economic dramatic medium there is. [It is] possible to venture on out-of-the-way experimental material with far less heart-searching than any television programme, even one addressed to a minority audience, could tackle.[186]

According to Roger Harvey, he enjoyed a strong financial commitment to drama at Metro Radio in Newcastle. Although it is not possible to cite specific costs, Harvey does recall "a lot of money at the time, it was 'thousands of pounds' and covered all the costs involved" (personal communication, 10 April 2017). These unusually high budgets also included the use of non-needletime music which meant an alternative MCPS charge based on usage in the context of production, rather than the normal playout of chart music during the course of the day. The alteration of IBA's funding arrangements in 1978 which introduced the secondary rental levy, coincided with Roger Harvey's arrival at Metro Radio. His proposed series of dramas was timely given the new opportunity to apply for funding for 'experimental programming', though he was quite aware of the reaction to such a contentious move, which was considered unjust amongst AIRC members, many of whom were still finding their feet financially. Like Radio Forth's epic production of *Mary Queen of Scots* (1976) and Ralph Bernard's documentary drama *Dying for a Drink* (1977), Harvey's play *The Reunion* (1979) was an expensive

[185] Joint Industry Committee for Radio Audience Research.
[186] (Esslin 1966 cited by Murdoch 1981).

production to mount. The lead actor Ian Bannen and his wife were accommodated in a local hotel and during the day's recording a "lavish Sunday lunch was laid on in the radio station's boardroom" (Harvey, personal communication, 10 April 2017).

The apparent allocation of extensive budgets continued with his subsequent productions, but with a number of procedural changes. Harvey would need to take over post-production duties himself meaning that the drama department would in effect mirror Sean Street's experience as a one-man show. Secondly, costs could be reduced by running a simplified production process containing less scenes, more in-house recording, greater use of the BBC sound effects library and employing fewer actors, spreading their work across multiple productions. Even though he would continue to spend the majority of his budget on actors, he continued to write economically resulting in what he characterises as 'extravagant' productions, as a consequence of hiring prestigious names. For instance, his subsequent original play *Prisoners* (1981), designed to be a 'two-hander' set in a prison cell, starred former RSC players Peter Wheeler and Geoffrey Freshwater.

With regards to previously cited examples like Wilson at Clyde, Harvey at Metro, Dunne at Piccadilly, and Street at 2CR, all were producers employed within a department at their station. However IRDP was independent much like the subsequent burgeoning 'indie' sector that was eventually established. As an independent production company, IRDP operated as a non-profit organisation. Its stated objectives demonstrated the lack of funding available for serious drama production. It was necessary for Tim Crook to spend a proportion of what would have otherwise been creative time to apply for sponsorship and pursue other forms of revenue. Shannon describes the running of a radio drama production company for so many years as "like a marriage and we were under huge pressure, financial pressure, production pressure, pressure

from the station" (personal communication, 07 June 2019). Yet throughout that time, their relationship was sustained. Initially, Crook himself subsidised IRDP's creative work consisting of new plays and classic series. He, along with the director Richard Shannon also received help from Capital Radio and LBC who granted the use of their studio facilities and provided engineering support, though this would shortly come to an end.

> …we were completely autonomous. We were like a cuckoo in the nest, really, they (LBC) gave us a desk, we had use of the studios. In the end, they couldn't afford to give us engineers, but we learned how to do it by that stage. We learned on the job. I learned how to engineer and post produce it. But the fact is, we were being increasingly taken seriously, but we were always independent.[187]

At one point, a new fund was established which arose from a radio conference. IRDP secured enough money from this to provide workshops in major theatres and community centres and a ten-year scheme to mount the London Radio Playwrights' Festival. Out of that came Martin McDonagh's first and only radio play commission. Crook was also successful in securing funding from the London Arts Board and a partnership with the then Woolwich Building Society to establish 'The Woolwich Young Radio Playwrights Festival' which also ran for 10 years and premiered the first work by Simon Beaufoy who went on to write *The Full Monty* (1997). In recognition of this success, IRDP received The Daily Telegraph/ABSA (Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts) award for Best Youth Sponsorship in 1991. In 1996, IRDP received a nomination at the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Awards for 'Developing and Fostering New Writing' in recognition of this work.

[187] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

IRDP's success led to securing numerous lucrative commercial commissions, which would assist in funding further initiatives. IRDP established a working relationship with National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States to produce adaptations of *Sherlock Homes* (1991) and *Frankenstein* (1996) which they could then rebroadcast on ILR stations. Most of IRDP's 'heavyweight' classical adaptations came from NPR commissions, most notably *Dracula* (1995). IRDP is also distinctive for its commissioning of original music, a rare luxury in ILR drama, as the available budgets increased due in large part to financing from NPR. Shannon recalls that there was a lot of money available from the United States for productions of this sort.[188] He also recalls other commercial projects like a series of dramas for use in corporate staff development. For instance, 'Act as an Industry' commissioned specially written plays for IBM employees distributed on cassette as part of a training exercise.

> …we were asked to produce a huge commercial series. Marshall Cavendish commissioned us to do a series called Music Box, which was a 52-part glossy magazine and CD collection using classical music and stories for children. It was a global publication, and we did that for two years and it was a really good revenue stream.[189]

Shannon recalls a pivotal point where a decision had to be made regarding whether or not to accept yet another commercial brief. They were approached by McGraw Hill with a proposal, but despite being a potential secondary revenue stream, it would have taken IRDP's focus away from its stated brief of expanding opportunity for newcomers to the media industry.

[188] National Public Radio commissioned IRDP to make a documentary for D-Day. They hired Lord Callahan to narrate the piece with Edward Petherbridge and contributions from Denis Healey and Phil Collins. It was an involved production. Shannon produced with the help of Tim Crook. As Shannon recalls, the post-production stage was 'a complete nightmare' (personal communication, 07 June 2019).
[189] Ibid.

Ironically IRDP flourished during the period when AIRC braced for change in anticipation of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Crook and Shannon were producing weekly content at a highly productive rate. Money was in place and the novelty of making drama with a high degree of autonomy was undoubtedly exciting. The decline came naturally as the finances began to dwindle. Sustaining the model that allowed for new talent to be developed and nurtured became difficult. There was also a difficultly in bringing new staff into the company who were able to continue working to the standard set by Crook and Shannon. There was little scope to train people to run IRDP, let alone foster new dramatists.

> I suppose my only regret is that we didn't sustain a commercial model to support the art and we weren't in a position to employ other people, and we weren't able to hand the company on as an entity. So although I feel were a little bit like John the Baptist, we were breaking new ground, and we sustained it for a very long time.[190]

In conclusion, station owners who promised drama certainly tried to deliver, with some stations going further providing a healthy outlay for production budgets. It was commendable to save money and deliver more with less. But inevitably, this meant working harder with fewer staff and low pay for creative talent. This was in the absence of any formal structures or agreements with trade bodies like Equity. The remit to serve the community also allowed producers room to make use of amateur performers, without formal obligation to employ professional union actors. To compound these concerns, the increasingly adverse effect of administrative duties involved in, for instance, pursuing sponsorship (in IRDP's case) meant less time for creativity. Essentially, LBC and Capital were willing to provide facilities and make space for drama programming in their schedules, but were not prepared to provide funding, meaning IRDP

[190] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

relied predominantly upon sponsorship, despite demonstrating that drama was successful on commercial radio.

4.6 Equity

ILR regularly used both amateur community talent with professional performers, as a natural part of working alongside the community. During the second reading of the Sound Broadcasting Bill, Hugh Jenkins,[191] who also happened to be the former Assistant General Secretary of Equity[192], stated ILR companies "ought to be allowed to use existing amateur organizations to provide a cross-section of what is happening in the areas they cover" (HC Deb 1971a). But it was necessary for producers to take care, especially since the IBA required high standards of broadcasting competence (Stoller 2010b).

Radio performances require a certain level of specialist skill. Mixing amateur performers into a production was inadvisable and increased the likelihood of disrupting a rehearsal or performance, or at least obscuring a play's message. It was also Baron Jenkins hope "that local radio companies will not be allowed to create amateur organisations for the purpose of employing cheap labour". Piccadilly Radio was recognised as making drama to a satisfactory standard in partnership with Manchester University's drama group (IBA 1976a). The IBA acknowledged this as a success that incorporated and reflected the local community. An interesting accusation regarding the use of amateurs in local radio was made internally by Peter Redhouse. BBC Radio Carlisle had apparently broadcast an unauthorised production of Tom Stoppard's *An Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972).[193] The recording featured amateur

[191] Baron Jenkins of Putney and Labour Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries.
[192] The actor's union.
[193] Broadcast on 14 November 1972, BBC Radio 3.

performers contrary to Equity's requirements. Upon investigation, Radio Carlisle had in fact followed the Equity guidelines precisely. But many ILR producers continued to routinely step around this issue without recourse. Radio Clyde's John MacCalman recalls how presenters were prohibited from recording voice overs for commercials as this was considered a form of endorsement by the IBA. MacCalman who was not a member of any union at the time, recorded the voice overs himself and was paid a supplementary fee in addition to his annual salary (personal communication, 23 January 2021).

In 1973, a meeting was held between AIRC and Equity to explore a possible relationship between members (Flint 1973). Initially, Equity expected drama to be networked across stations, but the syndicated content model would come much later. They queried if AIRC intended to become a trade union since it was preferable to have a closed shop agreement for the whole of ILR, rather than registering separate agreements with each station. In lieu of an agreement, Equity would favour a casting agreement to protect the interests of actors and indeed broadcasters. This was an issue since Equity's proposal to represent station announcers and presenters was seemingly in conflict with an identical proposal from The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT)[194] and The Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS).[195] Equity had similar agreements in place for theatre, film and television, but excluded the BBC which had its own arrangements. A seemingly beneficial model for both parties was the suggestion that stations should be able to employ actors for sessions, across multiple productions, rather than the BBC approach which paid £14 per half day and £18 for a full day regardless of programme length (Garnett 1974). According to *The Stage* (1974), these fees would replace the rates for actors hired by BBC local radio stations.

[194] ACTT eventually became BECTU - The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union.
[195] ABS represented BBC employees.

There was the additional matter of broadcasting live theatrical performances which would require separate negotiations. This was of particular significance to Capital Radio who later purchased The Duke of York's Theatre in 1979 from Peter Saunders with a view to synergising both businesses. Richard Attenborough stated: "It has always been Capital's hope that it would be as involved as possible with the arts within the community it serves" (Ashton 1996). The purchase required the approval of the IBA, which it granted, and work began on refurbishment. The theatre reopened in 1980 with the first Capital Radio production being Glenda Jackson in *Rose* (1980). This was followed by Al Pacino starring in David Mamet's *American Buffalo*, Richard Harris' comedy *Stepping Out* directed by Julia Mackenzie, and Willy Russell's *Shirley Valentine*. It is not clear if these plays were also broadcast on Capital. Capital Radio also used the theatre for meetings and expressed a wish for other ILR stations to use it too. In 1992 Capital sold the theatre to The Ambassador Theatre Group.

Equity's initial proposals suggested a fee of £20 per half day and £30 per full day. Philip Birch of Piccadilly Radio responded to Equity's proposal for a basic charge and repeat fee for the use of professional singers (1973). Birch pointed out that this was the same problem they faced with drama; the cost of employing artists was unrealistic given typical revenues for medium and small stations. AIRC remained concerned with a lack of recognition by Equity regarding the vast range of sizes across ILR stations (Garnett 1973). It was necessary for AIRC to communicate the differences in potential audience size. They pushed for four categories: the London area, areas with a population over 1 million, areas with a population between 500,000 and 1 million, and areas with a population lower than 500,000.

Equity did make an initial fee agreement to cover ILR's plans for short sketches and vignettes of 5 minutes or less to be approved on an as and when basis. But by 1976, Thompson was keen

to ensure that AIRC took a professional approach to the use of actors. It was his observation on the state of ILR drama that there was often some suspicion from stations when offered syndicated drama as an internal commodity, in terms of quality, cost and audience interest (IBA 1976b).

ILR had initially negotiated fee rates with Equity for the use of actors in commercials. Later, Radio Forth had negotiated a separate drama deal with Equity. By early 1975, Equity had devised a new arrangement for local radio which specifically allowed a lower rate fee than the existing general agreement (BBC WAC 1979a). This initially appeared to promise a future for drama, "an opportunity to fatten up Local Radio's contribution to cultural life" (BBC WAC 1975). Thompson also made some important observations regarding the level of acceptance of BBC radio drama amongst local listeners. His interpretation of JICRAR data showed that drama broadcast during the day was skewed to a London audience, when compared with listeners in Liverpool (and likely other UK regions too). He also observed a gender divide in the audience with more women listening to drama than men (IBA 1976b), likely a consequence of the limitations imposed by the economic circumstances of the time which forced women to stay at home.

One undated memo in the IBA's Equity file regarding the use of professional voiceover artists states that there was a surplus of actors willing to take part in ILR commercials, but the opportunity to do so had not yet been taken up asking: "Why not? Agencies apathy? Programme companies' ignorance/apathy? Cost considerations? (or cost misapprehensions)" (IBA 1974e). A subsequent initial meeting between the IBA and Equity was held in February 1978 to address the non-use of members. The minutes show that Equity had accepted that previous low revenues precluded fees in parity with work in similar circumstances as evidenced

by their agreement with Radio Forth. Thompson pointed out that although ILR's fortunes had improved, many stations were not yet profitable and were still paying off development costs. Gabriel Woolf raised the issue that the stated objectives of stations regarding drama were not being met and subsequently lacked balanced programming (IBA 1978).

The new fees for drama went into effect in May 1983. An actor would be paid based on 'network' rates which referred to the broadcast of a play across more than ten stations in the ILR system, and 'part network' of up to, and including, ten stations, and by individual station.

Network		**Part Network**		**Individual Station**	
Full day engagement	£64.00	Full day engagement	£48.00	Full day engagement	£32.00
Half day engagement	£42.50	Half day engagement	£34.00	Half day engagement	£25.00
Up to two hours	£26.50	Up to two hours	£21.50	Up to two hours	£17.00

Overtime:

Full day: 1.5 hours £3.50, or the two-hour rate if longer
Half day: One hour = £7, or the two-hour rate if longer
Two-hour: Half day rate

Duration & Breaks (not applicable to overtime)

Two hours: with 15-minute break
Half day: four hours & 30-minute break
Full day: eight hours & 60-minute break

Figure 3: Equity rates for ILR drama. 14.04.1983

Stations would be entitled to one transmission and three repeats before a residual fee totalling 50% of the original payment would be incurred. An actor could reasonably expect a two-hour recording session to correspond with an equivalent of fifteen minutes of programme time across a maximum of three programmes or items, which would fall into the category of comedy sketch. A half-day session would translate to a thirty-minute play, or five individual sketches and a full day would correspond to a one-hour play or ten sketches.

IRDP also had a special agreement with Equity. Director Richard Shannon was and remains an Equity member, and so there was a keenness for their plays to be properly budgeted and paid for. In 1987, before embarking on their first production, Shannon arranged for a meeting with

Equity's head of audio to discuss the economic realities of ILR. IRDP, as a non-profit company working with Capital and LBC (both non-national services) to increase opportunity for new writers, simply could not match BBC rates. And so an additional rate was negotiated and deemed acceptable. This meant Shannon could confidently offer a fee to actors with Equity's approval. He found that actors were usually very understanding of their circumstances. However, agent negotiations were more complex. There were certain precautionary clauses to bear in mind regarding repeats and sales to other ILR broadcasters. IRDP also produced commercial ancillary products, like releasing a series of LBC dramas on audiocassette for sale exclusively at WHSmith which incurred additional Equity fees but most importantly, demonstrated the commercial viability of ILR drama. Examples of these dramas will be analysed in chapter five.

4.7 Use and expressions of vernacular culture

A common characteristic of these case studies are the demonstrably vibrant and entertaining expressions of regionality, contradicting the assumption that local radio was somehow prosaic, unsophisticated or inconsequential. Vernacular speech and characterisations based upon local idiosyncrasies could have value, as Stoller (2010a) maintains, the duty to provide local output was the ILR system's key selling point.

> Indeed, it can be argued that those same obligations – requiring essentially local output, strong local and national news, information and features, plus a wider range of music than a commercial approach would ever have contemplated – actually underpinned the success. It caught the mood of the times, socially, politically and economically.[196]

[196] (Stoller 2010a)

Additionally, we have considered how the Manchester School may be regarded as the product of Manchester's culture manifesting itself, distinct from the ideals of public service radio. In this regard, Piccadilly Radio, which happens to be a commercial station, is also an expression of the Manchester School ethos and approach: the local character of Manchester expressing and asserting itself through programming. This phenomenon even predates the BBC. Russell (2004) cites the popularity of northern 'dialect writing' in publications like the Yorkshire 'Clock Almanacs' of John Hartley which consisted of humorous texts written in 'eye dialect'[197] referring to the phonetic spelling of regional vernacular speech to approximate its pronunciation. Russell (2004) maintains that communities negotiate economic upheaval "by drawing from and reworking their existing cultural legacy" (2004, p.118). Cohen also observes how "societies undergoing rapid de-stabilizing generate atavistically traditional forms importing meaning to contemporary circumstance" (2013, p.46). Likewise, Joyce (1994) speculates that when a strong community experiences social dislocation, its popular and vital oral culture will stubbornly assert itself. In the 1930's, such change was imposed on Manchester's social structure. Consequently, the region's culture was reasserted more rigorously through North Region. It happened again in the 1980s by its re-emergence through Piccadilly Radio's comedies.

In previous chapters we have considered the regional dramatist's use of vernacular speech in opposition to the standard English of the BBC. Locally produced fictional content as an act of democratisation suggests that ILR's widening of opportunity brought attention to talent otherwise obscured *by* their regionality, their use of vernacular speech previously considered incompatible with a national audience. As Russell says, this is "the north on its own territory,

[197] A term coined by George Philip Krapp. A modern equivalent would be the cartoon strips of *Oor Wullie* and *The Broons* featured in *The Sunday Post*.

being allowed make sense of itself" (2004, p.111). The supposed incongruity of such works being a product of a commercial model, rather than a part of existing local public services, is a component of two discussions. The first concerns ILR's need to turn a profit, whilst providing social gain. The second relates to that moment in the BBC's history when it faced a pressing need for growth and modernisation, leading to a period of considerable introspection. We have also considered the geographical differences between regions and local communities, the most prominent being what is understood to be 'The North', coupled with the disparate approaches across different ILR stations. Bearing in mind that by establishing the Programme Sharing Scheme, regions could hear the drama and comedy of other regions. Through these works of fiction, regions could regard each other's common values, traits and contrasting characteristics, decontextualised from the perspective of a national service. This also served to contrast the isolated approach of local BBC radio. It is useful to keep in mind Russell's (2004) view of place *as entity* with Hill & Williams' (1996, p.6) notion of culture as a state of mind.

Throughout this thesis, emphasis has been placed on 'northern' ILR drama and comedy and their associated fictional characters as exemplars of authentic vernacular culture in radio fiction. Piccadilly Radio and Liverpool's Radio City share the majority of the focus, with some notable additions from Metro Radio in Tyneside, Radio Clyde in Glasgow and Radio Forth serving Edinburgh and the Lothians. Little wonder then that the listening public now felt compelled to propose scripts on spec, most of which were unsuitable. By developing a sense of community involvement, they saw an entitlement to propose their own original work. From 1965 to 1980 there was a provincial expansion in local theatre in the vacuum left by provincial repertory groups. Local authority funding and Arts Council grants led to a growth in community-theatre groups and touring companies. Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre was renovated, and a series of new municipal theatres were custom-built like The Haymarket in

Leicester, The Crucible in Sheffield and at campuses in Sussex and Warwick allowing people to see live professional theatre locally.

Plays made for LBC and Capital particularly by IRDP. are notably distinguishable from the regions, aligning with a style, tone and approach consistent with the BBC and largely conforming to audience expectations of Radio Four. *Coffee and Tea 90p* (1991)[198] written by playwright Tony Duarte was produced under roughly the same practical conditions available at Broadcasting House and used a comparably sized cast (Duarte, personal communication, 12 January 2021). The setting is not specified, but locale is not an element of the plot or presented as an issue. Even so, the characters have southern accents, placing the story in contemporary Greater London. The plot, which concerns a broken relationship follows a non-linear narrative structure and exhibits the generic traits of a realist melodrama. By all accounts, this is a conventional play entirely in keeping with *The Afternoon Play* (1967)[199] and does not present itself as a regional product. There is a certain universality and accessibility to LBC and Capital plays given London's prevalence in media representation and its diverse inclusive nature. But this also infers a tendency towards featureless homogeneity to fictional programmes produced for London. By way of contrast, Edward Chisnall's *The Bell in the Tree* (1983) was necessarily *about* Glasgow. In the 1980s, a growing number of ILR productions made outside of London were more definable by their 'localness' or regionality. Places, towns and cities were presented as distinctively as the characters themselves. *The Bradshaws* (1983)[200] took place in the town of Barnoldswick. 'Scully*',* the protagonist of Alan Bleasdale's *The Franny Scully Show*

[198] LBC 1991 produced by IRDP (broadcast dates unknown).
[199] Broadcast from 1967 to present, BBC Radio Four. Previously *Afternoon Theatre*.
[200] Broadcast weekly on Piccadilly Radio starting in 1983 and continues to be repeated on a variety of local stations up to the present-day, including BBC Radio Merseyside, Chorley FM, 7 Waves Radio, Tameside Radio, Canalside Radio, The Cat 107.9 FM and Wythenshawe FM.

(1974)[201] habitually namechecks local footballers,[202] streets and neighbourhoods around the city of Liverpool. Gillian Reynolds also commissioned the singer John Gorman of *The Scaffold* to write and perform the comedy series *PC Plod* (1974) (personal communication, 16 December 2020). Short form comedy vignettes were usually broadcast at the discretion of the producer and/or presenter, made on an informal, though not ad hoc, basis. Conventional broadcasters also took advantage of the informal nature of ILR stations with a sense of freedom and a playful, creative voice. Tim Grundy, an established radio presenter, wrote and performed his spoof of *The Archers* (1951) titled *Umbridge* (1985) made entirely at his discretion. The distinguishing qualities of each region would form an underpinning basis, sometimes even the main focus of their station's drama and comedy. Pennine Radio's programme planning documentation specified a desire for local dialects, jokes, poems and readings by local authors (IBA 1975b). Their intriguing suggestion that the next brand of comedy to supersede *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969) would be produced by local people anticipating the online 'prosumer' by decades (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Likewise, Capital Radio's early recurrent short form soap operas appeared to borrow from a comedy sketch structure.

ILR comedy brought a wider awareness of regional culture as their performers would occasionally receive national attention, elevated through syndication. These were creative voices, unbeholden to established forms, using regional vernacular and naturalistic accents. Consequently, new talent without the formal editorial control of a BBC background brought less constrained expressions of creativity and a shift in approach and tone which Stoller describes as "ambitious early efforts at a new style for radio drama" (2010b, p.61). Piccadilly Radio was particularly successful in creating their own original archetypal comic characters

[201] Radio City in Liverpool. Unusually, it actually transferred from BBC Radio Merseyside to ILR.
[202] In this episode, Everton striker Duncan McKenzie makes a cameo appearance.

which arguably said more about a region's character than their straight drama productions. Their stated objectives for programming contained an ambitious promise to find local writing talent and provide them with a platform. As cited earlier in this chapter,[203] the following quote demonstrated their expectation of an influx from the region's high proportion of unintentionally amusing, bizzare or indeed awful writers, amongst which could be found a unique person of talent.

> This would attract many McGonagalls with Rochdale accents, but in our experience, this would not diminish their charm, audience interest or (occasionally) genius.[204]

Piccadilly did find such a unique talent in the form of Frank Sidebottom[205] performed by Manchester-based comedian Chris Sievey, who began his career as a musician achieving modest success with the post-punk band *The Freshies* and found wider fame performing in character as Frank. Frank existed peripherally to both the music and alternative comedy scenes. Sievey's friend and colleague Mark Radcliffe, who had been a producer at Piccadilly Radio, described him as "…one of the very few people in my life who quite honestly, I would call a genius." (British Broadcasting Corporation 2010).

Dialogue written and performed by local talent would be unmistakable to a regional populace who could confirm and accept its authenticity; a seal of validity equating to a form of 'truth', something the BBC in London simply could not replicate. The practical application of Wilfred Pickles' Yorkshire dialect in countering axis propaganda demonstrates this. Craig Ferguson's

[203] See page 123.
[204] (IBA 1974b).
[205] Frank performed as a stand-up comedy act in comedy venues and made numerous television appearances during the 1980s and 1990s.

comedy *Night of the Long Sgian-Dubhs* (1986)[206] was quintessentially Glaswegian with unapologetically vernacular comic dialogue. The use of vernacular speech is apparent from the isoglossic overlap of programmes from Radio City and Piccadilly Radio, both stations occupying the same general vicinity in the Northwest. The characters of Scully, Alf Bradshaw and Frank Sidebottom also exhibit strong, if not exaggerated, demotic modes of speech. They do not exhibit a perception of, or compunction over, any perceived linguistic inadequacy. Bearing in mind it was standard practice for comic performers to mimic accents and for some, this parade of ridicule may have stirred feelings of inferiority. As Russell observes, a northern accent often infers, albeit inaccurately, working class status (2004). He also describes how consequent prejudices led some northerners to modify their accents when integrating outside of their region. But for the comedy characters of Radio City and Piccadilly, there is no apparent concern over their provincial nature. These characters are highly indicative and emblematic of their working-class circumstances, with the author very much aware of their social status.

ALF:	Now just remember what I've told yer lad. Use yer speed, stay wide and keep lobbin' high centres for that lanky sod of a centre forward to knock in. Bloody 'ell look at the neck on 'im. Is his father a giraffe?
AUDREY:	No he's an Hinchcliff, they're all like that in that family.
BILLY:	He's our captain. Right I'm gonna have a kick about now.
AUDREY:	Yes, well try and keep clean now won't yer luv? What's them cardboards down yer socks?
BILLY:	Them are me shin pads wot me Dad made me. They look like real un's when I tuck 'em in.[207]

Each of these characters are also highly insular in nature, with a distinct lack of interest in the outside world. Scully is obsessed with Liverpool Football Club, to the exclusion of anything

[206] Written and performed by Craig Ferguson with David Sillars for Radio Clyde in 1986 (broadcast dates unknown).
[207] Hawkins 1988.

else. In Frank Sidebottom's mind, he has already ascended to the status of international pop star, despite his world reaching no further than his hometown of Timperley. Alf Bradshaw never expresses a motivation or ambition to leave his armchair. All of this is intentional. It is an appropriation of the parochial worldview of the Little Englander, and is also indicative of restricted social mobility amongst the British working class.

There is an intra-regional division between Manchester and Liverpool expressed by their respective characters which may not be as apparent to external listeners. Scully's quick-wittedness and rapid delivery is accompanied by increasingly higher rises in pitch and loudness the further he gets into trouble.

FX:	FOOTSTEPS
SCULLY:	Y'know I think there's someone outside yer know Wally. I mean not that I'm scared like y'know, but like, err"
FX:	DOOR OPENS
SCULLY:	If it isn't me favourite footballer! Ello Mr McKenzie, sir. Now I know who yer lookin' for, an' this is the truth this, he went that way through the fire escape…
DUNCAN MCKENZIE:	Hey, are you Scruffy?
SCULLY:	Er well I'm a bit untidy.
DUNCAN MCKENZIE:	Franny Scruffy the little scrawny creep who's been slagging me off.
SCULLY:	Yer mean that little nasty slimy…
DUNCAN MCKENZIE:	That's the one.
SCULLY:	Don't come any closer, yer teeth are blinding me![208]

[208] Bleasdale 1976.

In comparison, Alf Bradshaw's delivery maintains a slow, even-toned grumble:

BILLY:	Yer not gonna clout me are yer?
ALF:	Clout yer? I'll bloody swing for yer![209]

Another common trait across these comedies are the multiple vocal performances. As previously discussed, many ILR productions are monologues. Buzz Hawkins plays the entire Bradshaws family, Alf, his wife Audrey, and his son Billy. Sievey plays the vast majority of voices in *Radio Timperley* (1986) and this early iteration of Scully is voiced by Alan Bleasdale. All these comedies are written and performed by men and are consequently skewed to a male-perspective. But there is also a high degree of sophistication and self-awareness which allows for a cognisance of this dominant perspective. Audrey Bradshaw's softer conciliatory tone ameliorates Alf's growl. Frank Sidebottom's blind rage is worsened by the small meek voice of Little Frank pointing out self-evident facts. There is a distinct lack of cynicism across all these examples, with a common thread of positivity existing throughout, though not at the expense of irony. Each of these dramatists were not pioneers of radio comedy, but had been part of the audience, listening during their formative years during the 1960s. Logically, their approach to production was informed by extrapolating from BBC drama and comedy, with certain expectations of standard English. They had arrived at a time of post-modernist creativity which was self-referential and irreverent. They are *in on the joke* and are as equally aware of their accent, dialect, and cultural idiosyncrasies, rendering any stigma inert. They managed to deconstruct, reconstitute, and reinforce perceptions of the north and its place in our wider national culture. They are working-class characters with all the trappings of 'northernness' but do not project the sort of dejection and despair one would expect in social realism, or *Steptoe and Son* (1962) to cite an example from comedy. Scully is a cheeky unemployed lad with a

[209] Hawkins 1988.

single-minded obsession with football. Perhaps one day Scully will know the same desperation and hopelessness that Bleasdale would later give Yosser Hughes in *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1982). Scully still bears comparison to the plays of Kingsley Amis, John Osborne and the social realist teleplays of Ken Loach. At this stage, Scully is a young man, but not angry yet. Bleasdale's scripts are lighter in tone, even in comparison to his contemporary Willie Russell. Billy Bradshaw has an eagerness to experience life. Alf is satisfied with his own low standards of life which consists of lethargic indifference and sardonicism towards his family. Frank Sidebottom is not frustrated in his ambition but blames his puppets for holding him back, as does his fear of an unheard, unseen mother.

4.8 The BBC's reaction

ILR drama is an example of third way centrism, a highly regulated form of capitalism, providing opportunity for creative talent that would have otherwise been denied access, whilst also being a product and reflection of local culture. Those that chose to create fiction were providing stations with social value and in doing so, developed a singular example of a format for quality, cultural value and relevance which, like any good drama, possessed the power to move and persuade as well as entertain. We have also seen how there was no specific requirement to make drama other than a general expectation that programmes of value and quality would be made. But the distinctiveness of ILR and its style of fiction would put it adjacent to and sometimes in direct competition with the dramatic output of the BBC.[210]

[210] Burns' (1977) landmark study of the BBC is a revealing insight into the daily activities of its employees, during an early flirtation with the business accountancy practices that eventually expanded into Producer Choice and bi-mediality; key components of the corporation's reformation under Director General John Birt.

Local BBC was explicitly committed to reflecting the musical, literary, artistic and dramatic life of the community, but as Murdoch (1981) points out, the financial pressure on the BBC was comparable to ILR. In 1979, the projected income for the whole of ILR was approximately £40 million, which equated roughly to half the budget of the entire BBC network (Murdoch 1981, p.152). Local BBC producers had several advantages over ILR including access to the specialised expertise and production facilities of the larger regional centres, but without the use of RDC performers. As with ILR, the BBC would need to contend with cost-cutting (Wood 2008) and a degree of cultural entrepreneurship involving outreach to other institutions.

During the mid-1970s, dramatic content on local BBC radio was rare. Although local authorities were no longer required to co-finance local BBC, some councils were keen to fund fictional productions. In 1973, BBC Radio Brighton produced an original piece to coincide with the yearly Brighton Festival, funded by a direct grant from the local authority. John Thompson was aware of a grant secured by BBC Radio Sheffield through South Yorkshire County Council's Recreation, Culture and Health Committee to produce a 13-week season of plays by local writers (1976b). Radio Hallam could not qualify for the grant due to restrictions placed on its transmission area. Radio Derby partnered with their local theatre in *The Peartree Conspiracy* (1977), which concerned a plot to kill Lloyd George (Murdoch 1981). Bernagh Brims recalls commissioning *One Potato, Two Potato* (1979) a long running series of original short stories and plays at BBC Northern Ireland as part of their children's educational strand (personal communication, 01 November 2018). One notable series from BBC Radio London was *Alvar Lidell Reads…* (1976)[211] which went beyond single-voiced literature readings with the inclusion of a small rotating cast to accompany Lidell's performances. BBC Radio Oxford's

[211] A BBC continuity announcer.

breakfast show *It's Saturday* (1982) featured a brief recurring comedy sketch spoofing local radio called *Radio Chipping Norton* (Starkey 2011).

Bearing in mind the often stated intention for ILR as a complementary service to local BBC Radio (Carter 2003), *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (British Broadcasting Corporation 1969) expressed advisory council concerns that creativity should not come solely from London and proposing an initiative to nurture creative regional talent, a "real guarantee for creative development outside London will lie in substantially increased production work: in the wider opportunities now offered in the plans for many more local stations in radio" (British Broadcasting Corporation 1969, p.8). ILR's claim to be in competition with the BBC's *national* services meant that it was open to doing things local BBC stations would not do. As Linfoot recalls: "It became clear early on that elaborate features, such as dramas with professional actors, were unlikely to be viable for local broadcasting" (2011, p.97). However, the BBC archive provides a telling insight into the reaction of local BBC executives upon noticing the dramatic output of the ILR sector.

Hal Bethell[212] manager of BBC Radio Cleveland and later Cambridgeshire contacted relevant interested parties across local BBC radio to form a radio drama working party to consider the implications of AIRC's new arrangements with Equity (BBC WAC 1975). The working party convened in April at Broadcasting House in Leeds. Representatives from BBC Radio Carlisle, Oxford, Leeds, Derby, Brighton and Nottingham were present. Also in attendance was Alfred Bradley who had worked at BBC Leeds for over twenty years producing network drama and had, in that time, a formative influence on the career of Alan Ayckbourn. Bradley, with Alan

[212] Bethel was also manager of BBC Radio Leicester from 1967-70.

Plater, had already developed a circle of writers for *The Northern Drift* (1964)[213] and *Talkabout* (1964) series, both formats containing short-form original dramatic writing set within a format of music, song and poetry. In effect, Bradley had created an incubator for new northern writers, a mandate already specified in *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969, p.8).

> Everyone knew we were there, and so writers would drop in… and it became a sort of writer's club. One hears about the New York gang meeting at The Algonquin. The old Leeds studio was a little bit like that. Sometimes there would be more people in the cubical than there were in the studio performing…[214]

The working party surveyed the Leeds studio facilities to assess their suitability for drama production and considered ways to encourage local writers to get involved. Bradley's experience was of particular benefit by highlighting the potential issues raised if they were to mix amateurs with professionals and to ensure playwright contracts specified the release of creative control in exchange for a commensurate fee.[215] Hal Bethel repeated these issues in a memo, stating:

> …we would have to work a very fine line of discrimination between various projects within local radio. He further pointed out the difficulty of dealing creatively with written work unless a financial agreement gave us some right to editorialise the material.[216]

BBC local radio's support of creative writing was by all accounts beyond their means, but with aid from arts associations and county councils across Blackburn, Manchester and Merseyside, the working party mounted a successful short season of half hour plays. Randall Herley observed that the potential for drama on local radio "can no longer be in any doubt", expressing

[213] Produced at BBC Leeds for the Home Service beginning on 22 March 1964.
[214] (Bradley, A. AHRC/BBC Oral History project) No date available.
[215] (BBC WAC 1975)
[216] Ibid.

an interest in these "small but very significant exercises in Radio Drama" (BBC WAC 1978e). His concern with ILR's progress was clear.

> Our competitors have not been slow to see gaps which they might fill with advantage. Several commercial stations now include drama in their schedules. I would like to submit the case for the formation of a small Drama Unit, centred in Manchester, which would work towards a mutually acceptable syndication scheme on a larger scale. Several strong reasons can be given for choosing Manchester.[217]

Later in July, Sandra Chalmers of Radio Stoke supported this proposal, by characterising their locale as a "no man's land" (BBC WAC 1978b) of talent stuck between the north and the midlands. She suggested Bradley's *The Northern Drift* (1964) concept as a format for new writing talent. Her memo also cited *Broadcasting in the Seventies* specifically the proposal of a "nursery slope" (1969, p.8) to nurture local talent and creativity outside of London. She had at this point also received a number of encouraging responses from external local organisations with an interest in funding the project (BBC WAC 1978b). Geoff Talbot at BBC Radio Newcastle also expressed a keenness to participate, suggesting the formation of a special trust to process grants from local authorities and industry, rather than through a vague-sounding local radio pool. As with Chalmers, Talbot cited Northern Arts as enthusiastic over the initiative and suggested the availability of a "reasonable sized grant" (BBC WAC 1978d). David Broomfield at BBC Glasgow offered himself as producer by requesting an attachment to Portland Place having had plays commissioned for Radio Four previously, stating; "I understand the problem of writing for radio" (BBC WAC 1978c). In July, Alan Mensham[218] related programme review board concerns regarding ILR's intention to step up their drama production efforts to gain "brownie points" before the imminent IBA franchise renewal. ILR

[217] Ibid.
[218] Mensham was part of BBC Local Radio's publicity department.

had received good publicity and so it was requested that he be notified of any similar ventures being undertaken locally so as to match this exposure (BBC WAC 1979b). Aubrey Singer rejected the idea that BBC Local Radio should compete with ILR (Linfoot 2011), instead reaffirming local radio's role in providing a balance to network radio's role in making drama. But by August of 1981, he was keen on the idea and suggested they build stronger links with local repertory theatres (BBC WAC 1981).

Ultimately these efforts would be realised in the form of an annual playwriting competition run by BBC Radio's Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire who combined their budgets in partnership with the Northwest Arts Association (BBC WAC 1978a; Murdoch 1981). A £1,000 prize was offered to the winning playwright and the resultant play was broadcast on local BBC stations across the Northwest. The three stations also pooled their resources and expertise to ensure the production maintained high professional standards. Later in 1981, BBC Radio Sheffield also received an annual grant of £1,000 from the South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council to commission plays by local writers. BBC Radio Solent produced a serial *A New Life for Brenda* (1977) and a play titled *Action Speaks Louder* (1977) by Jude Kelly the founder of the Solent People's Theatre and was funded by the Adult Education Department of Southampton University.

The production process established by IRDP was entirely different from that of the BBC. Crook recalls that their decision-making process was quicker as was the development process that led to the origination of larger scale projects (personal communication, 21 May 2020). He cites another difference in comparison to the BBC initially in style of direction, with performances highly focused on the acting process. Later, the emphasis changed to a more cinematic approach involving multi-track post-production techniques which did not necessitate actors

interacting together and could be recorded and mixed separately. Consequently the overall sound changed over time. IRDP then introduced surround sound production techniques in the early 1990s resulting in a further enhanced level of quality. IRDP pioneered this technical development in British radio drama by providing the first *Radio Drama Surround Sound* entry into the Prix Italia festival 1993-4. Richard Shannon recalls how IRDPs repeated success at the Prix-Italia created stirrings of resentment from some in the BBC.

> Paul's (Sirett) piece was one of the winners, we produced it. The Radio Authority nominated it for the Prix-Italia. We beat the BBC in the sense that we were commended, and they didn't get anywhere. The BBC I have to say were quite antagonistic towards us through most of our lifetime as IRDP. And I think the seeds of that antagonism were sown in these quite important public industry arenas. And that play was picked up because it was commended to the Prix-Italia by Norwegian radio who did a Norwegian version. And of course, Paul has gone on to have a very illustrious career.[219]

It is important to keep in mind the concern within the BBC that ILR producers and IRDP in particular were winning awards for content created with so little money and meagre resources. The problem posed by the existence of commercial radio drama went to the very heart of public service broadcasting and provided an uncomfortable narrative against any justification for the licence fee. The writers that IRDP promoted, coupled with a long-term commitment to grassroots outreach work in communities and schools was something that the BBC may not have been able to do as meaningfully. After IRDP started their series of festivals, the BBC began a festival of its own but did not sustain it for as long.

> …we were regarded as barbarians at the gate - harbingers of a technological change and production model change. We were two guys and a Revox, and eventually a computer, and they had vast resources. We were making things in news booths at LBC. And for a long time, I think we were very badly patronised by senior figures. It became problematic for them when we

[219] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

> started winning awards. We won a number of Sony awards. We won many awards at the International Radio Festival of New York, and we got the commendation at the Prix-Italia, so we couldn't be ignored anymore.[220]

The writer Tony Duarte who was selected by IRDP to produce his play *Coffee and Tea 90p* (1991), characterises the BBC as 'unsupportive' in comparison to his experiences with IRDP who produced three of his plays (personal communication, 12 January 2021). During that time he recalls Crook's frustration with the BBC overlooking IRDP programme proposals. Later Duarte worked on a series of experimental drama products for the BBC in preparation for their digital channels which was initially known as the 'Fiction Lab' unit which then folded into the Interactive Drama and Entertainment division (iD&E). Ultimately, Duarte characterises IRDP's failed attempts to gain accreditation as an independent supplier to the BBC symptomatic of being 'outsiders', with commissions generally leaning towards to indies set up by former BBC producers. This view aligns with Wood's observation that 'independent production company' is a euphemism for 'producers we made redundant earlier' (personal communication, 25 January 2021).

But IRDP did have some support within the BBC like Gordon House, formerly the head of World Service Drama, then Head of Radio Drama in 2005. The BBC World Service, by its nature, was usually isolated from the rest of the corporation and so could afford to make overtures to IRDP who were, in their own way, also out on a limb. House understood and appreciated what IRDP was doing and generously shared his wisdom with Shannon when developing programmes. IRDP also forged a relationship with BBC Wiltshire Sound, with Shannon directing a play there.

[220] Ibid.

> …we were always looking for allies, both within the BBC and in ILR regionally… interestingly although BBC Radio Wiltshire welcomed us with open arms, obviously, mainstream networks wanted nothing to do with us.[221]

Eventually the tension between the BBC and IRDP dissipated. Shannon would then go on to work for the BBC on a freelance basis. Crook and Shannon were then both invited by the BBC to direct. John Tydeman, who by then had become Head of Drama, was on good terms with Shannon, later working together at The Actors Centre at the Seven Dials Playhouse, London.

In conclusion, the circumstances that ILR dramatists worked within were mostly constrained. It was unfortunate that ILR's early years coincided with the economic downturn, and it is reasonable to surmise that this experience affected some enthusiasm for drama production going forward. But it is clear that any initial failures were not for lack of trying. As will be elaborated shortly, stations were not deterred in the long term and continued to make drama and other forms of fiction. We have seen how not all stations expressed a commitment to drama, but those that did were happy with the prestige it provided. Proposals from Newcastle's Metro Radio appear to have been inspired by the prospect of glamour. Drama production was considered worthwhile, but the expenditure necessary for full cast productions reinforced the point that the creative freedom to make worthy, perhaps even experimental radio drama, was only feasible with the autonomy afforded by public funding. Yet there are some unconventional examples which we will explore in chapter five that would appear incompatible with expectations for a populist commercial concern, but proved popular, creative and cost-effective.

[221] Shannon, personal communication, 07 June 2019.

Chapter 5: Programme Reviews

In this chapter we will analyse a series of ILR dramas which have been selected based on the following criteria: year, region, genre, narrative and programmes of cultural significance. These are pragmatic choices to ensure coverage is as comprehensive as possible. They are organised chronologically to encompass ILR's lifespan and to consider the growth, change and maturation of the sector's fictional output. It is also important to ensure full representation of the local and regional cultures served by ILR. Although smaller stations in certain regions did not have the means to make drama, they were of course beneficiaries of the Programme Sharing Scheme. The selection accounts for Scotland, the Northeast, the Northwest and London. Regional representation is an essential underpinning consideration in addressing the question of what typified ILR fiction and what made it distinctive. These were locally sourced programmes, selected to reflect the character of each served region, exemplifying emergent creative voices, local writers, producers and by extension, the unique and distinctive traits exhibited across vernacular cultures (Ong 1988; Avery 2006; Innis 2008). The criteria also take into consideration a range of generic and narrative forms, which in this context are indicative of budgetary concerns and restrictions on facilities and equipment.

Additionally, there is room for the inclusion of case studies that hold some cultural significance, for example a play that made a particular cultural impact, or perhaps an author of note. We will also apply the conceptual and theoretical matters explored in chapter three to these dramas, in order to better inform our comparisons with the BBC.

5.1 *Honey Adair* (1973)

The first drama for analysis is *Honey Adair* (1973),[222] an original Capital Radio production.[223] It premiered during the drivetime daypart presented by Roger Scott at approximately 5.55pm, 16 October 1973 on Capital Radio's launch day. Since the episode is only just over four minutes long, the script has a tight pace. Each scene is brief, purposeful, and compact. Lines are delivered with urgency and with no apparent opportunity for characters to reflect or grow - there are no moments of Pinteresque introspection. Rather, *Honey Adair* (1973) is a piece of popularist entertainment that shares the features of a radio commercial. The highly simplistic plot which concerns a corporate heist and murder, lacks any stakes or emotional resonance. The scenes consist of simple scenarios, which are underdeveloped in terms of nuance or meaning – this is a very lightweight and forgettable piece.

It is perhaps unusual to start the programme analyses with a piece that is so limited in scope or significance, but there are a number of noteworthy points to take away from this episode. Firstly, *Honey Adair* (1973) cannot be said to be reflective of its region. One character speaks with a London accent that sounds as though she could effortlessly converse in *polari*, but this is not indicative of an attempt to reflect vernacular culture with authenticity. This is cosmopolitan London, post-swinging sixties, and designed for broad appeal. The announcer and the character of Adair use formal received pronunciation. Occurrences of vernacular dialects in ILR drama would become more commonplace later on in ILR's lifetime. At this point, ILR presenters and performers still spoke with a level of formality comparable to BBC Radio. Secondly it is necessary to properly contextualise this series within the time-period of

[222] The title is occasionally misremembered as *Hazel Adair*, who was the co-creator of the ITV series *Crossroads* (1964).
[223] So far, there is no record of the director, author, or actors.

production. The programme selection process has been mindful of representation in terms of gender and diversity in the ILR sector, such as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, typified by male dominated workplaces.

Honey Adair (1973) begins with the sound of rapid machine-gun fire and a raised voice announcing: "Meet Honey Adair!" a formal introduction demanding the attention of the listener. This announcement dates the production by its lack of subtlety and by being tonally incongruous to the style of Bond-esque sophistication that the rest of the piece attempts to emulate. The signature tune is played on mouth organs and is reminiscent of the seedy incidental music of a *Carry-On* film. This introduction suggests that what is to follow is not serious drama. The subsequent scene begins with the ambient background of a restaurant. We hear Adair's well-spoken voice. She uses received pronunciation with a seductive whisper.

PICKFORD:	Would you care for some more champagne?
ADAIR:	Why not?
PICKFORD:	Waiter!
ADAIR:	*I* can reach it…
FX:	ICE BUCKET
PICKFORD:	(HEAVY BREATHING)
ADAIR:	…and Mr Pickford, do you mind taking your hand off my thigh?[224]

This initial pilot episode of *Honey Adair* (1973) contains certain cliched elements. Adair is a model who moonlights as a private investigator. She is a dilettante detective whilst also being a softly spoken but capable *femme fatale*. At her headquarters, which doubles as a modelling

[224] Capital Radio 1973.

agency and swinging 'pad', Lucy 'Ma' Latimer acts as Honey's assistant, but has the seniority, presence, and scope to grow into a fully-fledged sidekick. She also has a raspy accent which could be mistaken for Kenneth Williams.

It is helpful to consider some similar contemporary dramas at the time, most notably the camp spy adventures produced by Lew Grade's ITC; *The Persuaders* (1971)[225] *The Protectors* (1972)[226] and *Jason King* (1971)[227] are all comparable. There is also something reminiscent here of Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1970) but only so far as *Honey Adair* (1973) being a product of its time. This example stands as another instance of the 'girls with guns' subgenre of detective fiction that grew in popularity during the latter decades of the twentieth century (Evans et al. 2019). There may be a divergence in opinion as to whether or not this is a positive feminist representation. One interpretation may be that this is a sexist male fantasy with the former model being quite accustomed to the constant advances of men, in addition to her pleased reactions to Latimer's comments regarding her choice of revealing clothes. Another view taken is that *Honey Adair* (1973) is a successful businesswoman and a skilled detective. Considering that the 1970s was a time of considerable social change, bringing new attitudes that sought to emphasise individual rights and responsibility for one's circumstances, this is a representation of confidence, independence, and empowerment. *Honey Adair* (1973) keeps one eye on the free love of the sixties and another on the free market feminism (Eisenstein 2015) of the twenty-first century. Incidentally, race is not generally signalled, apart from a reference to a 'Filipino house-boy', leaving the individual listener to project their own ideas of visual presentation. Despite Evans et al. (2019) observing that the great majority of detectives

[225] Starring Tony Curtis and Roger Moore.
[226] Starring Robert Vaughn and Nyree Dawn Porter.
[227] Starring Peter Wyngarde.

regardless of gender are white, radio allows us to impose diversity independently of the dramatist's intentions.

Each scene transition is signalled with the disruptive sound of a siren which supposedly connotes alarm and urgency in the mind of the protagonist. This discordant choice contrasts with the rest of the episode. The next scene takes place on a plane which concludes with the abrupt inclusion of jet engines as a transition back to London. This is another jarring sound which would have benefitted from a degree of editorial finesse as it transitions in and out of the cabin interior. We hear a man's voice. This is Kirk, an American detective en route to London. Kirk delivers his internal monologue not with a Mid-Atlantic accent, but rather an unconvincing American accent. The soliloquy is an unsophisticated list of exposition points regarding Adair's character background and his own situation. The continued reference to Adair as a 'dame' throughout the episode is a deliberate stylistic choice which makes an intertextual reference to 1940s noir thrillers.

KIRK:	So I'm on a high-grade assignment with a dame? All I need. 'Honey Adair' the man says. Started out as a model, shed her cockney accent, and got to be the biggest security consultant in Europe. So… they're putting mascara on their private eyes yet. This dame, the man says, operates from the cover of the model agency she used to work for. Tom Kirk this is not your life. Forty-thousand feet over the Atlantic and the only view I get is of an old Bugs Bunny movie.
FX:	JET ENGINES
KIRK:	Five get's ya ten this Honey Adair dame has teeth like Bugsy and a front like an ironing board.[228]

To fully realise the audioposition at this point, the mix could have included a base rumble to signify the engine underneath his monologue. The scene, however, consists only of Kirk's

[228] Capital Radio 1973.

voice. This simple addition would have also helped to economise the length of dialogue in the script, rather than the extended exposition. Back at the modelling agency, the script is a conventional two-person scene between Adair and Latimer. But the narrative style switches back to an internal monologue again when Kirk arrives, delivered in present tense as he picks out the surrounding details, the carpet, the door, the house boy, the view over Kensington. This is effective exposition which visualises the surroundings in Adair's headquarters and continues the textual reference as though a flatfoot in a Dashiell Hammett novel.

Honey Adair (1973) was the third recurring short form serial to air on Capital Radio's launch day (Baron 1975). Ultimately, this early attempt appeared to take the IBAs preference for a close association with the newspaper industry literally. *Honey Adair* (1973) was tabloid radio, stylised after a racy newspaper comic strip.[229] As a product of Capital's obligations stated in its programme proposals to the IBA, it is reasonable to view the purpose of *Honey Adair* (1973) as making good on those initial promises, rather than an organic realisation of creative inspiration on the part of the author. Its failure to last into 1974 meant that this early attempt, along with the other premieres airing that day, would have had a lasting impact on the perception of ILR drama.

[229] There were numerous such adult comic strips; *The Sun* newspaper's *George and Lynne* (1976) and *The Guardian's Varoomshka* (1969) being two examples.

5.2 *Dying for a Drink* (1978)

Dying for a Drink (1978) is a five-part series produced by Ralph Bernard at Radio Hallam in Sheffield. It was broadcast over consecutive nights in 1978. Each episode runs to approximately 50 minutes. The first four editions of the programme consist of a thirty-minute play, a lengthy commentary, expert interviews and original songs by Richard Digance. Although the series is concerned with alcoholism, it becomes apparent that the fictional components have a broader scope.

Considering the tight economic circumstances for ILR drama, this series is unusual in that it benefits from a generous budget which is demonstrated by the use of professional actors. Despite this, the scripts, particularly the introductions and other non-fiction material are notably verbose, imbued with 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu 1991). This indicates an approach on the part of the dramatist that opts for dialogue in favour of sound design. The third episode, *Britain Won't Count the Cost* (1978), has a notable lack of creative sound usage. Likewise, silence is not used to provide naturalism or at least to allow a scene to breathe. But as Crisell explains "radio is positively besieged by silence – a silence which portends non-existence, annihilation" (1994, p.160). A moment of Pinteresque silence in radio drama carries the danger of being misinterpreted by the listener as a technical fault. In lieu of sound design and economic writing, Bernard provides what Crisell terms "unheard silence"[230] by indicating the presence of silent characters through the dialogue of others. These plays demonstrate an awareness of the need in radio dramatisation to consider the complex relationship between the word as signifier and signified item itself. A character or object invoked by a word or sound has an ephemeral existence and requires constant reference. Additionally, considering the commercial

[230] Ibid.

drive of station owners, one senses an additional duty to fill every moment with speech to demonstrate value for money.

The characters are based upon actual people, the product of extensive research conducted by Bernard. The first episode begins with a lengthy introduction from the presenter Douglas Cameron, which is alleviated by a creative sequence consisting of a male voice speaking a series of lines that demonstrate his increasing denial of alcoholism. Each line of dialogue is punctuated by the sound of a footstep, whilst a reverb effect builds gradually as though the man is walking backwards into a cave; a creative use of speech that is comparable with national BBC radio. This series was made in Sheffield, and was initially intended for communities across Yorkshire and so Bernard's conventional approach to original drama also features the use of vernacular speech delivered by professional actors who draw upon their own regionality to deliver dialogue with authenticity. Episode one titled *Albert the Champ Is Not Here* (1978) begins with Albert telling his story in a thick Barnsley accent.[231] Initially this monologue is interpretable as a confessional, then perhaps as an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. This perception changes again to a marriage counselling session, but none of these actually apply. As though demonstrating Arnheim's point that nothing can simply *be* on the radio (1936, p.154), Albert is interrupted by his wife who takes exception to his story. She does not exist for listener until she is heard. Other characters also emerge in this way. As he continues, the voice of Mr Hurst interrupts.

[231] However, Russell Hunter's Scottish accent is perceptible at times.

ALBERT:	I'm ashamed of takin' money off the state. About the only thing I am ashamed of. As for the rest, well, I… I… I'll try an' put it in order. I'm not very good at dates… not at exact years and months.
WIFE:	Because yer 'ed's scrambled. I told you what would happen if you carried on. Yer brain's gone.
ALBERT:	(ANGRY) There's nothing wrong with my brain! I've never been unable to do what I had to do. You know nowt about it woman. Just… hush love. Let's set this in order, it's not your time yet eh? You earned what you took. But we'll come to that. Now then. I were a miner. Underground. Fourteen shilling a week.
HURST:	Fourteen bob, aye. 'An they expect us to stay straight on that Albert.
ALBERT:	They did then, but it's not your time yet neither Mr Hurst".[232]

Albert's tone is more conciliatory to Hurst than to his wife. The effect takes Albert's reminiscences about his youth and incorporates other characters as nonliteral internal voices. He is not interacting with them in the real world; these are the ghosts of his past. He argues and negotiates with them as thoughts in his mind. This also positions the listener as Albert's confidant. He addresses us. This also makes the initial audioposition ambiguous. The audioposition shifts as Albert takes us back in time to the late forties. The sound of his local pub emerges. As we approach the sound of crowd chatter and a pianist playing, Albert is now closer to the mic, speaking softly, inviting us in. Since the monologue is a part of his thoughts, we are in a non-literal but privileged position. The episodes which contain flashbacks like this, depict the nation's stabler periods of consensus, welfare and one-nation conservatism whilst tracing key moments in each protagonist's life. Each play provides an insight into Britain at the end of the seventies. The thematic concerns are in keeping with the pessimistic tone usually attributed to the decade: industrial conflict, the economy, ethnic tension and domestic violence.

[232] Allen 1978.

Episode three, titled *Britain Won't Count the Cost* (1978) concerns Britain and its association with the Eastern Bloc. It has a linear narrative indicating cause and effect and moves spatially from the headquarters of a British company to Czechoslovakia. Thematically, it is concerned with callousness of men, either as a cause or a consequence of alcoholism. The play is a commentary on the workplace, the world of sales and in particular, the higher echelons of management. It does not directly address the economic and political difficulties of the 1970s and despite being produced and broadcast in 1978, there is a lack of concern over industrial action. Instead, the playwright provides character studies, through which the male dominated workplace is represented. JB, the chairman of the company, is a caricature of an overbearing patriarch. He is a loud, brash arrogant authoritarian.[233] James Tomlinson's performance occasionally lapses into northern patois indicating working class roots, now suppressed by his elevated status. His performance implies a successful but unrefined middle-class entrepreneur elevated into metropolitan society. He favours his male employees, including new ones. He drinks in the day and encourages it as an essential part of his operation, especially in sales. The play frequently depicts casual misogyny and sexual harassment.

> JB: Violet! Get Miss Beacham in here, I don't care where she is. Oh, well as soon as she comes out then. Women. More trouble than they're friggin' worth to have them at work. Only more bother in the home too. [234]

[233] A major criticism of the play is how freely it plagiarises the character of CJ from *The Fall and Rise of Reginal Perrin* (1976):

> "Thank you, Violet. Come in Whitehouse, sit down. John, is it? Never forget a name. Wouldn't have got where I am today by forgetting things. John this is our personnel lady, Miss Beacham. She gets very upset if you tell her to keep taking the tablets."
>
> "As you credit lad! Still, we like to know people. Never got where I am today without knowing people, eh Miss Beacham?"

[234] Allen 1978.

Miss Beacham, the only woman depicted in a position of authority, is objectified, ridiculed and embarrassed by JB. She is isolated and must constantly rebut his frequent rude, aggressive abuse. JB's dialogue involves talking about her in the third person as though she is not present. JB's racist comments exposes Beacham's affair with another man.

JB:	Good. Miss Beacham thinks I drink too much don'cha Beacham?
WHITEHOUSE:	I'm sure it's none of my business sir.
JB:	'Course its none of yer friggin' business, but that's never stopped yer before, has it? (chuckles). No John, this is a family firm. We all know each other's little foibles. Miss Beacham's got a six-foot foible. He's called Julius. Coal black hospital doctor, who won't marry her because he's already got three wives at home and a child.
BEACHAM:	Really Mr Chairman, I wish you'd get it right. I won't marry him because he has one wife at home and three children.
JB:	Ha ha! Eee yer beautiful when yer angry!
BEACHAM:	Ugh.[235]

Misogyny, sexual harassment, racism and alcoholism are all exemplified in the final act as JB fires the occupational health nurse for drinking. This play is a distillation of every negative aspect of male dominated culture as it was in the seventies. It makes for uncomfortable listening by today's standards which make any defence for the play as a damning indictment of the patriarchy and not an actual expression of misogyny and racism, all the more difficult. JB rejects accusations of hypocrisy by using the potential reaction of the unions as justification:

[235] Allen 1978.

JB:	I could smell her breath! The woman was blasted drunk.
BEACHAM:	Drunk at nine in the morning?
JB:	No not at nine. I wasn't actually here at nine. Late business last night – say ten, ten-thirty perhaps.
BEACHAM:	She has got problems JB.
JB:	Well we've all got bloody problems! One of mine is her! What if the unions find out we've got a drunken nurse in the sick bay? They'll crucify me!
BEACHAM:	Her father's just died JB after a long illness. She was out of the country at the time, and she was made to feel guilty, I think. Bad love affair too, just broken up. Her work's been good here you know. You of all people won't sack anyone just because you caught them drunk once. It's a miracle you were in a fit state to notice.
JB:	How dare you talk to me like that Miss Beacham? I'd consider your future very carefully if I were you. Nurse Potterton is fired as of now! And it's your job if you wish to remain as head of personnel at Tools Intercontinental to tell her so and give her her cards.[236]

Turning now to John, the company's salesman - a favourite of JB and in line for promotion. John is deeply flawed and retains his position thanks to JB's biases. He speaks in a scornful tone, growling his words and gradually mirroring JB's voice. En route to Czechoslovakia, he makes a sleazy comment to the stewardess and encourages his associate to drink scotch. The associate responds with a wary cautious tone.

JOHN:	The chap who looks after us at the works, old Václav,[237] he'll have been working himself up for this chance for weeks. "Old John's coming he'll say to himself". He has a rare chance to get properly tanked up for once.
PETER:	Do the authorities let him?
JOHN:	Why not? They've got him on a tight rein the rest of the time. They don't mind showing the decadent west they can lay on a decent binge efficiently. Remember the war?

[236] Allen 1978.
[237] It is not clear if this is a reference in homage to Václav Havel.

PETER:	I… missed the war.[238]
JOHN:	Must have done national service surely? I used to drink… what was it? Pints of bitter with cherry brandy chasers (laughs) then go and beat hell out of Jerry! No one minded as long as we did the job. They knew what it took to do the job at all. Ah, drinks.[239]

John, through his declared admiration for Czechoslovakia, opposes the idea of liberalism intimating his being in favour of the invasion ten years earlier.[240] His wistful delivery suggests an attachment to authoritarianism and a heightened sense of nationalism, which in the context of Britain in the late seventies exposes a determination to sanction those who do not conform to his ideas of 'duty', 'order' and 'standards':

JOHN:	Ah duty. Trouble with the young generation Peter, no sense of duty. No wonder they're so miserable about the world.
JOHN:	That's a tall order comrade - I'm sorry, I don't mean to joke. Certainly not about your country which seems to me very regimented, but which, well, has things I miss. Beauty, certainly and order and standards.[241]

However, John's recklessness puts him at odds with the restrictions of the state. After a heavy night of drinking, he decides to steal ten ornate wine glasses. At this point, the play ably demonstrates Arnheim's (1936) observations regarding the sonic imperceptibility of objects that static things are not aurally perceptible in radio drama.[242] Arnheim maintained that nothing can exist, or simply be, on the radio (1936, p.153). In this case, the inciting incident of the narrative is not heard, the stolen glasses are referred to verbally, otherwise they have no

[238] The stage actor Peter Bell provides a subtle performance with a gentle thoughtful delivery. His line 'I missed the war' is enigmatic. Rodger (1982, p.136) considers how deftly a radio performance may convey social position and character history in small moments; in an instant we know that this person is cultured and more sophisticated than John.
[239] Allen 1978.
[240] This refers to the attempted 'Prague Spring' and its subsequent suppression by the invasion of Warsaw Pact members.
[241] Allen 1978.
[242] Arnheim (1936) considered the difficulty in making static things perceptible, maintaining that nothing can exist, or simply be, on the radio. He concluded that visual media falls short. Its imagery is not dynamic and remains static, whereas liveness of sound implies action, the essence of drama: "Aurally… almost nothing static is given... but the great majority of sounds imply momentary actual happening!" (Arnheim 1936, p.153).

material existence. This power of radio drama to create when invoked (or annihilated when disregarded) is demonstrated by these lines:

> JOHN: They were beautiful. They *are* beautiful. I'd always wanted some. You're right of course it is gentian. I've been trying to think what the colour was. I didn't think of it as stealing. They didn't belong to someone – a person. It seemed the natural thing to take... Brecht says things should belong to people who would be best for them.[243]

The politburo has been shadowing John since his arrival and he is detained and questioned by Dvořák, an ŠtB agent.

> DVOŘÁK: An English salesman who understands Brecht! We shall have to revise our stereotypes, and you would be best for the glasses Mr Greenwood? What makes you so certain you would be better for these glasses than the people of Czechoslovakia? The craftsmen who made them? All the miserable Communists who have no feeling for art and beauty eh? You are writing a letter. It is to your boss? Will he understand all this?
>
> JOHN: He'll understand about the drinking, he bloody well ought to, 'Didn't get where I am today by underestimating the value of a little drink'.[244]

Dvorak's view is affirmed. John exemplifies British arrogance. His personal success is tied to a professional reliance upon a socialist country. It is arguable that this is not written from a leftist viewpoint. This is not a critique of the politics behind the private sector either, rather it seems to favour commercialism by illustrating mishandled and lost business opportunities by callous attitudes. The conclusion is that casual misogyny and racism coupled with arrogant self-assuredness leads the men to failure. They cover themselves and close ranks without suffering consequences. Although alcoholism is purportedly the focus, *Britain Won't Count*

[243] Allen 1978.
[244] Ibid.

the Cost (1978) is a wider comment on the gravitation of a certain type of person to the captaincy of British industry.

The final episode contains no drama. Instead we hear recorded actuality from alcoholics. If a listener stayed with the series for the duration, it would gradually become apparent that these voices are the people upon which the dramas are based. They use certain words and expressions which have been used verbatim in the previous four episodes. This final episode reveals to the listener the underlying truth through a direct mode of address, both as a fictionalised drama series and again as a non-fiction feature. This is actuality of real people, which has informed the fictional episodes. Like Sara Conkey's docudrama *Hinterlands* (1996),[245] which also blended both actuality and drama, this is not a dramatisation of events, but rather an original series of plays inspired by recorded interviews.

There may no longer be a place for plays like *Britain Won't Count the Cost* (1978) today. Considering these lines of dialogue, the play itself and its author could be easily misinterpreted as racist and misogynistic without further scrutiny. As Chignell (2009) observes, comedy requires the occasional transgression over boundaries of decency to reveal important aspects of life, the "perilous terrain that lies between humour and offensiveness" (Lockyer & Pickering 2005 p.3). An appeal for this play as a critique of these character types may be too much to ask of a young contemporary audience. Yet these men are not sympathetic, the characters are not celebrated. This demonstrates the freedom artists once had to denounce through satire and caricature and how audiences were able to rationalise such depictions.

245 BBC Radio 3.

5.3 *The Bradshaws* (1983)

The Bradshaws (1983) was created by Buzz Hawkins at Piccadilly Radio in Manchester. His initial 'pilot' was conceived as a monologue poem. As a situation comedy, *The Bradshaws* (1983) has endured well beyond Piccadilly Radio as it was before deregulation. As a radio institution, it continues to wield considerable influence. Episodes continue to be enjoyed on local radio and online and Hawkins still performs the characters on stage, attesting the power of vernacular dialogue in ILR fiction. As mentioned previously, vernacular dialogue made its way into the BBC through entertainers like Wilfred Pickles and comedians like Ted Ray and Jimmy Clitheroe. As Russell explains; "major protagonists were mainly born in the North but had moved south in pursuit of media careers, generating a valuable critical distance that allowed for both affection and wry mockery" (2004, p.269). As an ILR radio comedy, written, produced and set in urban Manchester, there was no longer any need for such 'critical distance'.

Hawkins recalls how the series began whilst working as an overnight producer for presenters Gary Davies and singer Howard Jones. At 2am, Davies would encourage listeners across the Manchester area to call in and read their poetry live on air. One habitual caller at this early hour read her poem entitled *'I collect my tears in an Aspirin bottle'*. It inspired Davies to challenge the production team to do better and write their own poem for delivery the following night. Hawkins took inspiration from Stanley Holloway's performance of Marriot Edgar's comic monologue *The Lion and Albert* (1932). He created his own family of characters, similar to The Ramsbottoms and approached the script as a character-based performance, rather than a third person narration. The only production required was a bed of music to be played beneath.

AUDREY:	Alf love, shall we tek the lad to Blackpool?
ALF:	Its rainin'.
AUDREY:	Well it might be sunny there. We'll tek the plastic flask an' cups,
ALF:	And we'll be down 'tother end away from fair?[246]

The incidental music which runs underneath each episode is *Judex* taken from the second part of Gounod's oratorio *Mors et Vita* (1885), except this particular arrangement from the 'Glossop Old Band' has a slow plodding tempo played on euphonium and tuba producing just the right sort of dreariness that deliberately sets the ironic tone of each episode. Hawkins provides all the voices which situates *The Bradshaws* (1983) somewhere between a scripted play and a single voice monologue.

> I read the poem in three voices, and it was a bit of struggle because I only worked out the voices minutes before in the music library, so I had a low voice for Alf and a high voice for Billy and Audrey was the awkward one trying to sound like a girl…[247]

Hawkins performed the voices separately and then by overdubbing, created the effect of the three interacting with each other, with some overlapping dialogue to enhance the illusion. Each individual character has a decidedly different voice and there is very little to indicate that these are all performed exclusively by Hawkins. The voice of Audrey in particular is remarkably convincing, requiring no intervention with pitch modulation. She is often presented either up close to the microphone, or at a distance to pick up the reflection of her voice off close walls. The dialect, coupled with the simple application of reverb, provides the listener with a large amount of information regarding their geographic location, social class, economic circumstances and gender roles. We are provided with spatial information which tells us there

[246] Hawkins 1983.
[247] Hawkins 2017.

is hardly any distance between Audrey and Alf. This is a very small British working-class home and is therefore a highly intimate setting which projects notions of sepia wallpaper, dated wood panelling and linoleum floors. Cefai and Couldry (2017) refer to intimacy as the cultural effect of media practice, a natural consequence of the social action of 'joining spaces', in other words, this fictional world is embedded within the environment of the listener. The listener is not acknowledged, but considering our audioposition, we are placed next to Billy. Audrey is a few paces away in the kitchen and Billy moves between the two. Our role as listener is not to eavesdrop, rather we are visitors, embarrassing though it may be to be present whilst the indolent Alf casually belittles his family. He derides his wife and son, with an apathy to Billy's wants or needs.

The Bradshaws (1983) has a particularly potent nostalgic link which arguably runs deeper and more meaningfully to older local listeners who have unique interiorised knowledge and experience of this sort of domestic setting. Hawkins is essentially recalling his own family and childhood, striking a chord with others who experienced the same upbringing (Tacchi 2003) with some tellingly specific scenarios.

AUDREY:	What's he done Alf?
ALF:	Wots he done? I'll tell yer wot he's done. He's had me sitting out there frozen to the seat for the last hour waiting for you to come home coz he set fire to the paper behind the bloody door! That's what he's done. Come 'ere while I strangle yer.
BILLY:	I woz just strikin' a match to see what I woz doin' on the lav.[248]

The wider impression is highly redolent of British working-class life in the mid-twentieth century, but without specific cultural references that signify a time and place, keeping the

[248] Hawkins 1988.

stories as broad and universal as possible. Russell (2004) suggests that the allure of such a fixed unchanging version of the North offers a nostalgic bygone era of England in a safer, simpler time. The ability to evoke the notion of a perpetual by-gone era rests on Hawkins' creativity in his characterisations and sense of humour expressed through vernacular dialect; an essential quality that adds an extra level of meaning for those that are familiar with the cultural idiosyncrasies of the region.

These characters are just as recognisable as *Oor Wullie* (1936)[249] and *Andy Capp* (1957)[250] may be to a national audience, as continuations of the self-generated northern parody genre exemplified by Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1959). There are still many towns and streets in Greater Manchester and indeed across the UK with homes like these. There are also familiar cultural products like *Coronation Street* (1960) and period dramas depicting dreary rained upon brown brick buildings, bottle green doors, external brick privies and multiple repeating terraces along cobbled streets. Billy Bradshaw's world consists of *Beano*-esque scrapes, short trousers and catapults. Alf Bradshaw's occupation is unclear, he is either a labourer of some sort or unemployed. Audrey Bradshaw assumes her role as wife and mother, signified by dutiful placement in the reverberant kitchen. The audioposition places us alongside the two males in the sitting room in an anterior position to the kitchen, remaining detached from Audrey and so we take a predominantly male perspective, Billy being the principal character of the show and avatar of Hawkins himself. But nevertheless, our sympathies remain firmly with Audrey.

[249] *The Sunday Post*. Created by the editor of D.C. Thomson R. D. Low and drawn by cartoonist Dudley D. Watkins.
[250] *Daily Mirror*. Created by Reg Smythe.

GRAMS:	*JUDEX* - GLOSSOP OLD BAND
FX:	WASHING MILK BOTTLES
BILLY:	Mam? Can I have a biscuit please?
AUDREY:	Yer havin' yer tea in a bit luv.
BILLY:	Aw. Dad?
ALF:	Oh you've gotta mither someone haven't yer?
BILLY:	Erm, can you bemember wot it woz it like when you woz born?
ALF:	NO! I woz too young.
BILLY:	But wot wos it like in the holden days? Did you 'ave clothes like wot yer wearin' now?
AUDREY:	Yes, scruffy.
ALF:	No son. I wore a fig leaf an' a necklace made o' dinosaur teeth.
BILLY:	I like it when we're friends.[251]

These points concerning dialect, dialogue and audioposition raise broader questions concerning how 'northernness' is identified and defined; how individual northern identities are influenced and shaped and what contributions northern culture makes to national cultural life. There is a further question regarding whether *The Bradshaws* (1963) being so codified in time and place can even be read accurately by an external, or new, audience. We may formulate an answer to these questions by focussing on humour as a tactic for dealing with the often-sombre experiences of industrial decline.

In the episode titled 'Whit Walks', Hawkins manages to expose an underpinning but often veiled aspect of the Northern character. Audrey and Billy are preparing for the annual Whit Walk. In this episode of only four and a half minutes, we are presented with a significant

[251] Hawkins 1987.

amount of historical and sociocultural information in its imagining of the sort of conversations held behind closed doors. ‘Whit Walks’ refers to the traditional street marches that began during the nineteenth century across the Northwest and reached its peak during the inter-war years. ‘Whit’ refers to *Whitsuntide,* a day during the Christian holiday held during Pentecost. The ‘walking day’ tradition was mostly a Mancunian affair but occurred further afield across Lancashire in Liverpool, Preston and Blackburn. Its importance grew as a consequence of urban development during the inter-war years which mandated the clearance of the poorest areas of Manchester. These areas consisting of mostly Catholic communities meant a dislocation along religious lines. Cohen points out such movements of stress and upheaval usually result in a reassertion of “social identity and people's sense of social location” (2013, p.50) the same phenomenon we have seen expressed through vernacular culture (Russell 2004; Cohen 2013). In countering this dislocation, the Whit Walks became a ritualistic display of collectivity, asserting a stronger sense of religious and communal identity, and acted as a symbolic appropriation of physical spaces under development, including the city centre.

In the Bradshaws household, Audrey is dressing Billy and herself to look as presentable as possible. She fusses over Billy since there was an expectation to dress smartly for the walk. This scene exemplifies the matriarchal appropriation of the event, which was instrumental in establishing the tradition. According to Wildman, when the Catholic church expressed a preference for an understated appearance, the women demanded their children "wear white dresses” (2011, p.120) resulting in more intensely colourful public expressions with children carrying flowers and religious iconography. The Protestant processions were noticeably reserved in comparison, carrying patriotic banners and children in guide and scout uniforms. Historically, Manchester was not as troubled by sectarian tension as Liverpool or Glasgow and so the Whit Walks was a rare moment when sectarian division was clearly reasserted.

Accordingly, it is Billy that reveals the generational transferral of understated latent sectarianism that did not usually express itself overtly.

BILLY:	Mam? Is me Dad a catlick or is 'e a proddydog?
AUDREY:	Oh Billy, I wish you wouldn't use that kinda talk and stand still a minute.
BILLY:	It's wot everyone sez. If you're a cafflick, they say 'cafflick'… I mean 'catlick' and if yer a prodisont they say 'proddydog'. Urm, wot is me Dad, mam? Is 'e the same as uz?
AUDREY:	Your father isn't the same as anybody. I think 'e's peeved coz God won't let him win the pools.[252]

For children, this was a time of excitement and amusement and for others it was treated as a holiday set aside from its religious connotations. It is Alf who disavows himself from identifying with any side and opts to ignore Audrey's preparations, intending to visit the pub. This was a time of leisure which was "as good as going to Blackpool" (Wildman 2011, p.110). But this also says a lot about Alf who either works with both Catholic and Protestant men getting along out of necessity, or knows better, staying out of such business. It is also equally possible that he doesn't get involved out of sheer indolence.

These early episodes demonstrate key aspects that contribute to a perception of 'northernness'. 'The North' as both a tangible and imagined place plays a leading cultural role in music, sport, entertainment and politics, things adjacent to regionality which identity may also organise around. Russell (2004) is concerned with the precise area served by Harding, Bridson and Shapley at BBC North Region. He discusses the developments that contributed to our collective image of 'The North' and its role within the national cultural imagination; a "powerful imaginary space to be called up when needed but only then, and one never able to shed its

[252] Hawkins 1987.

accretion of negative images" (2004, p.269). He observes that our collective idea of the North exists on such a large scale, that it may be regarded as an alternative form of 'Englishness'. It is important to note that Russell does indeed mean English, rather than British, since his specific concern is with the North of England, not Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. In conceptualising the problematic notion of a north/south divide, Russell [253]identifies positive Northern characteristics like warmth, virtuosity, authenticity, self-reliance, and quick wittedness. There is a danger at this point in formulating a diametric characterisation of the south as contrastingly soft and ineffectual. Russell[254] does so, pitting his positive northern traits against 'metropolitan' 'pretentiousness' and 'condescension'. Russell also observes the characterisations that established a northern identity as a response to the threat of mass culture and 'Americanisation'. However, *The Bradshaws* (1983) inverts any negative representations of the North of England, by providing its own less than positive portrayal with an honesty and familiarity than any external satirical caricature. There is no charming pre-industrial representation, no restorative tonic to be found in the bracing northern countryside. This is an expression of the North imagining and exploring itself, based on its own memories and environment. *The Bradshaws* (1983) is *for* the North and demonstrates that there is a space in comedy and drama, situated in a secondary position to the dominant dictates of cultural forms.

[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.

5.4 *Hassan* (1983)

Hassan (1983) is a two-part adaptation of the 1922 play by James Elroy Flecker. It was adapted for radio by Roger Harvey and is a Metro Radio Production. It begins with a narrator, speaking with a formal commanding British accent projected at a normal volume, but with a slow cadence usually applied when whispering. The introductory sting blends a contemporary synthesiser with a Persian setar. This is cut short by the deep resonance of a large tam-tam, perhaps in reference to the opening sequence of a J. Arthur Rank motion picture. It is a signal to attention, cutting the music abruptly, leading to the ambience of a marketplace.

The voice of our narrator re-emerges, speaking invitingly and enigmatically as though revealing carefully where we are. His tone suggests caution and a very slight trepidation steering the listener furtively. The result is a sense of small, darkened winding streets. Unusually, he openly directs the listener:

> NARRATOR: You must imagine yourself in a street in old Baghdad at the time when Harun al-Rashid was Caliph. In this street you would find the shop of Hassan the old confectioner and in the shop, you would find Hassan himself in conversation with Selim, a coarse young fellow of the streets.[255]

This choice is reminiscent of early attempts at radio drama to those unaccustomed to reading the medium. There is nearby singing, though not perceptible as prayer, and rather than the music featuring accurate instruments like a ney or oud, we hear a pungi and sitar. The choice of music suggests a different sensibility towards accuracy by selecting library music that only roughly approximates a time and place – an amalgam of Asian, North African and Middle

[255] Harvey 1983.

Eastern and forms. Today there is an expectation for programme makers to exercise diligence in ensuring accuracy which serves as a reminder of the need in ILR for expediency, making use of available resources. Just as Flecker's play is an example of orientalist literature, this production is an equally imprecise simulacrum. However, the music selection is also an aesthetic one, selected to strike an emotional chord with its western audience, as we shall see with its use of Italian orchestral suites.

In this adaptation, the younger cast members, Selim and Yasmin, speak with southern British accents, commonly referred to as 'Estuary English' (Rosewarne 1994). By opting for a vernacular approach in these two performances, the presentation is modified to provide a certain familiarity or universality, suggestive of their social class, age and status. Curiously, there is no attempt to make use of Northumberland accents which may well have worked in much the same way.

HASSAN:	Eywallah! Eywallah!
SELIM:	Oh you have repeated yourself thirty-seven times oh ancient one.[256]

Clive Champney provides Hassan's coarse gruff voice, initially whining with desperation and later with pitiful hopelessness. Champney's performance provides vivid details about Hassan's character and appearance; overweight, slovenly, perhaps unshaven and lacking refinement, never relaxing his gruff voice when tenderness is more appropriate. He speaks with rolled 'r's' indicating a stereotypical faux-middle eastern accent, which is, like the music, inaccurate. But one must remain mindful of the blunter sensibilities of audiences in the 1980s leading to the

[256] Harvey 1983.

general pantomimesque *Arabian Nights*[257] approach taken here. In opposition to the use of vernacular modes of speech, the dialogue does not contain any contractions as with the original text. As an acting technique, the lack of contractions infers an inability to break idiomatic rules, implying a non-native English speaker; Hassan is therefore foreign. Later, the disguised Caliph and his entourage wander through the city. The Caliph's voice has a vocal tremor which often breaks when amused or threatened, expressing a higher pitch that betrays an effete cowardly nature to his character. He, like Hassan, rolls his 'r's' and draws breath through his teeth. He speaks through an occasional sly smile which is quite audible. Contrastingly, the poet Ishak emotes quietly to himself with a gentle mellifluous voice as he resolves to escape. The supporting actors use modern received English, and their performances are in all respects comparable with a BBC production intended for a national audience. They are primarily voice over artistes having been hired previously by Harvey for commercial productions. But in the heated exchanges we hear something reminiscent of Stephen Hearst's[258] characterisation of the 'rep voice' as "two actors confronting a microphone" (Hendy 2007, p.204).

Hassan is tormented with desire for the younger, beautiful Yasmine. His lack of self-awareness being an old, fat confectioner leads him to believe he has a chance at winning her love. She rejects him while ridiculing him. Her promiscuity upsets Hassan who had regarded her in an idealised way and he collapses in the street, his love unrequited, compounded by her laughter and mockery. This inversion of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) is the only tangible moment of levity to be found in Flecker's otherwise nihilistic play which is not entirely transferred word for word by Harvey. But this scene also exposes the technical limitations typified across ILR stations. The interaction between Hassan and Yasmine with Selim reveals

[257] This title is the Anglicised version of *'Alf Laylah wa-Laylah'*: '*One Thousand and One Nights'*.
[258] The controller of Radio 3.

the close immediacy of the studio surroundings. Hassan's voice betrays the sensory parameters of the environment. Such instances are occasionally detectible in BBC productions but are not as common and limited to scenes containing sustained raised voices as demonstrated in this scene where the Caliph is interested in an occupied house. Seeing lights and hearing music he asks Jafar to call out to the occupants.

JAFAR:	Oh dwellers in the House! Answer in the name of Allah! (A BEAT) Answer! Answer!
VOICE:	[REVERB] WHO CALLS?
JAFAR:	Sir… ah, we are merchants from Basra. We have lost our way in this great city and seek hospitality.
VOICE:	[REVERB] IF YOU ENTER O MERCHANTS OF BASRA, YOU WILL BE IN MY POWER! AND IF YOU ANNOY ME, I SHALL PUNISH YOU WITH DEATH. BUT YOU ARE NOT COMPELLED TO ENTER. GO IN PEACE, IF YOU WISH.[259]

The effect is to emphasise distance and depth. The voice inside booms with a cavernous reverb effect implying a supernatural quality as though rousing the attention of genie. An impression of height is then implied as Rafi allows the disguised Caliph and his party to enter. The listener is compelled to reassess the spatial arrangement of the scene as do the characters, who are initially unaware that there is no door and the only means of entry is upwards through a basket on a pulley system. These visual elements are specified with simplicity through the use of economic dialogue with the intrigued reaction of the Caliph's party and the sound of a winch or a wooden wheel.

[259] Harvey 1983.

Harvey, having become accustomed to the commercial recording room at Metro Radio, opted to continue using this facility for his drama productions. This sort of arrangement usually necessitates a series of recording sessions with individual actors on separate days, perhaps with the benefit of playback to match intonations, or simply editing lines together in parallel later in post-production. The smaller the vocal booth, the less opportunity there is to apply techniques of audioposition, unless such experimentation extends to recording on location or outside, which Harvey did on other projects. Harvey opted for the older recording process with actors gathered around a single microphone, stepping into the responsive pickup area to deliver their lines, with spot effects played in live. Although this should have simplified the subsequent mix, Harvey recalls the production required a complex process to blend in the music score (personal communication, 10 April 2017).

In some respects, Harvey maintains a high level of professionalism and quality control throughout *Hassan* (1983) despite the limitations of Metro's facilities. In other respects there are a few unusual aesthetic choices in sound usage. For instance, the night is signified with a rather apparent loop of cricket chirps. After the interaction with the basket, there is a scene transition denoted by a juvenile xylophone sweep which is out of place given the previously established air of enigmatic trepidation. Other shortcomings include the repeated over-modulation of voices, and the occasional labial plosive can be heard on words beginning with 'p'. Both are due to the volume and proximity of the performer to the microphone. It is certain that an equivalent BBC production would review and retake any scene to avoid these forms of distortion.

There are some ingenious moments with sound, however. One instance occurs when the metallic scrape of a falling portcullis is duplicated four times, edited into progressively

shortened segments to indicate four separate prison walls that trap the visitors in the centre of Rafi's home. Additionally, one can envisage the vertical dimension caused by Hassan as though calling upwards and Yasmine addressing him below.

The most remarkable thing about Harvey's creative ear is his use of Respighi's symphonische dichtung *Fontane di Roma, P. 106: IV. La fontana di Villa Medici al tramonto* (1916). Harvey uses an arrangement by the Boston Symphony Orchestra with some slight modifications edited for time. He specified the actor Cliff Burnett wear headphones whilst listening to the track to deliver lines constructed from Flecker's famous poem *The Golden Road to Samarkand* (1922) which is contained in the final act of the play. The stanzas presented here are a truncated version adapted as lines of dialogue for Ishak and Hassan. Burnett performed the stanzas in precise time with the music, pausing as it builds, then continuing as it recedes. Thus, the music *informs* the prosodic approach, discovering where the gravitas, emotion and drama are, as live, whilst recording. At this end point of the story, Hassan is traumatised by the execution of Pervaneh and Rafi, and Ishak returns to rescue him. The tempo and timbre of Burnett's voice integrates with the music acting as a gentle salve to allay Hassan's fears and bolster his resolve before making the pilgrimage to Samarkand. The effect is a highly convincing and emotionally resonant conclusion. The brevity and self-contained nature to Respighi's movement as a form of musical poetry is complementary to Flecker's intentions as a textual poem.

This adaptation departs in a few significant ways from Flecker's original text. The darker themes have been significantly reduced; the corrupt brutality of the Caliph is verbalised, but not realised aurally. Harvey has also excised the disparaging anti-Semitic remarks. There is an entire act missing which contains the torture and execution of Rafi and his love Pervaneh. It is also interesting to note the absence of the entire sequence between the genius loci of the

fountain and the spirits of Rafi and Pervaneh. In the original text, Flecker demonstrates a philosophy more in line with his Parnassian influences than romanticism by not allowing the spirits of the two lovers to remain together, since nothing anchors them to the physical world. Creating the sequence with sound and filtered dialogue would have been an interesting exercise for Harvey, perhaps becoming an involved process that would equal the rest of the production. Its removal suggests a decision based on timing given the production was restricted to two thirty-minute parts. The effect of this deletion lightens the overall tone of the play and positions Hassan more prominently throughout. The focus of the original play moves away from Hassan in significant ways, whereas this version retains his role as the principal protagonist.

5.5 *Radio Timperley / Frank's World* (1986)

An initial appraisal would present *Radio Timperley* (1986) as a ventriloquist act, a homage to the BBC Light Programme's *Educating Archie* (1950). The studio supposedly set in his garden shed also recalls Arthur Askey's *Band Waggon* (1938).

> That was a nice idea; that within Piccadilly was this little pirate radio station… I mean, why would Piccadilly ever give a radio station to someone like Frank? But it was fully realised, with jingles. Chris was very productive.[260]

Radio Timperley (1986) is very much an acquired taste; the notion of 'radiophonic ventriloquism' being the least of any mainstream listener's bemusement. Upon further examination, this is complex satire; a situation comedy comprising multiple levels of meaning, nested in layers of unreality and absurdity.

ROGER:	Hey Frank! Yer mum say's there's a letter for yer.
FRANK:	Is there now. Let's have a look at this then. I wonder who this is from? Oh blimey! IBA! Oh blimey, I'm not in more trouble with them, am I? They took all my equipment off me. 'Dear Francis' (tuts) I do wish they wouldn't call me that. 'Dear Francis, erm, we have decided to give you a fantastic broadcasting licence. Er, consider *Radio Timperley* back on the air!'. Brilliant Little Frank! Look at that in er green and white!
LITTLE FRANK:	Ooh yes that's good![261]

Describing this show as 'surreal comedy' or 'absurdist' only offers a superficial usefulness in addressing the character of Frank Sidebottom. Surrealism in its precise sense as an avant-garde

[260] (Radcliffe cited Middles 2014).
[261] Sievey 1988.

movement can assist us in an analysis of how the character playfully tests the boundaries of rationality and audience expectation. Sievey was clearly influenced by *The Goon Show* (1951) but also *Hancock's Half Hour* (1954).[262] Frank shares key traits with Hancock, an ineffectual man in modern (post war) Britain, insignificant, but with delusions of grandeur, reminiscent of the recurring representation of men in the plays of Giles Cooper (Chignell, 2019). It would be disingenuous to present *Radio Timperley* (1986) as a precise example of absurdism. But just as Cooper borrowed from absurdist theatre to move freely between the mundane and fantastical (Grey 1981), Frank moved effortlessly from the monotony of northern working-class life to fantastical cartoon-like scenarios. *Radio Timperley* (1986) is better described as an ironic, non-sequitur anti-comedy and in some respects Dadaist performance art.[263]

In the opening episode of *Frank's Blackpool Holiday* (1987), Frank, travelling by train from Timperley is annoyed to find Little Frank, his puppet counterpart, also on board. The episode consists of a lengthy argument with Little Frank.

FX:	TRAIN INTERIOR
FRANK:	Bet you don't where I am. Well I'll tell you, right. This week, I have decided… er well I've changed a habit of a lifetime really 'cos for the last thirty-five years, I've been going to er Blackpool to Auntie Edie's with me mum every year. And I thought: 'Blimey Frank, it's about you had a holiday on your own' y'know what I mean? Because, like, me mum, she won't let me go in them arcades or anything like that you know, so I thought; get away on your own and have a fantastic time. A change is as good as a holiday or something, in't it? So! Guess where I'm going? Well I'm actually going to Auntie Edie's still.
LITTLE FRANK:	Tickets please.
FRANK:	Oh blimey, eh? Oh it's you! You had me worried then, I thought it was the ticket card man. Eh? What you doing on here?

[262] Considering the apparent residue of the Manchester School ethos present at Piccadilly Radio, Sievey was comparable to Kenny Everett, both non-conformists, undermining authority and making light of authoritarianism.
[263] For a detailed introduction to the characters, see page 140.

LITTLE FRANK:	Ooh you'll get thrown off if you've not got a ticket.
FRANK:	Well you show me *your* ticket. Where's *your* ticket?
LITTLE FRANK:	Ooh I haven't got a ticket.
FRANK:	Right well you'll be thrown off with me then when the guard comes won't yer?
LITTLE FRANK:	Oh no, he won't throw me off.
FRANK:	Why won't he throw you off?
LITTLE FRANK:	Because I've got a Puppet Railcard.[264]

His relationship with Little Frank is comparable to an abusive, demeaning marriage, Frank being an immature, frustrated husband, and Little Frank the put-upon wife suffering constant criticism. Frank's ire towards the puppet is convincingly bipolar, stopping when he is distracted – he has to *remember* to be angry with Little Frank.

FX:	TRAIN INTERIOR
LITTLE FRANK:	So you mean that the listeners are now just going to listen for the other thirty-five minutes to the sound effects of trains?
FRANK:	OH WELL THANK YOU LITTLE FRANK! YOU'VE NOW TOLD EVERYONE ITS SOUND EFFECTS. YOU'VE RUINED ME WHOLE SHOW!
LITTLE FRANK:	Well you could edit that bit out, couldn't you?
FRANK:	WELL… YES! THAT'S JUST WHAT I WAS GONNA SAY! LUCKY FOR YOU, I CAN EDIT THAT BIT OUT RIGHT!
LITTLE FRANK:	You won't forget?
FRANK:	NO! I WON'T… JUST SHUT UP! No we're not going to do it for forty minutes because er, y'know magic of radio, all that business, I can just suddenly decide when we're at Blackpool.
LITTLE FRANK:	Oh when's that?
FRANK:	I'LL TELL YER WHEN! ER, WELL ITS NOW ACTUALLY! OH HERE WE ARE AT BLACKPOOL! Brilliant. Right here we are Birmingham New Street Station… Eh? BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET STATION?

[264] Sievey 1987.

LITTLE FRANK:	Oh where does it say that?
FRANK:	THERE! BIRMINGHAM! WE'VE COME TO THE WRONG… THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT. YOU'VE PUT ME ON THE WRONG TRAIN WITH ME VERY SPECIAL CASE ON THE BLACKPOOL TRAIN! YOU'VE HAD IT LITTLE FRANK!
LITTLE FRANK:	Doesn't say Birmingham New Street, it says Blackpool.
FRANK:	No it doesn't... oh. So it does. OH YOU'VE GOT ME ER SO CONFUSED THAT I CAN'T READ NOW![265]

Crisell cites the "transient and uncertain reality" (1994 p.170) of *The Goon Show* (1951) as a key benefit of radiogenic comedy and this series may also be considered in this regard. Importantly, the series does not make frequent use of this ability and when it does, the joke lies in exposing the artificiality of the studio. This also applies to the dynamic between Frank and his puppet, which appears differently depending on the situation and how a scene is read. Frank is annoyed that Little Frank is on board the train but is simultaneously angry that he has undermined the reality of the scene as it is being recorded in the studio – both states coexist. Frank himself may be regarded as both an individual who is predisposed to wearing a large fibreglass head for some undisclosed reason, or as an unusual metaphysical half-human half-cartoon hybrid.

Gray (1981) observes how Louis MacNeice effortlessly moves a scene into the character's mind, dividing it into different voices. Supposedly this is easily explained here with the comic conceit that this is ventriloquism on the radio, and yet Frank is such an atypical sitcom character that arguing simultaneously as both Frank *and* Little Frank is suggestive of schizophrenia more than meeting the expectations of a traditional ventriloquist act. With Sievey playing all the characters including the train conductor, Frank is essentially talking to himself when interacting

[265] Sievey 1987.

with Little Frank. Crisell (1994) is aware of the potential confusion caused when transposing multiple voices performed by one actor from radio to the stage. This is sidestepped by Sievey because Frank's fixed unmoving face obscures the point that this is ventriloquism. Indeed, this effect is then deliberately broken when audiences express empathy for the puppet. Frank would remind the audience not to get too invested in the character since it is 'only cardboard', thus undermining the entire construct.

These simultaneous overlapping approaches to Sievey's characterisations, transferrable from the stage to radio and television constitutes a perceptual conflict. Frank's unmoving lips and fixed-cartoon face evoke the McGurk effect (1976), which refers to the disconnect between aural (spoken) sound and its visual source. On radio, we are not provided with a visual image of Frank. On stage, we are similarly denied an animated expressive face or moving lips. Moreover, Frank as drawn in comics also parallels his fixed unmovable appearance in reality. His appearance is a striking but minor part of the character. Considering Scholes (1982) critique of visual media as having a fixed and reductive effect on the audience's imagination, the most tangible grasp we may have on Frank is through his voice, making radio *his* medium.

Radio Timperley (1986) is structured as a weekly episodic serial set around a particular storyline which may or may not be resolved satisfactorily, or as an individual stand-alone episode. Each episode may run anywhere from 5 minutes to 10 minutes with occasional 60-minute specials. There was no requirement by Piccadilly for episodes to conform to a particular duration, which meant that presenters would incorporate an episode at their discretion. Often presenters did not provide any specific time signposting for *Radio Timperley* (1986) beyond perhaps a brief allusion, necessitating a commitment to listen through the majority of a show, or in some cases an entire daypart.

A typical episode begins with entirely inappropriate library music evocative of a classic *Republic Pictures* film serial, suiting the irreverent tone.[266] Frank's introduction addresses the listener directly to recap the previous episode, the music fades out to delineate the start of the narrative. But this is often undermined with a deliberately underwhelming resolution to the previous cliff-hanger. One instance of this may be ILR's only 'darkness play' *Frank's Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1988) where Little Frank ties a rope around his cardboard feet to pull Frank out of a sinkhole and also falls in. The demarcation between introductory narration and the first scene is unclear with interactions and arguments with other characters in the narrative world. This metalepsis (Genette 1983) for comic effect often breaks the audio equivalent of the fourth wall. Frank's position allows movement to and from the role of extradiegetic narrator to narrator interacting within the diegesis, then as a character interacting within the narrative world. Other characters also move in and out of the narrative as freely. These confluences appear effortlessness, but also indicate a high level of sophistication on the part of Sievey as writer-performer and in the audience's ability to 'read' the audio sequence.

Radio Timperley (1986) occupies a unique place in the use of vernacular orality and culture on ILR. It exhibits a dialect particular to Greater Manchester. 'I haven't' and 'haven't you?' become 'I've not' and 'have you not?'. Lines of dialogue and song lyrics contain numerous false starts and non-lexical utterances, a deliberate overuse of 'er', and words out of sequence as though an unplanned train of thought, are additional instances of Frank's expectations of the audience to be accepted without question. The regional dialect is unmistakably authentic but was satirised by Sievey who created his own lexicon for Frank. His catchwords and phrases

[266] The choice of incidental music was another aspect borrowed from *The Goon Show* (1951).

like ‘blimey’, ‘fantastic’ and an Arthur Askey style ‘thang yaw’ are frequently exclaimed. His self-styled and exaggerated use of language became known as ‘Timperley rhyming slang’. For instance, the word ‘bobbins’ (i.e. “‘bobbins of cotton’ equals ‘rotten’”) was popularised by Frank and grew in use in the Manchester region during the 1980s, later gaining wider exposure on Radio One through Mark Radcliffe and Marc Riley. Sievey deliberately broke with convention by incorporating an exaggerated pattern of disfluent speech to interrupt the flow of dialogue, undermining any sense of authority that the station projected. Consider the BBC’s initial path towards national unity, promoting literacy and conventional mainstream fictional content in contrast to the approach taken by Harding, Bridson and Shapley. This raises the question of how far The Manchester School acted as an internal force radiating outwards to the regions. Perhaps this ethos and approach was a product of external voices from vernacular culture acting *upon* the medium as evidenced by Sievey’s comedy. *Radio Timperley* (1986) and the popularity of Frank Sidebottom is a logical continuation of this subversive force.

Radio Timperley (1986) as an act of mockery went to further extremes by taking ILR’s mandate for localness beyond the point of ridicule.

> FRANK: Well I always thought me an’ Elvis would work together. ‘Cos I’ve never been to Graceland, an’ he’s never been to Timperley.[267]

Every episode and song are saturated with multiple references to the village of Timperley located in the borough of Trafford. Despite being in all respects unremarkable and mundane, Frank’s hometown is celebrated to the point obsessiveness by Frank with song titles like *Born in Timperley* (1987)*, Timperley Sunset* (1987) and *Wild Thing… in Timperley* (1987)*,* to name

[267] Sievey 1987.

a few. The lyrics to his reimagining of Ultravox's *Vienna* (1980) titled *Oh Timperley* (1987), demonstrates this excessive subversion:

> *There's loads and loads of roads,*
> *and there's loads of lampposts in those roads.*
> *Everywhere you go…*
> *…there's loads and loads of trees,*
> *loads and loads of shops.*
> *loads and loads of houses,*
> *loads and loads of pavements everywhere you go…*
> *It means everything to me!*
> *Yes, it means everything to me!*
> *Oh Timperley!*[268]

Frank's unique covers of mainstream popular music included a particular focus on independent acts from Manchester like Joy Division, New Order, The Fall and The Smiths, though a Frank Sidebottom cover was generally considered a source of pride.[269] Sievey's gently mocking renditions played on banjo and Casio synthesiser veiled a deep admiration of these artists. His authentic speech and mischievousness made him emblematic of Manchester and a pseudo-mascot of sorts amongst musicians.

Crisell (1994) presents the paradox contained within the limitations of radio which conveys a complex and rich comic world; the scope and intensity of an imagined world being greater than the reality of a visualised world. When applied to the culture of Manchester, *Radio Timperley* (1986) provides a vivid, imaginative, innocent world of characters but still reflects the oral vernacular and relationships of northern working-class life. Frank is very much a Mancunian, but devoid of the cynicism and bleakness typical of the representations set within the harsh industrial environment of the 'staged north' (Russell 2004).

[268] Sievey 1987.
[269] Marc Riley of The Fall and Mike Joyce of The Smiths both had associations with Sievey.

Radio Timperley (1986) takes every opportunity to undermine and subvert radio conventions. It is founded upon vernacular culture and language, but the nature of the character means that this is exaggerated to an absurd extreme. It also mocks popular music and culture. Furthermore it is logical to conclude that the entire character conceived by Sievey is a parodying of Mancunian culture, as it expands to wider popular culture. In that regard, we may regard it as a logical continuation of the Manchester school by mocking the establishment.

5.6 *Pepys* (1987)

Pepys (1987) is the first of two plays selected here for analysis, produced by IRDP Ltd. It was written and directed by Tim Crook and Richard Shannon for broadcast on LBC and later released on cassette as part of a series of classic adaptations for sale exclusively by WHSmith. This series in particular is highly indicative of the level of professionalism apparent across all IRDP productions. The series won the Best Drama award at the International Radio festival of New York in 1988 and a Sony / Radio Academy award for most creative use of radio in 1989.

The historical value of *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1825), being a detailed first-hand account of life in London in the mid-seventeenth century, holds a particular fascination as a recording which bears witness to both the mundane and the historic. In this analysis, we are primarily interested in an examination of the approach and choices made in adapting Pepys's diary, though there are moments of audiopositioning within the stereoscopic imagery presented in the series from which can be gleaned useful information. Although the original source material is written from Pepys's perspective, the adaptation process required a high level of efficiency in economic writing and a balance of practicality with imagination. We shall explore how the dramatists, Crook and Shannon of IRDP, have taken elements of the diary to construct original scenes that bestow upon others in Pepys's orbit their own voice and role with equal levels of prominence. As a four-part series on a finite ILR budget, there was no realistic way to cover the entire ten years that the diary spans, thus a selective approach was taken, narrowing the options available to the dramatists. The selection process for *Pepys* (1987) appears to have involved paring the source material down to cover its most popular, noteworthy and familiar components. The Great Plague followed by the Great Fire of London are of course key moments in the history contained in the diary, which is also notable for being a frank, salacious

record of his adulteries. Consequently, the four episodes titled *Plague*, *Fire*, *Jealousy* and *Infidelity,* would appear to cover the most prominent themes of the source material. This means that key points in Pepys's life and career are either de-emphasised or disregarded; the restoration of the monarchy for instance, his administrative role in the Navy and his associations with the great and good like Sir Christopher Wren and Sir Isaac Newton are altogether excised in favour of a story about his relationships with women, and the women are given a voice in response.

With any literary source there is always the unique question of adapting for the specific demands of the radio medium. There are difficulties in the development of a radio adaptation, literary fiction and audio drama being markedly different mediums. As readers, we occupy a fixed position in relation to the author's intentions as characters, objects, places and plot events are maintained. But to restate Arnheim's (1932) point, it is necessary to *auratise* things in order to give them existence on radio for the benefit of the listener; a process that reminds and keeps track of things that only have momentary existence. People, places and objects are not as recallable in sound drama as they are in literature. Characters may exist in a scene, but until they are heard or alluded to, they might as well not be there, or as Young observes, "broadcasting has no life until the listener joins himself to it" (1933, p.14). We have previously discussed Hamish Wilson on Radio Clyde[270], who took the cost-effective route of delivering recitations of classic literature. In this instance, we are presented with a highly ambitious full-cast dramatisation, requiring an extensive scriptwriting process at a standard in keeping with expectations for national BBC radio drama.

[270] See page 103.

As an adaptation of a seventeenth century text, the dramatists have expanded the scope of cultural representations that typify this time period, in an act of imagination designed to reform the past and reflect present day values. Tutan (2020) provides an understanding of the intentions behind a dramatist's reconstruction of a historical text by characterising adaptation as a valid form of history. Berger uses Mikhail Bakhtin's 'dialogism' to demonstrate how the past impacts on our ideas and creativity, the future and the audience, observing; "Texts are suspended between the past and the future" (1995, p.36). The past and the present are held in a permanent state of dialogue which reveals more about our present than the past it adapts. In fact Waugh (1984) observes that the writing of history follows the same process of fictional writing and consequently, history may be thought of as a personal reconstruction. *Pepys* (1987) is such a negotiation, moving beyond any discrimination between factual and fictional history, preferring a radical historical representation. Hutcheon (1988) maintains that history and subsequent adaptations are often contextualised in their own time, place, society and culture, which negates the idea of a fixed, unchanging version of history. The decision to provide Elisabeth Pepys with her own voice mirrors current cultural concerns with inequality in gender representation. In doing so, *Pepys* (1987) demonstrates the simple fact that such values were absolutely present in media representation during the 1980s and earlier decades, calling into question some contrary claims made by newer progressive voices today. Tutan (2020) cites Hutcheon's point that storytellers often "silence, exclude, and absent certain past events and people" and that "historians have done the same" (1988, p.107), reducing the distinction between historian and storyteller. We should consider Pepys's diary but one version of history, in other words, it is *his* adaptation of events. Any subsequent adaption of that material is free "to signify whatever the historian intends" (Hutcheon 1988, p.122). Therefore, this adaptation of Pepys is precisely what an adaptation should be, a story of the past that says something about our present.

A significant creative choice by Crook and Shannon is the expanded role of Pepys often-wronged wife Elisabeth, a progressive trend in literature with examples like *Mrs Pepys - Her Book* by Marjorie Astin (1929), *The Diary of Mrs. Pepys* (1934) by F.D. Ponsonby Senior, followed by Dale Spender's feminist reinterpretation *The Diary of Elizabeth Pepys* (1991), *The Journal of Mrs. Pepys: Portrait of a Marriage* by Sara George (1999) and *Pleasing Mr Pepys* (2017)*, A Plague on Mr Pepys* (2018) and *Entertaining Mr Pepys* (2019) by Deborah Swift. This device begins early in the play with four lines of dialogue that serve to orient the listener, and is especially useful to those who have not read the diary.

> ELISABETH: (HUMMING 'BARBARA ALLEN') Twentieth of June. I wonder if Mr Pepys guesses that I too am keeping a diary? Of course it's not so important a diary as his must be, full of state secrets and such. He says there are matters unfit even for my knowledge and therefore it is written in a secret handwriting which most people, including me cannot read.[271]

Elisabeth, played by Alexandra Mathie, hums the folk tune *Barbara Allen* helping to ground the play in its time period. These brief introductory lines establish a great deal of exposition. Mathie performs with a young-sounding French accent, her variation in pitch adds a knowingly coquettish playful tone. Samuel and Elisabeth are married. Perhaps naively, Elisabeth believes Samuel's honourable claim to be keeping the diary in code due to the sensitive nature of his work as naval administrator. This is also a statement of fact since the diary was decoded and published 155 years after the final entry. She certainly respects his importance and stature, providing for her and their position of status in London society. The four lines also reveal that this is a secretive relationship; the two keep things from each other, providing opportunity to reveal her own extramarital dalliances. If she too keeps a diary, then both characters are equal,

[271] Crook & Shannon (1987).

therefore the respective diaries have a greater use in the narrative as a source of ammunition against each other. Both diaries are pitted against each other. Our role as listener may of course be interpreted as confidant. But since Mr and Mrs Pepys speak to *us* as they write their intimate entries, and since *we* hold both their secrets in mind knowing now that Mrs Pepys also kept a diary as an equal and opposite force to her husband, we act, in a sense, as the *diary itself* - a consequence of dramatic irony.

In terms of narrative structure, there is a non-linearity to a diary, any diary, that permits the reader to move in and out of discrete units of time. Reading a diary like a novel in a standard linear fashion provides a holistic perspective. But for the researcher, or even the diarist who may need to recount certain facts by time period, the narrative structure of a diary is individualised chronologically. For example, episode two *Plague* (1987), is bookended by Pepys's actual entries. But the bulk of the play imagines Elisabeth's time away from home, as she lodges at William Sheldon's house in Woolwich to escape the plague. It begins with an audio-montage of brief moments in short succession which weave in and out of the signature tune. The scene truncates and reorganises time as presented in the diary to introduce and establish the characters and express their situation in reaction to the encroaching plague in a dramatic but expository way. The sequence runs as follows:

GRAMS:	SEVENTEENTH CENTURY COUNTRY DANCE (REPRISE)
	FADE UNDER
ELISABETH:	Samuel! Horrible news! I heard it from the baker's boy. The plague has at last arrived at the city, *inside* the walls!
PEPYS:	Oh no! Where?
ELISABETH:	Our good friend and neighbour Doctor Burnett has it at his house.
PEPYS:	At Fenchurch Street? How unlucky! Poor Burnett, and so near! To us I mean.

ELISABETH: Well his door is shut up and nailed, but you know he did that voluntarily when he found that his servant had the disease, he didn't even wait for the plague watch to come round.

PEPYS: (Sighs) Ah noble fellow. Very handsomely done.[272]

This momentary scene is a reimagining of Pepys actual entry for Sunday, 11 June 1665. Tonally, the original entry bears no relation to the adapted scene. There is a distinct lack of fear or urgency as apparently, Pepys sounded relaxed during what would have been a pleasant summer's day and more interested in his new suit following an afternoon visit from his cousins:

> They being gone, I out of doors a little, to shew, forsooth, my new suit, and back again, and in going I saw poor Dr. Burnett's door shut; but he hath, I hear, gained great goodwill among his neighbours; for he discovered it himself first, and caused himself to be shut up of his own accord: which was very handsome.[273]

Moreover, the mandated practice of 'plague notices' on nailed-shut doors was observed earlier that week by Pepys, lamenting:

> I did in Drury-lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and "Lord have mercy upon us" writ there - which was a sad sight to me, being the first of that kind that to my remembrance I ever saw.[274]

So to prepare the dramatic impetus of the episode, the menace of this gradual threat and the urgently organised dispatch of his wife Elisabeth and her maid to safe lodgings in Woolwich, Crook and Shannon appear to amalgamate asynchronous time, constructing scenes by selecting separate, but related events and arranging them into a new formation. This technique is applied

[272] Crook & Shannon (1987).
[273] *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1825)
[274] Ibid.

throughout the series. The end of episode two ends with Pepys's entries for September 6th and 8th 1665, where he discards a letter addressed to Mrs Pepys. The play imagines who actually wrote that letter and the circumstances that led to its delivery. In episode three *Jealousy,* there is an intriguing but protracted six-minute sequence that extends what was originally this brief description:

> And so parted, I having there seen a mummy in a merchant's warehouse there, all the middle of the man or woman's body, black and hard. I never saw any before, and, therefore, it pleased me much, though an ill sight; and he did give me a little bit, and a bone of an arme, I suppose, and so home, and there to bed.[275]

Mike Shannon's performance as Pepys is delivered with a soft and gentlemanly tone. He is no brute and is in fact, easily frightened, though not without good cause. He clearly relies upon Elisabeth when in distress. He is not brusque with her or ill tempered, and has a rather sensitive and gentle way with words. Essentially, we are presented with a good man, kindly and God-fearing, despite the later revelation of his womanising.

The first episode makes use of the stereoscopic picture by positioning Pepys away from our audioposition to imply distance. The sense of space and distance from the listener's position is accentuated by the sound of a heavy wooden door slam. This sound would have been taken from a recording rather than a live prop door in situ, since it was recorded in LBC's parliamentary studio, a comparatively spacious facility which allowed actor Mike Shannon to move away from the microphone, into a corner to deliver his lines as though in the hallway of Pepys residence:

[275] Ibid.

GRAMS:	SEVENTEENTH CENTURY COUNTRY DANCE (UNDER)
FX:	COACHES AND HORSES, BELLS, CHATTER. HEAVY DOOR SLAM
PEPYS:	Elisabeth? Oh lord! Elisabeth! Dear dear dear! I feel quite faint! Will? Mary? Elisabeth! Where is everybody?
ELISABETH:	Samuel whatever can the matter be? Are you ill?
PEPYS:	I have had the most unpleasant fright, Elisabeth! A most unpleasant fright! Oh something to drink. Aquavit. Something strong. Oh lord!
FX:	BOTTLE POURS
PEPYS:	Oh lord! Oh lord, what a scare!
ELISABETH:	Here, drink it in sips. Now, tell me what has so upset you?
PEPYS:	I was in a hackney coach, I took over in the west end of Holborn, you know near the parishes where there is plague? Near St. Giles. I have been at my Lord Treasurers. Well, at first, we went along alright, but then coming through Newgate, I felt the coach slacken and the coachman drive more slowly, and more slowly. And in ten minutes we hadn't gone further than Westcheap and there stopped altogether, with the coachman almost falling from his box. He was hardly able to stand or speak. Then he thrust his head right through the window within an inch of my face and told me was struck very sick and almost blind and could no longer drive
ELISABETH:	What did you do?
PEPYS:	I alighted and into another coach at once. I nearly died of fright when I saw his face all livid and staring and sweating.
ELISABETH:	Could you do nothing for the poor man?
PEPYS:	I should have. Oh, I should have. They are dying two or three hundred a week over there! I could only take to my heels. I am sorry for that now. I didn't even give him a fare. What times wife! God preserve us all.[276]

In episode three *Jealousy* (1987), Mike Shannon begins his performance as an older Pepys, his voice deeper and tired. The episode, told in flashback, concerns his courting of Elisabeth. These

[276] *Pepys: Plague* (1987) IRDP.

second two episodes have a notably different structure, without separate discrete diary entries, but a frequent running narration from Pepys commenting as illustrative scenes play out.[277]

Later in the garden at Woolwich, when Elisabeth meets Lieutenant Makepeace, the restrictive size of the studio is apparent. The exterior ambience and birdsong are at odds with the reverberation when Makepeace speaks. After we transition to the next scene, Elisabeth is indoors speaking up close to the microphone, which would have been preferable for the garden scene. One questionable aesthetic choice is the sound of the quill. The scratching sound whilst writing could have easily been reproduced by a pencil or fountain pen which would have been perfectly acceptable. However, as the implement is picked up, the effect is distinctly reminiscent of a ballpoint pen click. These episodes also contain contemporaneous tunes on a replica harpsichord built and played by Anne Tucker.

Later in this chapter, we shall explore another case study by IRDP which goes even further in its construction of a highly sophisticated 'pure' radio drama.

[277] Clearly the first and second episodes written by Shannon differ in tone and structure compared with episodes three and four written in a notably different style by Crook, which rely on the frequent punctuation of Pepys' diary entries.

5.7 *Under the Arch of the Guns: Presented by The Soldier Poets* (1988)

Under the Arch of the Guns (1988) was recorded at Radio Clyde. It was produced by Alex Dickson. It consists of fifty-five poems from the First World War, featuring most notably Thomas Hardy, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. The texts presented in this piece are a combination of poems and extracted stanzas into a verse play of sorts. Taken in isolation, they are self-contained poems. However, rather than presenting them as simple readings in linear fashion, a narrative has been formed, identifiable as a radio drama, with radiogenic qualities. In textual form, rhythm is largely prescribed by the poet in stressed and unstressed syllables. However in this example, the voice actor has a degree of control over stress and intonation, and delivers the poems like lines in a script. The voice actors perform in character and not in isolation - in some cases they interact with each other. In this regard, *Under the Arch of the Guns* (1988) is comparable to techniques established by the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould who was best known in radio for his 'contrapuntal' overlays of speech occupying a poetic middle ground between dialogue and music. Arnheim advocated radio as a medium uniquely suited to poetry since poets "should be able to adapt a verbal work of art to the limits of the world of space, sound and music" (1936, p.208). Louis MacNeice, Douglas Cleverdon and Charles Parker also merged the dramatic radio experience with poetry in this way.

The poems are contained within scenes signalled by ambient background sounds. The listener is positioned either in the trenches on the western front or in a domestic setting in homes and on the streets. These are not carefully arranged soundscapes, but single tracks of sound effects; a familiar clock ticking or exterior traffic alternating with incessant gunfire and shell explosions. The use of sound lacks a degree of sophistication and integration with the source material which precludes an analysis of audioposition. We can argue that less is more, as Grey

(1981) explains in relation to *Under Milk Wood* (1954), a little sound may go a long way to great effect. However, this case study is quite indicative of the limitations of the ILR sector with a number of apparent shortcomings which reduce the potential scope of this piece.

The birdsong and church bells provide an initial moment for the play to breathe before the interruption of explosions and trumpets. This is followed by a female announcer who, with a newsreel intonation, sets the scene over trumpets signalling reveille:

FX:	CROWDS. CHURCH BELLS
ANNOUNCER:	1914. Great Britain as she was. Men cheering, eager to fight and to die.
FX:	TRUMPETS
ANNOUNCER:	No one stopped to wonder why.[278]

Dickson extracts segments of the poems, not all of which are heard in full, to form a wider recontextualisation. This is a curated selection which fuses different stanzas together to construct a coherent narrative. The production does not present these as readings, instead each poem is provided with a voice or in some cases multiple voices, performed in character as an individual monologue. In this example the following verses from Siegfried Sassoon's *Twelve Months After* (1918)[279] become lines of dialogue:

[278] Dickson 1988.

[279] Siegfried Sassoon: *Twelve Months After. Counter-Attack and Other Poems.* (1918.)

> HULLO! here's my platoon, the lot I had last year.
> 'The war'll be over soon.'
> 'What 'opes?'
> 'No bloody fear!'
> Then, 'Number Seven, 'shun! All present and correct.'
> They're standing in the sun, impassive and erect.
> Young Gibson with his grin; and Morgan, tired and white;
> Jordan, who's out to win a D.C.M. some night;
> And Hughes that's keen on wiring; and Davies ('79),
> Who always must be firing at the Boche front line.
> . . . . .

GRAMS:	THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD BY JESSIE SEYMOUR IRVINE (1871).
FX:	BIRDSONG.
LIEUTENANT:	Hullo! Here's my platoon, the lot I had last year.
SOLIDER 1:	The war'll be over soon.
SOLDIER 2:	What 'opes?
SOLIDER 3:	No bloody fear!'
NARRATOR:	Then…
SOLDIER 2:	Number Seven, 'shun! All present and correct!
NARRATOR:	They're standing in the sun, impassive and erect.[280]

The particular selection and order in which the poems are presented, forms the milieu of the drama and its intended reception. The effect of such an audio-montage presents a new over-arching metanarrative from the constituent components of each poem. The poems are organised according to pace and tone and what they imply. The narrative is structured into three loosely defined acts, around themes of jingoistic patriotism, naivety and peer pressure. This transitions into disillusionment, criticism of blind duty and ignorance amongst those at home and culminates in expressions of fear, suffering, squalor and resentment. Correspondingly, the performances are initially loud, enthusiastic, aggressive and eventually tempered by grim resignation, becoming quieter, softer and subdued.

There is a logical continuity and structure to the juxtaposition of each poem to indicate cause and effect. The first three stanzas from Robert W. Service's *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man* (1916)

> 'Old soldiers never die; they simply fide a-why!'
> That's what they used to sing along the roads last spring;
> That's what they used to say before the push began;
> That's where they are to-day, knocked over to a man.

[280] Dickson 1988.

are coupled to the last two stanzas from Thomas Hardy's *Men Who March Away* (1914). Both halves of each poem redouble the emotional insistence of enlistment. The following verses are excised from Service's poem:

BRIGADIER:	Into the pot of War! Women all, hear the call, the pitiless call of War! Look your last on your dearest ones, brothers and husbands, fathers, sons: swift they go to the ravenous guns, the gluttonous guns of War. Look your last on your dearest ones. Death's red sickle is reaping to-night.[281]

By removing these warnings of impeding death, Dickson provides only Service's initial promise of victory and glory. He replaces these stanzas with Hardy's words:

GRAMS:	HOLST: MARS, THE BRINGER OF WAR (1918).
VOICE:	In our heart of hearts believing victory crowns the just, and that braggarts must surely bite the dust, press we to the field ungrieving, in our heart of hearts believing, victory crowns the just.
FX:	CROWS.
VOICE:	Hence the faith and fire within us. Men who march away before the barn-cocks say, night is growing gray, leaving all that here can win us; hence the faith and fire within us, men who march away.[282]

Words like 'heart' 'victory' 'just' and 'faith' affirm the duty and virtue of enlistment. Of course, this is not Dickson's own personal view, rather his arrangement acts as a propagandist would, wielding editorial control, perverting Service's actual intentions. This also serves the narrative by maintaining the initial tone of blind patriotism and restricting it to the first act. Following this, we are repositioned next to a woman. The ticking clock indicates a cosy sitting room and states to the listener 'meanwhile back home…'. This is unmistakeable as a scene

[281] Service 1916.
[282] Dickson 1988.

change; we have purposefully moved in space and time, further indicating the intention that this is a dramatic production rather than a book reading. The rhymed poem[283] *A Song for the Undecided* (1915) by William Kersley Holmes is performed as a single voice monologue by Diana Olsson. It was structured in couplets and is performed here conversationally:

FX:	CLOCK TICKING. TRAFFIC OUTSIDE.
WOMAN 1:	Our Jimmy joined terriers to fight against the Hun, In order, as he worded it, that he might share the fun. We liked his khaki uniform, his sudden martial air, And thought his colonel must be proud to have our Jimmy there. He went away with brightened eye to face fatigue and risk, With name and number round his neck upon a tiny disk. His necessaries all compressed within one little bag, Just like the many thousands more who rallied to the flag. He marched all morning in the wet and even went to bed, While rain that pierced the canvas roof came dripping on his head. He dug in trenches from the dawn until the sun was low. We said: 'Oh what he suffers! Oh, how could we let him go'? Then Jim came home on two days leave not worn to skin and bone, But taller by an inch or two and heavier by a stone. As happy as a king besides. So that's what drill and stew and rain and air had done for him, they'll do as much for you.[284]

As with the previous two poems, this is fused to the final bullying stanza of *The Call* (1914) by Jessie Pope:

GRAMS:	MILITARY TRUMPETS
FX:	MARCHING FOOTSTEPS
RECRUITER:	Who'll earn the Empire's thanks? Will you, my laddie? Who'll swell the victor's ranks? Will you, my laddie? When that procession comes, banners and rolling drums. Who'll stand and bite his thumbs? Will you, my laddie?
FX:	CHEERS[285]

[283] It is a 15-syllable iambic verse in the Greek Political or 'civic' style.
[284] Dickson 1988.
[285] Dickson 1988.

Each poem is delivered by a particular character with a setting, which may in turns be an abstraction over a bed of music, or rooted in reality with sound effects. But ultimately, the success of the programme comes from the performers who imbue the poems with character. The poems are performed as a dramatic script rather than simply read aloud. The men's voices range from commanding seniority to wavering, wary and overwhelmed. As a Radio Clyde production, it makes use of Scottish accents but is not confined to Scotland. There are a range of accents, southern English being prominent throughout, incorporating a variety of tones used to indicate class.

A recurring characteristic is the depiction of women as heartless throughout the piece. 'Our Jimmy', performed as an enthused, loud, working-class woman who is delighted with the effect of enlistment on her 'Jimmy', how he has come of age and found his purpose. She is impressed with what military life can do for men. Then by appending the intimidating male voice of a gruff canvasser, we experience Pope's callous threat in *The Call* (1914). The delirious jingoism of the fishwife is bolstered by fierce accusations of cowardice if one does not enlist. Conscientious objection is not alluded to, but we are left with an impression of the use of women to shame men into joining and a sense of the failing volunteer campaign, which gave way to conscription. This is positioned with verses from *Recruiting* (1918) by E. Alan Mackintosh:

FX:	TRAIN CARRIAGE INTERIOR
VOICE:	Fat civilians wishing they could go out and fight the Hun. Can't you see them thanking God that they're over forty-one?[286]

[286] Dickson 1988.

Again, the positioning of certain verses and stanzas provides the distinct impression of enthusiastic support for conscription amongst those at home who do not have to go, but bully others into submission:

FX:	EXPLOSIONS, MACHINE GUNFIRE
SOLIDER:	For Gawd's sake, kid, don't show it! Don't let your mateys know it![287]

Another similar depiction occurs later on in *Victoria Cross* (1917) written by William Kersley Holmes in iambic pentameter. We return to the same woman who spoke of 'our Jimmy' at home with the clock ticking on the mantlepiece:

FX:	CLOCK TICKING. TRAFFIC OUTSIDE.
WOMAN 1:	Have you seen Bill's mug in the news today? He's earned The Victoria Cross they say. Little Bill what'd grizzle and run away If you hit him a swipe on the jaw. He slaughtered the Kaisers men in tonnes. He's captured one of their quick-fire guns, An' he hadn't no practice in killing Huns Afore he went off to the war. Little Bill what I nursed in his bye bye clothes. Little Bill what told me his childish woes. How often I've tidied his poor little nose With the hem of me pinafore. And now all the papers his praises ring, And he's been and he's shaken the hand of the king, And I saw him today in the ward poor thing Where they're patching him up once more.[288]

A further example of this presentation of women is the performance of Robert Service's *Tipperary Days* (1961) performed again by Diana Olsson, who delivers these verses with an air of defiant authoritarianism. She spits out the words:

[287] Ibid.
[288] Dickson 1988.

WOMAN 3:	Fighting-fit and mirth-mad, music in the feet of them, Swinging on to glory and the wrath out there. Laughing by and chaffing by, frolic in the smiles of them. On the road, the white road, all the afternoon; strangers in a strange land, miles and miles and miles of them, battle-bound and heart-high, and singing this tune:
GRAMS:	IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY[289]

It becomes clear that each character argues and rebuts each other's points with selected stanzas. As a detournement, a man's voice provides this retort taken from *Singing 'Tipperary'* by William Kersley Holmes (1915) whilst *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* (1912)[290] plays underneath:

FX:	FOGHORNS.
SOLDIER:	We've each our Tipperary, who shout that haunting song, and all the more worth reaching because the way is long; You'll hear the hackneyed chorus until it tires your brain. Unless you feel the thousand hopes disguised in that refrain.[291]

Loud performances draw attention to the studio space in which this was recorded. Frequently in ILR drama one hears the close reverberation of a small compact news cubicle, with voices' quick reflection off the walls. The impact of the line "Gas! Gas! Quick boys!" from *Dulce et Decorum Est* (1920)[292] is reduced in this way. This was unavoidable for ILR dramatists who had no choice but to use whatever facilities were at their disposal, which were usually unsuitable for the purposes of recording drama. This also extended to the use of cardioid microphones purchased for news reporting, often broken, worn and taped to stands. These

[289] Ibid.
[290] By Jack Judge and Harry Williams.
[291] Dickson 1988.
[292] By Wilfred Owen during World War 1 (published posthumously).

limitations also extended to the editing and mixing process, with limited access to a Revox A77 during the daytime.

This is not likely to have been as apparent to the audience, alleviated in part with background music like *Mars, the Bringer of War* (1917)[293] and music hall songs like *Hold Your Hand Out, Naughty Boy* (1913).[294] The music cues reinforce the context of the time period, but only in a few instances are used with nuance. This programme is not edited to create a stereoscopic picture integrated with performances. The volume level of *Mars* rises over birdsong as the performer proclaims: "Sweep to the fire of War!". Other performances are not always positioned in the mix evocatively, arranged in time with the music. However, what would have been detectable, though certainly forgivable, is the use of pre-recorded sound effects, all of which were apparently sourced from the BBC sound effects library. The crowd cheers are of a lower fidelity than the recorded performances and there are many audible instances of crackle from LP records. There is a repetitive linearity to the way the sounds are used, one of which was the odd decision to use an incomplete train whistle which cuts abruptly, then loops at intervals. To reiterate, the minimal application of editorial control in places suggests limited studio time, but also exposes a lack of quality control routinely practised at the BBC. There was no hierarchy over the producers that would have the time or even inclination to review and approve programmes before committing to broadcast. But it is fair to conclude that despite these shortcomings, there was a clear ambition to do more than a simple book reading.

[293] Gustave Holst.
[294] Recorded by Florrie Forde. Original lyrics by W. Raymond (1913).

The final 15 minutes is set in the future with a prescient poem called *High Wood* (1918).[295] The ambient background sound of the scene is reminiscent of a theme park with crowd chatter and children playing. The voice is a tour guide who interrupts his well-rehearsed monologue to occasionally chastise tourists straying from the path. The performer plays a tour guide, adopting a Pythonesque Eric Idle voice, indifferent to the now historical surroundings.

FX:	CROWDS, CHILDREN PLAYING.
TOUR GUIDE:	It has been said on good authority, that in the fighting for this patch of wood were killed somewhere above eight thousand men, of whom the greater part were buried here, this mound on which you stand being... Madame, please, you are requested kindly not to touch or take away the Company's property as souvenirs; you'll find we have on sale a large variety, all guaranteed.[296]

This new tone brings a dawning realisation in the aftermath of war. The final scene makes use of *The Next War* (1918) by Osbert Sitwell and takes place in an office; sounds of teacups and typewriters support a discussion on how best to memorialise the war and the question of how to ensure future generations do not have to repeat its horrors.

FX:	TYPEWRITER. STIRRING TEACUPS.
NARRATOR:	The long war had ended. Its miseries had grown faded. Deaf men became difficult to talk to, heroes became bores. Those alchemists who had converted blood into gold had grown elderly. But they held a meeting, Saying:
FX:	TAPPING ON TEACUP FOR ATTENTION.
VOICE 1:	We think perhaps we ought to put up tombs or erect altars to those brave lads who were so willingly burnt, or blinded, or maimed, who lost all likeness to a living thing, or were blown to bleeding patches of flesh for our sakes. It would look well. Or we might even educate the children.'
NARRATOR:	But the richest of these wizards coughed gently and he said:

[295] Written by Philip Johnstone which may in fact be a pseudonym (*The Guardian* Fri 14 Nov 2008 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/14/high-wood-philip-johnstone).
[296] Dickson 1988.

VOICE 2:	I have always been to the front in private enterprise. I yield in public spirit to no man. I think yours is a very good idea, a capital idea and not too costly. But it seems to me that the cause for which we fought is again endangered. What more fitting memorial for the fallen than that their children should fall for the same cause?
NARRATOR:	Rushing eagerly into the street, the kindly old gentlemen cried to the young:
VOICE 2:	Will you sacrifice through your lethargy what your fathers died to gain? The world must be made safe for the young!
WOMAN:	And the children went…
FX:	AIR RAID SIREN. SOUNDS OF THE BLITZ.[297]

The poem in its natural textual form may be delivered as a single reading voice and would still resonate emotionally, but the use of simple sound effects and a range of voices help to evoke an image of civil servants and industrialists safely ensconced in Whitehall, which underscores a callous disregard and lack of contrition. Crisell (2004) cites this as the inherent intellectual value of radio, like poetry as printed text. When disconnected from the subject matter, our personal imagination opens up to interpret what is referred to. This final scene serves to deliver a conclusion that lessons were not learned and to provoke the listener's contempt. In this regard, the chosen radiogenic enhancements serve the scene well.

In conclusion, *Under the Arch of the Guns* (1988) is demonstrably sophisticated in its approach to textual curation and its exchange of authorial creativity for editorial ingenuity. Dickson successfully constructs a narrative using the existing words of soldiers and others who did not fight. The result is a journey-like structure that compresses time to give a full experience of the propaganda, opposing sentiments and the sense of helplessness in the face of relentless peer-pressure. There is deft usage of separate conflicting verses and stanzas, presented out of their usual context as ideologically opposed, refuting each other by turns

[297] Dickson 1988.

5.8 *Farewell Little Girl* (1993)

Anna Hashmi's *Farewell Little Girl* (1993) is an original drama with a minimal cast produced by IRDP and was first broadcast on LBC. IRDP, founded by Tim Crook, Richard Shannon and Marja Giejgo was a production company which operated as a non-profit company from 1987 to 2003 with the objective of "promoting the value of radio drama and to expand opportunities for writers new to radio" (iRDP.co.uk 2015). Aspirant drama writers were fostered through a series of IRDP initiatives, festivals and competitions. In 1996, IRDP was nominated at the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Awards for 'Developing and Fostering New Writing'. IRDP also worked to persuade the Arts Council for London to recognise radio drama as a legitimate candidate for subsidy for artistic work. In partnership with LBC, it used radio drama to great social effect in order to stimulate debate and discussion during live phone-in programming. The availability and standard of resources for the production of drama varied across ILR stations. Certainly, there were practical and financial limitations which resulted in a tendency to produce simple readings of public domain books, rather than fully developed radio drama. This case study demonstrates a higher ambition by IRDP to produce sophisticated and experimental audio drama, demonstrating the strengths of the radio medium with a dynamic range of originally acquired sounds to create its expressionistic soundscapes. The end result is a serious monologue-driven drama that deviates from expectations for popularist commercial fare, indicating IRDP's estimation of their audience as capable of reading sophisticated audio plays, and recognising their willingness to consume intelligent content.

This production is a significant example of inclusivity and diversity in the radio industry. It was an early professional commission for Hashmi, a mixed-race woman, to write an original play for broadcast. Hashmi would go on to highlight racial inequality in her later film career,

but this smaller, personal story explores an individual's response to grief. Matters of race, identity and class are not signalled through the script, though it is reasonable to suggest that since the performances are delivered in formal, well-spoken British English, class privilege is detectible. Arguably, the conflict in this play arises from the protagonist's relatively comfortable upbringing adorned with an abundance of books and toys as opposed to, for example, the iniquities and daily struggles experienced in other parts of British society. Similarly, gender in its binary sense is not directly or overtly addressed, yet is essential to a reading of this play. Hashmi highlights the end of childhood marked by the loss of a parent, but also examines maturity from girl to woman. This is a woman's story, told through voices that are both strong and gentle, maternal and feminine. There is an important relevance to gender here, certainly in the play's themes but also in terms of how it may affect an attempt to analyse. For instance, Laperle (2015) demonstrates a disconnect between the female character as rhetor and male audience members, rendering the outcome of any pathos ineffective or a product of male evaluation.

The narrative begins in medias res, her father having already passed. Key plot points are not immediately stated and are implied, contributing to a piecemeal understanding of the protagonist and her circumstances. Gradually, small ideas of who this is, her background and prior events are revealed. As each part of the enigma surrounding the protagonist and what has happened is elaborated upon; the listener is required to re-evaluate their assumptions at various points. The protagonist is a reliable but impaired or naïve narrator, though her psychologically unstable point of view can be misinterpreted as unreliable. The entire play operates from her point of view. For instance, the brief asides with minor characters are eavesdropped and the diegesis moves with ease to the woman's internal world, independent of the conventional

world. Similarly, she moves freely between roles: narrator, protagonist and by the conclusion, antagonist.

The first voice, our protagonist, is an unnamed woman in mourning. She is in the process of clearing her parents' house finding herself reunited with her childhood possessions. The woman is annoyed and impatient with visitors offering tea and sympathy, preferring the distraction of her rediscovered storybooks. She becomes increasingly distracted and unhealthily obsessed with her childhood as the voice of her inner child begins to influence her waking thoughts and interactions with others. In one memory, we learn that her mother has also died, but she is comforted by a strong maternal and senior voice, perhaps a fairy godmother.

FAIRY GODMOTHER:	You've grown.
WOMAN:	Yes.
FAIRY GODMOTHER:	You're an adult.
WOMAN:	Yes, or… no. I don't know.[298]

This ethereal voice invites the woman to join her in a fantastical storybook world. She does so without hesitation. However, in the real world, she is deteriorating as her inner persona begins to take over conversations. She retreats from the reality of the loss of family and the familiar surroundings of her home (she has purchased a smaller apartment). Later, she breaks down as a dinner guest. The characters of her inner world continue to seduce her, but she eventually rejects them. The conclusion of the play remains uncertain as the woman is resigned to leaving

[298] Hashmi 1993.

her home and starting a new adult life. The listener is left in a state of uncertainty as there is no resolution or any assurance of her well-being.

There are a number of creative strategies used in this production and of particular interest are the *audiopositions* taken. The play makes good use of sound, though it is not saturated with effects. Initially, we are positioned in the 'real' world childhood home of the woman. It begins with a linear sequence of mundane sounds, jar lids, the metallic impact of a kettle, water from a tap, a match strike and cupboard slams. The performer does not use or place these items gently; there is a terse dissonance to this sequence. The sounds are reflective, that is, from an *indirect* sound path characteristic of the equidistant tiled walls of a kitchen. The reverberant harsh kitchen sounds situate this familiar domestic setting firmly in the background providing a contrast to the gentle voice of our protagonist. But this exterior position is only a brief protrusion into the real world which sits adjacent to a *supra*-audioposition existing within the woman's mind. This position is a fantastical world where she interacts with familiar characters from classic children's literature. The woman is suffering from a dissociative disorder and has involuntarily created this space as a response to her anguish.

As the woman experiences nostalgic comfort upon the rediscovery of her storybooks and her voice rises with enthusiasm, sounds from the external world intrude. Her stream of consciousness is stopped by the sound of the whistling kettle which has been building in the background. The clatter gives the impression that the woman is resentful of accepting visitors. There is an abrupt movement between audiopositions when her inner monologue ceases and directly interrupts the visitor, denying her the opportunity to offer condolences. Each time the visitor speaks, the woman deflects what she is saying through her internal monologue, spilling out into the diegetic world as though waking from a daydream. She is in denial, even as far as

admitting that she must avoid anything said to her which could trigger an emotion. The woman's fragile state is further underscored by the exterior audioposition which moves unnaturally close to the mouth of the visiting friend. The sound of chewing and breathing is an uncomfortable effect, leaving an impression of heightened senses, alert to small details. There is potential for the play to be compromised when we are spatially repositioned in this way, however Verma (2012) identifies a certain a forgiving poetic quality which operates beyond the literal that allows the listener to readily accept this sort of incongruency.

The woman also has a child-like inner voice that interrupts her 'adult' voice, intruding on the conversation with her visiting friend. Her innermost thoughts are now writ large. As the inner child, she recites *The Ugly Duckling* (1952)[299] which causes her to absent-mindedly tell the visitor she is beautiful. The sound of a dropped teacup denotes a reaction to this faux pas. Her memories are realised aurally; the ticking sound of the alligator from *Peter Pan* (1904) causes her to lose her train of thought and the textual references to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) mirror the retracting audioposition, signifying her retreat into this insular fantasy. These transitions from the exterior world to the domain of the woman's inner child are delineated by the abrupt placement of sounds and reverb. Later in the play, these transitions are marked with an original audio effect which would not sound out of place in a sci-fi genre piece.[300]

The play therefore makes use of three audiopositions; our primary position residing in the preconscious mind of the woman, secondary to this is the deep subconscious of her inner-child and an additional tertiary position back in the conscious or literal world where she struggles through this crisis. These three positions would appear to imprecisely mirror the Freudian *ego*

[299] Song by Frank Loesser from the MGM film *Hans Christian Anderson* (1952) based on Anderson's 1843 fairy tale.
[300] The stereo picture is designed assist with the blocking of the scene; the voice of the children panned to the left and right, the woman positioned in the centre and the fairy godmother centred but enhanced with reverb.

as it mediates between *id* and *super-ego*.[301] In the primary audioposition, she acts as both narrator and as a vehicle that extends and retracts between audiopositions. The woman's monologue allows the narrative to move freely between audiopositions, her thoughts existing in a shifting and transient state of flux.

Recalling the 1939 MGM production of *The Wizard of Oz,* roles alternate between the literal diegesis of the play and as fictional voices in the protagonist's mind. For instance, when the play reverts to a flashback scene in a hospital and the death of her mother, the seniority of the visiting friend's voice becomes a disembodied fairy godmother. The performer also alternates as the woman and as her inner child. The demarcation between woman and child is clear. Becoming the little girl is not an accurate portrayal of a child, but is instead a somewhat infantile vocal caricature in its depiction. It is an unconvincing, though possibly explainable performance as a deliberate creative choice when considered as the woman's *idea* of a child's voice, suggesting that this is not a permanent retreat from the ego.

In places, the woman whispers her dialogue in a secretive way, confiding directly with the listener. The woman is softly spoken as though narrating a children's story. The woman's performance is precise with deliberate *Jackanory* (1965)[302] intonations. At one point, she even cites Julie Andrews as she retracts further into her mind. This cosy materteral voice is not sustained as she wistfully recalls the eternal youth and fun of *Peter Pan* (1904), stopping abruptly with a sharp gasp which can be heard either as excitement or holding back tears, absent the promise of a return to innocence. She switches to the present tense to describe the touch and feel of her storybooks. As her delivery speeds up, she describes how the characters inside

[301] *The Ego and the Id*. Freud, Sigmund, 1923.
[302] *Jackanory* (1965) was a BBC Television series consisting of book readings for children.

the books animate into life as she flicks through the pages. The pace of her delivery slows as she falls asleep. The slow delivery of the woman's lines is accompanied with intimate, even sensual breathing and whispering. She delivers the word 'sleep' with a plosive coupled with a slow exhalation of breath which is sustained and extended by a reverb effect. This leaves a strong impression of relaxation and tranquillity in an auditory-tactile sense, lulling the character into her fantasy world as a respite from grief.

To address a previous point concerning the calibre of the actor and the risk of exposure when providing a voice-only performance; this production, as with all IRDP productions, is notable for its use of professional voice actors. Hashmi appears to have opted to write a universal and accessible play, demonstrating a potential for broad mainstream appeal, which suggests a directional choice to follow a pattern of norms and expectations from Radio Four by using voice actors with experience of BBC radio drama conventions. Aside from various performance choices, the cast's accents are exclusively clipped southern English. The accents of the performers are, in all likelihood, a consequence of expediency rather than a commentary on class, IRDP being based in London would naturally have access to such performers.

As tragedy, the conclusion provides a moment of reflective catharsis. The unreality of the play imbues the conclusion with the *literal* truth of bereavement, and a *poetic* truth that appreciates the transience of life. The melancholic pathos of the conclusion also mirrors the narrative pattern of Italian neo-realist cinema movements of the 1940s by abandoning both audience and protagonist without a positive, affirming outcome and reaffirming that despair and helplessness is the single inevitable constant of life. As stated earlier, Laperle's (2015) thesis on rhetorical theory highlights the effect of gender upon the delivery of pathos in theatre. In her analysis of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), she discusses the role of emotion in persuasive theatre.

The possibility that male audiences do not receive impassioned appeals for the purposes of persuasion from female characters is circumvented in Hashmi's play, since the woman negotiates with herself without an outward appeal directed to the listener. The woman's need for succour is expressed internally between characters.

In addition to providing the spatial dimensions in which scenes take place, the audioposition and sounds also provide elements of the narrative to allow the play to explore its preoccupations with mind, persona, abandonment, bereavement, nostalgia and mental health. The woman's dialogue switches between a number of modes; a direct-address narration, an internal monologue to herself, and interactions with others, moving between the first and third person. This mild inconsistency is by design and does not interrupt the flow of the narrative. Furthermore, elements of the narrative that appear to be absent are of equal importance to what the narrative provides. There is a distinct void where a supportive partner should be; we hear a montage of concerned voices one of which stops short:

WOMAN:	I ask them to leave the light on and as I lie in bed, I listen to the grown-ups whispering outside my door…
FRIEND:	She's been acting very strangely lately.
OLDER MAN:	Well, devastated of course.
FRIEND:	But I'm really worried.
OLDER WOMAN:	Well first her mother and now her father. I don't know how anyone could cope.
OLDER MAN:	But her mother was six years ago.
FRIEND:	But she's got nothing left. No one left.
OLDER WOMAN:	She's got her hus…[303]

[303] Hashmi 1993.

Another dissonant metallic impact from the kettle stops that painful memory. The details surrounding this missing husband are left ambiguous. Indeed, the detachment and dissociated behaviour may have been a longer-term issue for the character. Her inner child's exclamation of the ugly duckling that: 'He's beautiful!' is connected to the promise that the kiss of a prince will allow Sleeping Beauty to wake from her 'comfortable coma'. There are extensive intertextual references to characters from children's literature as a thematic motif, though the play tends to bind classical renditions to modern Disney interpretations. She repeats the word 'ticking' in reference to the sound of the alligator from *Peter Pan* (1904). This subtle reference to the inevitable consequence of her own advancing years is underscored by the lack of indication that there any children in her own life. Her summary of *Bambi* (1942) for instance:

> WOMAN: Too difficult to conceive as a child and now it seems too common to conceive as an adult.[304]

She herself, becomes her own substitute for a child. She describes how she defaced her storybooks, transforming Lewis Carroll's Alice into a brunette. The intertextual similarity is clearly not accidental, the inward retreat paralleling Alice's descent. This alignment continues as the play progresses, supplanting the protagonist with a hybrid idea of herself as Alice.

Farewell Little Girl (1993) demonstrates a confidence in its appropriateness for commercial radio, acceptable to the audience and certainly comparable with BBC radio drama. Hashmi also appears to borrow some aspects of absurdist radio drama, focussing upon suffering and a lack of meaning as the protagonist moves towards increasing depersonalisation and a deterioration into childishness. To make a thematic similarity with Pinter, the protagonist is vulnerable,

[304] Hashmi 1993.

seeking a sense of security as other menacing characters, created within her own Id, seek to dominate her. She is not however presented as a grotesque. Rather, the narrative provides a gradual change as she finds herself disconnected from her family and friends. She is marred by an existential realisation and denial of having not passed through certain rites of passage and lives without meaning.

Hashmi's play is one of the last from the former ILR sector, produced after 1990 when the mandate for drama had been expunged in the broadcasting act. There is perhaps a simple parallel between the woman having lost the enchanting stories and characters of her childhood and the loss of drama to audiences and practitioners in the commercial radio industry. Hashmi's ultimate message then, is concerned with the role of a woman, diminished, perhaps incomplete without family. This need to be a child again is therefore less a desire for nostalgia and comfort, but a wish for rebirth or reincarnation, to start again.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore a hitherto forgotten body of fiction produced by the Independent Local Radio sector from 1973 to the early nineties. In exploring these dramas and comedies, a number of considerations emerged concerning who ILR's dramatists were, their successes and to understand their experiences in production. Additionally, a critical analysis of these productions sought to determine what typified these productions, what made them distinctive and how they affected, if at all, the BBC's own drama provision. It is important to recognise that there is now an increasingly growing availability of ILR drama available to researchers and audiences alike; dramas that have not been heard since initial broadcast. The plays of IRDP for instance are notable for their long shelf life, meaning universal content that is still accessible to a modern audience. This chapter provides a synoptic overview of the findings presented in the preceding chapters. It concludes by identifying potential avenues for further research into this body of dramatic work, and provides some tentative suggestions regarding the implications of such research for the industry going forward.

In establishing ILR, the BBC's monopoly over radio ended. Stations owners took a share of what was now a fragmented market, the simultaneous migration of staff to the new sector mirrored the approach taken by Shapley, Bridson and Harding and opportunity opened up to creative talent. A proportion of this new talent took an approach to drama and comedy, which drew upon local cultural heritage, vernacular modes of speech and naturalistic accents, reminiscent of the Manchester School ethos. Their approach was also a challenge to the BBC's orthodoxy that influenced perceptions of what radio fiction should be. The northern ILR stations also exhibited a less reverent tone, with satirical comedies that not only sent up

established forms, but recognised their own shortcomings and were self-deprecatory of their cultural peculiarities.

It is important to recognise that what characterised ILR fiction was often an atypical approach. We have seen how the conceptual and theorical matters of co-presence, intimacy, companionship and mode of address had a curious and unique pertinence to ILR drama. For the stations owners, fictional content may have just been regarded as a cultural box ticking exercise to satisfy the IBA and the Radio Authority. But in broadcasting these plays, emergent properties of identity formation/affirmation acted as instruments of cultural orientation. The most noteworthy examples of fiction across the ILR system fell into either a formal approach, consisting of original and adapted work, consistent with mainstream expectations for drama, or a local form that was highly expressive of vernacular speech and culture, containing local idioms. During the early seventies, at the time of ILR's inception, BBC radio drama was similarly divided into challenging and sophisticated plays and also, evidently, mundane drama intended to fit into a domestic surrounding, which were a cause for concern for the BBC (Hendy 2007). In total, we have observed three classes of provision occurring simultaneously: plays that constituted serious 'high art'; satisfactory but average dramas that one may 'hoover to' (Wade 1981) and monologues by highly localised, authentic voices which, it is suggested, were as equally as challenging as our first category. Both the intellectual and the vernacular often share that common ground of impenetrability to the mass audience. But it is ILR's comedy, in the form of monologues, sketches and character-based situation comedy that stands out as most distinctive and appears to have been centralised and concentrated in the Northwest of the UK (Manchester and Liverpool). Our examination of these productions as cultural forms reveals their tendency to reinforce and redefine local culture (Nicolas 2006; Halbwachs 2020). Using

collective memory and vernacular speech to form plots and characterisations, they offer archetypal behaviours and contribute to a definition of cultural character. Piccadilly Radio had a particular fixation on local idiolects expressed through its comedies which were expressive of their regionality and would later be re-expressed in mainstream media. We see these forms persist on Radio Four with *The Shuttleworths* (1993) created by Graham Fellows and in Caroline Aherne's situation comedy *The Royle Family* (1998) for example. These 'Northwest comedies' are in a sense a ritualistic form of collective memory reaffirmation (Kitch 2008). We have seen a number of trends across ILR's lifespan that illustrate these matters, most notably the use of authentic naturalistic vernacular speech, the preponderance of single voice monologues and the 'fictional DJ' character being a recurrent staple. In that respect, these particular forms of fiction had a level of power and influence that may not have been recognised at the time. Chataway and Thompson's designs for localised provision couldn't have envisaged how far dramatists and comedians like Bleasdale, Hawkins and Sievey, would take the mandate for localness.

An additional task was to identify ILR's key successes in fiction. We know there were some initial missteps at the start of the sector, particularly the earliest serials that began on Capital Radio's first day. Despite this, mid to late stage ILR drama and comedy is demonstrably innovative, creative and sophisticated. Original fiction returned relatively quickly to Capital through Kenny Everett, another Northwest comedian transposed to London, who took an innovative, atypical approach, working solo to create original comedy characters featured in densely produced comedy sketches. The *Captain Kremmen* (1976) series demonstrated what ILR talent could achieve, it was also undoubtedly gruelling since Everett worked solo as producer, writing, performing and developing effects as studio manager. Even so, he retained

ownership of his intellectual property, taking his success with him (Sellers 2013). Similarly, Chris Sievey also had difficulty letting go of control. His situation comedy *Radio Timperley* (1986) may have been baffling to a mainstream audience, but as a transmedia character, he had a cult following of devotees. *Radio Timperley* (1986) may be regarded as mere comedy, it may even be received as juvenile by some, but it is arguably a genuine example of avant-garde work, exhibiting a remarkable degree of sophistication.

There is a case to be made that what typified these productions and what made them distinctive is in large part a consequence of the restricted facilities and budgets across ILR. One can hear the restrictions of production, which is a by-product of our audiopositioning analysis. The aural characteristics of a performer speaking from a coincidental point in a small room is apparent. This is intensified by the reflective non-absorbent quality of regular parallel walls. The confluence of restricted budgets, small studio facilities and the subsequent limitations on cast size and scriptwriting staff led to a set of distinguishing audible patterns; a close reflectiveness, stripped of a sonic richness and solitary vocal performances. To borrow once again from film studies, a useful comparison can be made with realist cinema movements. Roberto Rossellini's[305] *Rome, Open City* (1945)[306] was made under oppressive conditions during the final throes of the German occupation by using bomb sites as filming locations, amateur performers and a meagre budget since the Italian economy had collapsed. Rossellini taped together scraps of film stock discarded by the US military and the resultant product was neither lavish nor spectacular and without star performances. It was however distinctly gritty with an honest visual documentary-like verité. Each scratched frame of film added to the resultant

[305] Roberto Rossellini is considered one of most significant directors of the Italian neo-realist movement.
[306] Italian title: *Roma città aperta* (1945).

aesthetic. It is possible to consider the ILR canon as having a unique style and approach to radio drama in its own right, as a consequence of these restrictive circumstances.

A key theme running through practitioner testimonials was *freedom*; the freedom to create and write, a lighter touch commissioning process, and in the case of shorter 'vignette' series, freedom on the part of the presenter to schedule fiction. This illustrates a wider shift in the UK radio industry, which was also occurring at the BBC out of financial necessity, towards 'format' radio; consisting of a generic focus with 'streams' or 'strips' across dayparts (Crisell 1997). The prevalence of shorter dramas and sketches over discreet programme units had implications for narrative structures in terms of pacing, cause and effect, and on audience reception. One had to be prepared to listen to an entire daypart to catch the next instalment. This also put a work of fiction on an equal footing with songs, commercials, and news, traffic and weather bulletins. Even some of IRDP's plays were divided up into bite-sized pieces rather than broadcast as appointment listening.

Additionally, it is fascinating to contemplate that evidence exists that could be interpreted as a rudimentary internal marketplace, perhaps as an experiment for later independent production models. There is a risk of overstating the importance of such practice, but it is at least conceivable that this was an exercise that could later be recalled or reinterpreted as evidential practice in the planning of Producer Choice. Certainly, we can say there is a larger prehistory to the models of producer choice and the external independent supplier market.

The BBC's early objectives were to increase literacy, compared with the higher intellectual prowess of Bloomsbury group members who considered themselves in an elevated position of

intelligence, higher even than the BBC (Avery 2006). We may draw a parallel between ILR's constrained but earnest attempts at drama and comedy and the BBC's provision of niche, high quality, challenging plays; an opportunity afforded by the narrowed scope of radio's newfound "secondaryness". This David and Goliath relationship marks a cultural shift in style and tone for radio drama at the BBC. *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969) confirmed what had been suspected within the BBC since 1966 (Chia 2017), that there would be a restructuring, which led to fierce resistance in the corporation. Furthermore, misgivings over Radio Four's dramatic output, in addition to the need for a fresh approach to light entertainment were twin problems compounded by the arrival of the ILR sector. Archival evidence presented in chapter four suggests that drama on local radio was enough of a threat to spur the impetus towards change. *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969) brought resistance, but ILR drama prompted action – a development which, it is suggested, should be incorporated into this part of the BBC's history as it moved towards reform.

Reflecting upon ILR's successes in drama and comedy, I am reminded of the arrival of the 'morning zoo' format in the UK, specifically producer Kevin Greening and Steve Wright's incorporation of short sketches or 'skits', character-based comedy and originally produced musical humour. In addition to these American influences, we ought to include the additional influence of ILR fiction on these developments as a previously missing evolutionary point. The approach taken by Kenny Everett on Capital Radio, and subsequently by Piccadilly, was highly impactful, preceding the zoo format's influence expressed across BBC radio at breakfast and drivetime during the nineties. These two influences upon the BBC appear to have coalesced in the long term, not just at Radio One, but also Radio Four and The Light Entertainment Department. Inevitably, ILR's talent migrated to national BBC and would continue to apply

these innovations to programming. Mark Radcliffe, Chris Sievey and Chris Evans all transferred from Piccadilly Radio to Radio One. Radio Four's answer to *Radio Timperley* (1986) and *The Bradshaws* (1983) came in form of *The Shuttleworths* (1993) and even Radio 2's *Wake Up To Wogan* (1993) made use of the comedy vignette with the popular *Janet and John* sketches.

Previous sentiments regarding the quality and quantity of ILR fiction were often misjudged. We may now dismiss such inaccurate perceptions and elevate these works to prominence. Keeping in mind the financial restrictions that the IBA/RA's advertising model inevitably produced, this research should encourage today's producers who are now free to explore new expressions of dramatic sound art. Production and distribution are now democratised in a way that surpasses the scope of opportunity that ILR could provide. Crowd sourcing was of course unheard of in the 1970s and 1980s, but is now a well-established avenue for content producers that has effectively rewritten the budgetary restrictions that radio was once bound by. Again, the long-tail theory of economics allows for the sort of content that ILR dramatists pioneered. These new platforms have segregated content by genre, but provide an à la carte menu of audio content in place of a diktat that says music, for example, should take precedence over drama. Perhaps this is a return to a new iteration of 'mixed programming' organised and scheduled by the user. There is also a valid agnosticism over the cultural divide that separates and elevates serious and challenging dramatic expressions, in comparison with popular fiction. There is room for both. A growth in amateur content is inevitable, necessarily requiring an active discerning audience to play a selective role in recommending dramas based on creativity and innovation, in addition to high-profile professional premium content. What these developments do not consider however, is the hiring of professional voice actors and subsequent obligations

for the payment of fees. Today's drama podcaster is not necessarily bound to any agreement with a trade body.

At this point, we may confidently state that there was a case for the production of original radio drama and comedy as it was during the ILR era. We may also say with certainty that the production of drama on ILR was commercially viable. Take IRDP's work in isolation; internationally recognised, award-winning productions which were then sold on cassette in high street stores. There is also a compelling case to rebut any previous dismissiveness expressed by some in the industry towards ILR's body of work, many of which still exist in disparate but increasingly available archives. The resurgence in popularity of radio drama on new platforms assures its current place and future iterations. In that respect, it is tempting to argue that today's commercial radio sector could now conceivably borrow from its past and return to some form of popularist fictional programming, perhaps with the benefit of transmedia approaches using social media and podcasting. Commercial radio could for instance partner with a company like Audible to develop new intellectual properties.

Finally, the following recommendations are made for further research. The gender disparity in employment within the ILR sector must be investigated further to provide an accurate assessment of the experiences of practitioners. This thesis does not have a representative sample of women for previously stated reasons, but it is likely that future research will find that the majority of female participants were likely to have been actresses rather than dramatists or director/producers. A critical mass of women gravitated to the BBC rather than the commercial sector, which raises questions regarding gender inequality and the suitability of ILR stations in providing an equitable working environment. Additionally, a project is

suggested that involves the commissioning and professional production of a radio play or serial for broadcast on a networked commercial station, developed in partnership with an independent production company. This experiment could combine the use of new platforms with FM radio, followed by audience research to determine the attitudes of today's listener to such content.

A theme that I have frequently returned to during this research is radio drama's fragility and precariousness. Radio drama provision is a useful measurement of quality and an expression of commitment to public service ideals. It is something broadcasters have done without for decades and so its continued existence on the BBC acts as a bellwether or perhaps a sentinel species indicating the stability of British public service values. News provision is often used to make the same point, but can we always say with certainty that news journalism is free from subjectivity? Equally, does it behove the dramatist and their play to be a conduit of morals and values? This is an unresolvable argument between literal truth and poetic truth, but for Shakespeare, the play is the way to catch the conscience of the audience.[307] Today, listeners of sound drama are not reliant upon the BBC for content and more of it is being produced for a global audience than ever before. Production equipment has been simplified to a few basic semi-professional items, and the venue for recording does not necessarily need to take place in a traditional studio/control room. Radio drama production can take place anywhere and worldwide distribution is instantaneous. These things were unimaginable just a few years ago. Given the dichotomy between the public service approach and current commercial radio broadcasting patterns, and in light of the Culture Secretary's announcement in January of 2022 regarding a change in funding arrangements for the BBC (Amol 2022), knowledge of how to

[307] Hamlet: Act 2, Scene 2 (1609).

provide commercial radio drama as an expression of our cultural values now seems more urgent.

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Appendices

A non-canonical list of ILR drama and fiction

Capital Radio (London)					
Year	**Title**	**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
1973	A King and His Mistresses				
	Famous Courtesans				
	Rose A Ring				
	Honey Adair				Ended early 1974
	The Bedsitter				Ended early 1974
	She and Me				Ended early 1974
1974	Dapple Downs				Ended summer 1974
1980	Othello				
	Arms of the Man	George Bernard Shaw		John Alderton, Pauline Collins, Una Stubbs, Barry Foster, John Laurie (his final role) Margaret Courtney	24 April
	Pygmalion	George Bernard Shaw		Ian Richardson, Michael Gough, Phyllis Calvert, Cheryl Kennedy, Mark Kingston, Vladek Sheybal	08 May
	Androcles and the Lion	George Bernard Shaw		Bernard Cribbins, Patricia Hayes, Cyril Luckham, John Fraser, Percy Edwards, Brian Blesed	22nd May
	Alexei Sayle and the Fish People	Alexei Sayle		Alexei Sayle	Pye Radio Award (Sony)
	The Dutch Lieutenant's Trousers	Alexei Sayle		Alexei Sayle	
1984	Nicola Johnson		Liane Aukin	Kathryn Hunter as Molly	Soap opera which ran for two years.
	Pravina's Wedding	SG Ghelani	Betty Davies (dir)	Zia Mohyeddin	Won competition judged by Betty Davies [British director] and adapted by Central Television
	Capital Playhouse If you can't fight...you'd better dance	Nick McCarthy	Anthony Cornish		Two-part serial
	Capital Playhouse Faces in the Smoke		Anthony Cornish	Keith Martin	Two-part serial
	Christabel				
	Diary of a Nobody			Zia Mohyeddin	Starring Richard Briers
1985	All kinds of loving: In Transit	Eddie Gaynor			Producer Anthony Cornish
	Capital Playhouse: Old Romantics	Liane Aukin		Kate O'Mara, Harry Towb, Miriam Karlin	
	The Carpaccio Affidavit	Michael Coombe		Robert Hardy. Producer Anthony Cornish	Two-part serial
	All kinds of loving: So Little Time	John Harding		Barry Foster, Elizabeth Power, Clare Higgins, Rupert Fraser Ben Stevens. Philip Rham.	
	All kinds of loving: Messages from Home	Philip Kerrigan		John Alderton, Pauline Collins, Una Stubbs, Barry Foster, John Laurie (his final role) Margaret Courtney	
	Dummy Run			Ian Richardson, Michael Gough, Phyllis Calvert, Cheryl Kennedy, Mark Kingston, Vladek Sheybal	Four-part serial
	Captain Kremmen			Bernard Cribbins, Patricia Hayes, Cyril Luckham, John Fraser, Percy Edwards, Brian Blesed	
	A Christmas Carol			Kathryn Hunter as Molly	

LBC (London)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
1980	Hound of the Baskervilles	Michael Hardwick	Anthony Cornish. Dir Betty Davis	Ian Richardson as Sherlock Holmes and Michael Gough as Dr Watson	Adaptation
	It's Jeeves*	C. Northcote Parkinson	Peter Orr / Neil Ffrench-Blake	Gerald Harper	*Made by Radio 210 - 4 stories divided into 20 x two-min segments
	Right Ho Jeeves				
	A Christmas Carol				
	It's a Long Way to Tipperary				
	Love and War in the Appeninnes				
	The London Interrogations	Rodney M. Bennett		Elanor Bron	
1984	Dulce et decorum est.	Nigel Bowden		Nigel Bowden	Adapted from the works of Wilfred Owen
	The Irish R.M.				Five-part adaptation
1985	Evaleena				The Gill Pyrah afternoon show
	The Wind in the Willows	Kenneth Grahame	Adapted by Brian Sibley		
	The Doctor and the Devils	Dylan Thomas			
1987	Tales from the Courts of Law	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon			
	The Sexton's Tales			Bernard Cribbins	Late night weekend series on the Mike Allen show
1988	Pepys	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon		Mike Shannon, Alexandra Mathie	Four-part serial: Jealousy, Infidelity, Plague, Fire
	Mutiny on the Bounty	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon		David Peart, Scott Cherry	Interpreted by Crook & Shannon
1989	The Borgias	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon		Don Henderson, Mike McCormack, Cate Hammer	
1990	The Canterbury Tales	Mark Burgess	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon	Polly Taylor, Stephen Thorne, Ian Bamforth	Adapted from Geoffrey Chaucer's text
1991	Coffee and Tea 90p	Tony Duarte	Richard Shannon		
	Play #2	Tony Duarte			
	Play #3	Tony Duarte			
1993	Farewell Little Girl	Anna Hashmi	Tim Crook, Richard Shannon		
	Murder After Midnight	Martin Fido			Clive Bulls show
	The Ice House	Olwen Wymark			
1999	Daisy		Richard Shannon	Gwen Taylor and Ann Mitchell	
2003	Jackie Collins book readings				Clive Bulls show

Piccadilly Radio (Manchester)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
	Murder by Gaslight – Death in the Nursery	Leo Knowles			
	Murder by Gaslight – No Grounds for Complaint	Leo Knowles			
	Murder by Gaslight – The Diary of a Tramp	Leo Knowles			
	The War of the Worlds				Aired at 5.15 am
	The First Intercity	Barry Hill	Tony Hawkins		
1977	The Last Rose of Summer	Stephen Gallagher	Tony Hawkins		SM: Pete Baker
1978	Hunters' Moon	Stephen Gallagher			
1979	Babylon Run	Stephen Gallagher			
	The Bradshaws	Buzz Hawkins			
1986	Radio Timperley / Frank's World	Chris Sievey	David Dunne		
	The Andy Wright Show	Chris Sievey	David Dunne		
	Umbridge				
1982	Top Twenty Series – The Last Waltz	David Simpson			
	Top Twenty Series – Another Brick in the Wall	David Simpson			
	Top Twenty Series – Maggie May	Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – Merry Christmas Everybody	David Simpson			
	Top Twenty Series – I'm Not In Love	Peter Warley			
	Top Twenty Series – Three Times A Lady	Peter Warley			
	Top Twenty Series – It's All Over Now	David Simpson			
	Top Twenty Series – Starting Over	Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – Sunny Afternoon	Ken Blakeson			
	Top Twenty Series – When A Child Is Born	Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – Way Down	Ken Blakeson			
	Top Twenty Series – Wonderful World	Ken Blakeson			
	Top Twenty Series – Yesterday	Ken Blakeson			
	Top Twenty Series – You Are the Sunshine of My Life	Peter Warley			
	Top Twenty Series – Breaking Up Is Hard to Do	Peter Warley			
	Top Twenty Series – Let's Twist Again	David Simpson			
	Top Twenty Series – Sweets For My Sweet	Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – This Old House	Peter Warley & Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – Something in the Air	Andy Lynch			
	Top Twenty Series – You're So Vain	Ken Blakeson			
	Top Twenty Series – Across the Universe	Peter Warley			
	From Wapping to Water Street				
	Markusa Run	Pete Tong			

	CABS				Broadcast on Piccadilly's Key 103

Radio Clyde (Glasgow)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
1974	Benny Lynch				Boxing drama adapted from stage 40 mins.
	The Kenneth McKellar Show			Kenneth McKellar & Tony Currie as misc. voices	Sketch show
1983	The Bell in the Tree	Edward Chisnall	Hamish Wilson, Findlay Welsh		520 episodes over two years - a second series followed in 1990
1984	The Second Coming of Alvin Cholmondeley	Donald Gunn	Hamish Wilson	Peter Sallis, Rose McBain, Stella Forge, Richard Greenwood, Michael McKinsey	Gold medal winner New York Radio Drama Festival 1985
	Anna				
	Readings by Hamish Wilson	Various		Introduced and read by Hamish Wilson	1984 to 88. Over 170 programmes. Classics by Edgar Allen Poe, M.R. James, Arthur Conan Doyle etc.
	The Chinese Dreamers	Nick McCarty			
1985	Flowers in the Sky	Nick McCarty			
	Lots of hot water, quick!	Dick Sharples			Brian Cant, Paula Wilcox
1986	Bing Hitler in: The night of the long Skean Dhus	Craig Ferguson	Craig Ferguson, David Sillars		
1988	Under the Arch of the Guns: Presented by The Soldier Poets	Various	Alex Dickson	Leonard Maguire, John Shedden, Paul Young, Martin Cochrane and Diana Olsson	Studio managers John Lumsden, Alastair Owen and Jim Robertson 55m 42 secs rec 29.10.1988
	Casting the runes				
	Two characters in search of a more intelligent author				
	Christmas Decorations				
	Rhymes Thorns and Airs				
1990	The Bell in the Tree Two	Edward Chisnall			

Metro Radio (Newcastle)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
1974	Metropolitan Line				Soap opera
1974	Slatey Drift				
	Miss Julie	August Strindberg			
1984	Alex	James Kelly			Winner of competition
1979	The Reunion	Roger Harvey	Roger Harvey	Ian Bannen and Kevin Whately	Not broadcast
1980	The Only Child	James Kirkup	Roger Harvey	Edward Wilson	
1980	Kiddar's Luck	Jack Common	Roger Harvey	Edward Wilson	
1980	Mr. Know-All	W. Somerset Maugham	Roger Harvey	Tony Cook	
1981	Prisoners	Roger Harvey	Roger Harvey	Peter Wheeler Geoffrey Freshwater	
1981	The Speckled Band	Arthur Conan Doyle	Roger Harvey	Nigel Stock	parts 1 and 2
1982	The Machine Stops	E. M. Fortser	Roger Harvey		
	Asra! Asra!		Roger Harvey		
1983	Hassan	James Elroy Flecker	Roger Harvey	Clive Champney, Denise Welch, David Easter and Vincenzo Nicoli	
1985	The Silver Spitfire	Roger Harvey	Roger Harvey		

Radio City (Merseyside)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
1974	44 Stanley Road				
	The Franny Scully Show	Alan Bleasdale			
	The War Years				
	Sam O'Shanker				
	Rising Dead				
	A Present for Aunt Mary				
	Turn for the Worse				
1974	PC Plod	John Gorman			
	Bessie				

Radio Hallam (Sheffield)					
Year		**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
	Down to Earth part 1				
	Down to Earth part 2				
	Down to Earth part 3				
1978	Dying for a Drink 1: Albert the Champ Is Not Here	Paul Allen			Started on Piccadilly - 20.07.1978 7.00pm weekly
1978	Dying for a Drink 2: It Looks Good - It Tastes Good - But Is It Fair?	Paul Allen			
1978	Dying for a Drink 3: Britain Won't Count the Cost	Paul Allen			
1978	Dying for a Drink 4: I Used To Be A Boozer	Paul Allen			
1978	Dying for a Drink 5: Getting Through It	Paul Allen			

Radio Trent					
Year	**Title**	**Author**	**Producer / Director**	**Cast**	**Notes**
	A Letter from Inside				
	Life's a joke				
	Life's been kind to you				
	The Black Man				
	Big Roddy				
	The breakdown				
	A Quarter to Midnight				
	Fresh Evidence				
	Guy Fawkes				
	The Price to Pay				
	Every Boy Should Have One				
	Table For Two				
	A Bowlful of Blackberries				
	A Change of Diet				
	See You Later, Heartbreaker				
	Honeymoon Eclipse				
	I Want to Be on My Own Here				
	Twist Of Fake				
	Obsessed				

Miscellaneous

Year	Station	Title	Author	Producer / Director	Cast	Notes
	2CR	First and Third Days: a play for Easter				
	BRMB	Radio Acocks Green				Jasper Carrott
	BRMB	Yesterday Never Comes				
	Radio Forth	Mary Queen of Scots				Planned over 130 episodes. Monday 24th May for 26 weeks.
	Radio Sutch	Fanny Hill and Lady Chatterley's Lover				
1968	Radio Caroline	The Weird Beard's Tales of Ghosts, Ghouls and Horror				Book reading from The Pan Book of Horror Stories
	Radio Caroline	Bill the Boilerman				Part of Johnnie Walker's show
	Radio 390	Dr Paul				Soap
	Radio 390	Playtime				Children's story
	Radio 390	Moonmice				Children's story
	Radio Trent	Cobblers	Martin Campbell		Bill Maynard	Recorded at the Albany Hotel
	CBC	The Reekfoot Files				Comedy (Cardiff)
	County Sound	The County Arms				Soap (1566 am – Surrey)
	Heart London	X-Fools				Comedy
1988	Viking Gold	Jubilee Crescent				Spoof soap. 2x15 episodes (Hull)
	Manx Radio*	The Castlereagh Line				
	Manx Radio*	City				