

ESSAYS IN  
THE  
CULTURAL  
HISTORY OF  
RADIO

# **RADIO READER**

Edited by Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio

ROUTLEDGE NEW YORK • LONDON

Published in 2002 by  
Routledge  
29 West 35th Street  
New York, NY 10001

Published in Great Britain by  
Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane  
London EC4P 4EE

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.  
Copyright © 2002 by Routledge

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including any photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

All essays are original to the volume excepting Susan Douglas's, which is a substantially revised chapter from *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. Times Books: 1999, and John Fiske's, which appeared in *Media Matters: Everyday Culture and Political Change*. University of Minnesota Press: 1994. Both are reprinted with permission of the publisher and author.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publishing Data

Radio reader: essays in the cultural history of radio / edited by Michele Hilmes & Jason Loviglio.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-415-92820-6 — ISBN 0-415-92821-4 (pbk.)

1. Radio broadcasting—History. I. Hilmes, Michele, 1953– II. Loviglio, Jason.

PN1991.2.R33 2001  
384.54—dc21

2001019230

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction xi

**† CHAPTER 1** **RETHINKING RADIO**..... 1  
Michele Hilmes

**CHAPTER 2** **RADIO IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION: PROMOTIONAL CULTURE, PUBLIC SERVICE, AND PROPAGANDA** ..... 21  
Kate Lacey

**CHAPTER 3** **CRITICAL RECEPTION: PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS, DECRY DEPRESSION-ERA RADIO, MASS CULTURE, AND MODERN AMERICA** ..... 41  
Bruce Lenthal

**CHAPTER 4** **"YOUR VOICE CAME IN LAST NIGHT... BUT I THOUGHT... IT SOUNDED A LITTLE SCARED": RURAL RADIO LISTENING AND "TALKING BACK" DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA IN WISCONSIN, 1920–1932** ..... 63  
Derek Vaillant

## CHAPTER I

## RETHINKING RADIO

Michele Hilmes

*In advanced industrial societies there is a radical disjuncture: radio is everybody's private possession, yet no one recognizes it in public.*

—Peter M. Lewis

WHAT HAPPENED TO RADIO? For eighty years it has played a significant role in American lives and American culture, as it has in cultures around the world. For its first forty years it provided one of our primary means of negotiating the boundaries between public life and the private home, becoming the American family's "electronic hearth" (Tichi), our central acculturating and nationalizing influence during the turbulent decades of the '20s, '30s, '40s, and '50s. After television usurped much of this role, radio became the background sound of our lives, our most persistent and ubiquitous media companion, losing the main spotlight of prime time in the living room but keeping us company during the rest of the day in our kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, automobiles, offices, and workshops; serenading us while we walked and jogged; filling us in on local and national news, sports reports and play-by-play, weather, school closings, and emergency bulletins; and generally serving as a vital, though ancillary, component of our informational and entertainment universe. It brought us each successive new wave of popular music while preserving older and regional styles, allowed groups marginalized by mainstream media to meet electronically to discuss, share, and organize, and sold us consumer goods by the billions.

Yet this invisible permeation of our lives has gone remarkably unstudied. Scored as "merely" a popular culture phenomenon in its most prominent decades, radio had barely begun to attract serious aesthetic and political attention when television suddenly eclipsed it. Attention turned to the new visual and aural medium, which hit the ground running not only with the industrial structure, textual forms, and audience formations inspired by radio but also with the accumulating weight of sociological study and critical concern. Television scholars pretended that television had sprung into the world fully formed in the early 1950s, and simply dismissed the decades of aural innovation that preceded it. Radio faded rapidly into the background of American social thought. In colleges and universities, though a radio production class often catered to students' career desires and a campus radio station livened up the local media offerings, the industrial, theoretical, aesthetic, and historical study of radio all but vanished—or placed radio solely in an anticipatory role for television. This was not true in all countries, but in the United States many elements came together to "disappear" radio study, even as the academic consideration of other media—such as journalism, film, and later television—began to rise and find secure spots in the curriculum. From the 1950s through the '80s a few lonely and persistent voices published radio work;<sup>1</sup> a few organizations kept alive the memory of radio in its glory days;<sup>2</sup> a thriving industry operated largely under the radar of academics and cultural critics. Only in the last ten years has this massive act of public "forgetting" begun to shift, and once again young scholars (and a few older ones) from a variety of disciplinary homes are putting radio back into the central positions it deserves. The "missing decades" of the '30s and '40s, in particular, have captured the imaginations of cultural historians, even as the regulatory politics of the '90s have thrust radio back into the spotlight—not necessarily in a flattering way.

### Why? Roots of Forgetfulness

I want to open this volume of new radio work by considering some of the factors that caused radio first to be forgotten and then, increasingly, to be remembered and reconsidered. The roots of this phenomenon are, it seems to me, multiple and complex, having to do with industrial pressures, shifting cultural patterns, new historiographical concerns, and changing theoretical paradigms. What worked to keep radio relatively subterranean from the '50s through the '80s met with a host of different agendas and conditions in the early '90s—even as radio itself went through a general blinding process with small pockets of resistance holding out. As a result, radio is finally being included in American cultural histories; musicologists increasingly recognize radio's role in the formation and dissemination of musical culture; the field of media studies has begun to broaden its preoccupation with the visual to include considerations of sound; and though

### Rethinking Radio

other countries such as Great Britain and Canada still maintain a far livelier field of original, creative radio production than we have seen in this country since the 1940s, at least scholars and producers from various national traditions have begun to take note of each other and draw on each other's experience. What changed?

It seems clear that as World War II brought the radio era to a triumphant new high, a much fuller recognition of, and accounting for, radio's cultural role was at hand. During the Depression radio had seized hold of the national imagination. A hugely profitable industry had grown up. A national audience consisting of the vast majority of Americans tuned in to a wide variety of entertainment and information that reassured and unified the nation through hard economic times and wartime strife (Cohen, Czitrom, Hilmes, *Radio Voices* MacFadden; A. Douglas). Radio had taken on a central role in the nation's political life, from President Roosevelt's addresses to a new crop of news, discussion, and propaganda programs that recruited the nation for war and hashed out its inequities (Savage; Horien). The nation's reliance on wartime news only cemented this key position. By the mid- to late 1940s a new breed of radio regulators and producers, empowered by the wartime vision of what radio could be, agitated for regulatory reform and a more serious political role for creative radio work. The Federal Communication Commission's Blue Book of 1947 laid out this new vision to industry outcry, even as—outside the scope of regulatory reform—social and market forces began to open radio up to the voices and concerns of women, youth, and minorities (both ethnic and political), long ghettoized or excluded from the airwaves.

### Industrial Distraction

It is at this very moment that television enters the scene, distracting attention from radio and relegating it to secondary status. As television's picture strengthened, radio's voices began to fade into the background. The industry itself contributed the first powerful blow to radio's prominence, not only for economic reasons but also for political and cultural ones. Many historians have traced the US television industry's deliberate cannibalizing of radio to feed television's gapping maw (Boddy; Fornatale and Mills; Spigel, *Make Room*). As the war ended, factories that had been churning out military technology and goods looked around for a new function. Radio sets had achieved a point of saturation in the consumer market, while television barely reached a fraction of the American public, which was now busily equipping suburban homes with the latest in consumer goods. To stimulate the growth of television set sales, all three major networks plus struggling fourth network Du Mont lobbied their hardest to transfer radio's most successful artists and programs from one medium to the other and to persuade advertisers to switch their allegiance to the developing television market. For a brief period major shows were simulcast—their audio portions aired on radio while the full

video version played on TV—but by 1955 the vast bulk of radio's established programming capital was hard at work bringing in profits for television. During the transition period, the major networks actually diverted advertising income from their radio operations to prop up their nascent television divisions, further weakening the older medium. Radio, gutted and demoralized, struggled to adapt.

Meantime, as so often happens in history, to the victor went the spoils of memory. The television networks began to tell their own stories, distancing themselves from their controversial performance during the radio decades and promising a bright new day of education, information, and enlightenment in the home. Several scholars have traced the ways that the major networks joined in the celebration of the era of live drama, as a way of holding up a superior cultural form in contrast to the potential threat that Hollywood and its filmed programming offered (Boddy; Anderson; Hilmes, *Hollywood*; Vianello). Soap operas, one of the most socially disreputable of radio's offerings, were kept off the daytime television airwaves until late in the 1950s, and the serial form was banned from prime time. The quiz show scandals of the late '50s presented the networks with a chance to break the hold that sponsors had held over broadcast programming since the 1930s, and they seized it in an atmosphere of high seriousness and cultural uplift, promising more-responsible performance and a higher level of program quality. The example of commercial radio, with its sponsor-dominated production and highly criticized popular programming, had to be pushed far into the background if this newly burnished image were to be maintained. Television needed to forget radio in order to take advantage of its temporary golden position with regulators and social critics. And as a new generation of TV-created stars and producers began to emerge in the '60s, television's erasure of radio days seemed complete.

### Cultural Marginality

Radio's new localized and fragmented address presented little to contradict television's historical re-visioning. Turning its attention to audiences outside the mainstream, radio became the place where those culturally excluded from television's address could regroup and find a new identity. As the network system crumbled, a greater degree of localism entered the radio market than had been seen since the 1920s. This worked particularly well for the nation's largest ethnic minority, African Americans, and a host of stations and formats sprang up to serve neglected black communities across the country. The DJ format, with scattered roots in recording-based shows during the radio network era, took on new life and a distinct character rooted in black culture (Barlow). This phenomenon would eventually lead to the rise of rock-and-roll radio, catering to another previously overlooked but newly powerful minority, the nation's youth (S. Douglas, *Where, Listening?*). Tired of waiting for television to recognize the youth culture

propelled by the baby boom, young people of all ages and social groups turned to the radio to hear the music that mattered in their lives—even as their parents continued to rely on the sounds of an older generation, such as Perry Como, Arthur Godfrey, Lawrence Welk, and Arthur Murray now featured on television. This appeal to youth and racial minorities did nothing to enhance radio's cultural credibility with the academic and critical mainstream. Radio became a medium more reviled than studied, more frequently dismissed than addressed. Its cultural status shifted ever downward, though its importance in the lives of its local and marginal audiences solidified and grew.

### Historiographical Erasure

If the sheer novelty of dominant TV technology and the discredited status of radio as a cultural form were not enough to deter the attention of academics and historians, the form of history being practiced during the middle decades of the century itself resisted recognition of radio's influence. The 1950s and early '60s marked the high point of "consensus history" in the United States, a form of historical scholarship prevalent in mainstream and popular accounts, though already under attack in the academy. It reflected the influence of "modernization theory," a response to Marxist historical models, which proposed capitalist economic development as a universal, modernizing process with its roots in the West but with implications for the rest of the world (Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob). This was the era of the "end of ideology," of a progressive view of American national history that emphasized consensus, assimilation, and the "natural" rise of democracy and freedom buoyed by marketplace capitalism. As one of its early proponents, Daniel Lerner, put it:

There is a single process of modernization which operates in all developing societies—regardless of their colour, creed, or climate and regardless of their history, geography, or culture. This is the process of economic development, and . . . development cannot be sustained without modernization. (Quoted in Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 84)

Modernization had not only an economic component but also an intellectual and psychological one, emphasizing the necessity of producing "a rational and autonomous self that was essential to modernization" (Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 85). Television could be employed as both an exemplar and a cheerleader for this vision of history, at once embodying the progress of Western development, presenting a means for spreading American values abroad, and drawing all into its majoritarian, economically driven address (Curtin). In this vision, radio was an older, defective technology that had played its part but now had been succeeded by a superior medium. To question television's conquest of the audience, furthermore, might be to call into question the very workings of modern-

ization and marketplace democracy itself. Looking back at abandoned potentials or discarded possibilities—or tracing the confluence of corporate and government power that produced them—did not suit the mood of US historical scholarship. Radio lay outside the consensus of history.

### Theoretical Impossibility

Finally, though the study of popular culture slowly began to permeate the academy, the routes it took also tended to preclude the study of radio. The rising field of social science research turned its attention to the increasingly controversial effects of television on children and other susceptible groups, funded by government grants and supported by social and regulatory outcry. Along with the spotlight, radio lost its ability to generate grant dollars; meanwhile, marketing research in the service of the television industry captured much of the academic research agenda through its abundant supply of funds. By the 1960s government grants and corporate funding for social-science-based research not only had turned attention away from radio but had led to the most established branch of broadcasting studies turning its back on its previous critical focus.

In the humanities, radio's cultural marginality and lowbrow roots worked against academic legitimization. The 1960s saw the entrance of film studies into the curriculum of more-advanced colleges and universities, propelled by a strategy of raising the medium's cultural status through an explicit articulation to literature and the visual arts. Advocates of film study initially based their lobbying for film respectability on the *auteur* theory, treating directors as authors and films as expressive individual works of art. The primary component of the auteur's artistry was the visual mise-en-scène of the film, its strategy of narration through visual elements, and though sound was recognized as an important ancillary component, its study remained subsumed under the dominance of the visual. Neither radio's aurally nor its "authorless," lowbrow, commercialized status allowed it to benefit from film's legitimating strategy.

The television industry jumped on board the highbrow bandwagon as part of the networks' drive for respectability. CBS and NBC had engaged in an active defense against charges of philistinism for years by pointing out, in lavishly produced brochures and booklets, the many examples of "quality" programming they claimed to produce. In 1960 CBS commissioned an edited volume of television criticism, drawing on various critics and academics and titling it *The Eighth Art*. In 1962 the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences founded the journal *Television Quarterly* (Spigel, "Making"). With it they hoped to stimulate informed aesthetic criticism of television. As their mission statement put it:

Those who are associated with the planning of this Journal believe it is time for a penetrating, provocative and continuing examination of tel-

evision as an art, a science, an industry, and a social force. Accordingly, our purpose is to be both independent and critical. We hold that the function of this Journal is to generate currents of new ideas about television, and we will therefore try to assure publication of all material which stimulates thought and has editorial merit. This Journal has only one aim—to take a serious look at television. (*Television Quarterly* 1. 1 [1962])

The editor was A. William Bluem, a professor at Syracuse University. Editorial board members were drawn from industry and journalism for the most part, with Sydney H. Eiges of NBC as chairman and Walter Cronkite as cochairman. Other members included Chet Huntley, Gilbert Selles, Robert Lewis Shayon, and Hubbell Robinson of CBS. They began to publish a combination of academic and journalistic work on television that would form a conservative alternative to the public emphasis on social science research shaping up around the violence issues (Kompare).

On the left, radical criticism of the media also militated against its serious study. The legacy of the Frankfurt School dominated leftist scholars' thinking on radio and television in particular, with all commercial, corporate manifestations of popular culture tarred with the same derogatory brush. Commercial culture remained highly suspect culture, no matter what its popularity or how varied its uses. Aside from the slowly burgeoning Pacifica chain of stations and a few community broadcasting efforts, US radio (along with television) seemed completely captured by capitalism to a greater extent even than most other media.<sup>3</sup> In 1957 the groundbreaking volume *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* appeared, struggling to mediate between the Frankfurterian disdain for mass culture and the more accepting, still emergent "popular arts" approach. Its two editors personified the problems inherent in a left-informed analysis of the commercial popular media. Bernard Rosenberg, an editor for *Dissent* magazine and a lecturer at the New School for Social Research, articulated the Frankfurt School's suspicion of commercial mass culture and excoriated the lowbrow standards of the benighted audiences who supported it. David Manning White, a professor of journalism at Boston University, took a more supportive, liberal-pluralist stance, defending the popular arts, despite their commercialism, as capable of achieving excellence if properly encouraged. The two could not even agree to write a joint introduction, pulled between the tensions of the book's basic question: "Should we adopt the classic intellectual rejection of mass culture, or should we give mass culture our 'critical support'?" (Rosenberg and White 18). Its contributors included "literary critics, social scientists, journalists and art critics" writing not just on television but on movies, jazz, comic books, popular literature, and advertising—with radio, significantly, out of the picture completely.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this process of increasing legitimacy for other media, most markedly TV and film, radio remained an anachronistic embarrassment, the discarded chrysalis of a new technology that could now emerge into glorious (or dreadful) maturity. And its contemporary incarnation, as a fragmented, local medium playing rock and roll to racial minorities and unruly youth, hardly represented the kind of high culture that film and television advocates—industrial or academic, left-wing or conservative—were anxious to endorse. The development of underground radio in the late '60s and '70s brought a certain cachet to creative, politically informed broadcasting within youth culture, but the competing rise of format radio and its attendant commercialization and standardization continued to keep current radio practices well below the horizon of critical respect (Keith). When public television struggled into existence in 1967, funding for public radio was added as an afterthought, and thoroughly discouraged by some.<sup>2</sup> Commercial radio, regarded by radical critics as mere “dialing for dollars” and by more conservative commentators as a particularly egregious example of populism run amuck, had virtually dropped from academic sight in the United States by the late 1970s. Industrially, culturally, historiographically, and theoretically, radio had been rendered invisible by the temper of the times.

### The Return of the Radio Repressed

What did it take for radio to emerge from the historical doghouse into better quarters in the main rooms? The late 1990s, in particular, saw a sudden blossoming of radio studies, from a variety of different fields in a variety of directions.<sup>6</sup> Once marginalized, radio not only has become a part of media studies and journalism curricula but has begun to figure prominently in accounts of twentieth-century American history and culture written by scholars from many different backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Again, the roots of radio resurgence are many and varied, but this time the primary vehicle of return seems to begin in academic theory.

#### Seeing Culture in a New Light

In the early 1980s a new theoretical paradigm began to reach American shores, having first appeared in England in the work of the Birmingham School. In the United States it would be taken up by a variety of disciplines, but the field of media has always been central to cultural studies, as the new approach came to be called. Deliberately calling into question assumed hierarchies of high and low, of seriousness and triviality, of “quality” and “trash,” cultural studies scholars turned their attention to formerly disparaged media forms such as girls’ magazines, working-class style, popular music, romance novels, television, and eventually even radio (Hall and Jefferson; Hebdige; McRobbie; Radway; Frith).

With the introduction of feminist and critical race theory into the mix—and the later addition of queer theory—the study of formerly “low” forms, as well as interrogation of what propped up the “high,” allowed new light to be shed on the critical dismissal of popular culture by both conservative academics and their Frankfurtian colleagues (see, for instance, Gray; Torres; D’Acci; Allen; Fiske; Zook; Dory). Perhaps low forms spoke in a language below the notice of relatively elite academic analysis. Perhaps they could be understood as equally complex and meaningful as more legitimate forms, and far better at connecting with their working-class, female, and minority audiences—as well as with the greater mainstream. Perhaps what mattered was how audiences understood and used media, rather than the former assumption that the intentions of the producers determined all that could be thought and said. Attention broadened beyond the sphere of producers and artists, to encompass a focus on audience reception, use, and meaning making. Within this context, radio’s very exclusion from the realm of the academically acceptable became a signal of its underground cultural importance. What was hiding under those decades of critical neglect?

#### New Histories

A new type of history writing began to uncover previously neglected aspects of radio. Influenced by the theoretical trends of the last decades of the twentieth century, historiography too had begun to change. From its former insistence on consensus and unified narratives, the new movement toward social history turned to those factors that traditional histories had obscured, excluded, or marginalized. The minutiae of everyday life: the repressed histories of women, gays, minorities, and the working class; the traces of conflict and opposition; and the identification of new forms of historical evidence—all these, taken together, led to a rewriting of the American story, and indeed to a questioning of the role of nation itself. New histories traced the workings of power in its various forms not only through the events of the past but through the processes of historiography. The influence of other disciplines, from sociology to psychology to art and musicology, began to determine the kinds of questions historians asked and the kind of answers they found.

In media study, television slowly gained status as a subject of historical analysis, its role as central purveyor of, and player in, national culture and history finally revealed beneath the layers of disdain and neglect. Film too received a more culturally embedded treatment, less tied to the aesthetic approach that had prevailed. Study of the media industries grew in importance as media converged, merged, and contracted, and many of the “givens” of media practice, formerly considered beneath notice, were subjected to historical interrogation.

Radio began to benefit from this historiographical shift—though slowly and more in some areas than others. Formerly marginal or obscured practices—minority stations, local innovations, women's programs, religious broadcasting, negotiations of gender and race in mainstream media, politically resistant broadcasts and culturally debased formats such as serials and talk and quiz shows—became the object of renewed interest. This was particularly true for the pretelevision period. Posttelevision radio, on the other hand, has yet to benefit from the same kind of social interest or scholarly study. Both of these phenomena—the attention given to prewar radio and the neglect of the postwar scene—have to do with changes in radio's cultural role and status.

### Safe to Study

By the late 1980s radio's earliest decades had lost much of their former cultural threat and become safely ensconced in the nostalgic aura of the distant past. In an era of television, the clearer and present danger, the decades of radio's prominence as a national medium seemed quaint, intriguing, even respectable. In history departments, political science departments, and American studies programs, as well as in communications and media studies fields, radio began to receive the academic attention denied it since its birth. The decades of the 1920s through the '40s, in particular, attracted scholarly and popular focus. Formerly overlooked in accounts of twentieth-century US history, radio now began to be perceived as part of the social glue that held America—and other nations—together. Though its evanescent nature made it less useful to historians than the print journalism that forms such an important basis for historical scholarship, radio could no longer simply be left out of the historical record. Negotiations of cultural and political power around, in, and on the air received recognition as vitally important and central parts of both everyday and national life, inseparable from the larger struggles and currents of American and world history (see, in this volume, essays by Loviglio, Murray, Hanger, McCracken, Smith, Savage, Russo, O'Connor, Mitchell, and Wang). Radio archives and museums began to gain attention. New York opened its prestigious Museum of Television and Radio in 1975; Chicago established its Museum of Broadcasting in 1983; and Los Angeles weighed in with its glossy branch of the New York organization in 1993. Other key archives, such as those in the Library of Congress, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the University of California, Los Angeles, archive, the Library of American Broadcasting at the University of Maryland, College Park, and the Hartmann Center for the Study of Advertising at Duke University, drew scholars from many fields interested in the development of this broadcasting medium.

Yet again most of this attention stops at the point at which network radio gives way to the localized, music-centered, and format-driven business that it

became in the late 1950s. Format radio still attracts little but disdain from academic researchers, despite a few notable exceptions (S. Douglas, *Listening Wall*). Not until the rise of political talk radio in the '80s did the medium begin to receive some scholarly and critical attention, mostly from a sociological perspective. Meantime, the number of hours that Americans spend listening to their radios every day continues to grow. Yet contradictory developments in the radio industry since the '80s have worked to render contemporary radio less and less "discussable" even as the stakes grow higher.

### Industrial Contradictions

The radio industry has gone through a variety of cycles since its nadir as a medium in the 1960s, diversifying its formats to reach most segments of the population, not just the young. By the mid-1980s all demographic groups listened to the radio, often in the shape of formats specifically geared to them, and with the rise of call-in programs and talk radio a new era of political and social controversy began. Reaching its apogee in the popularity and political influence of Rush Limbaugh in the early '90s, radio's captains of consciousness included a wide variety of controversial and outrageous figures, from Howard Stern and Dr. Laura to Larry King. The growth of National Public Radio through its turbulent first decades and into the more stable '90s showed a mature listening public what serious, informative, and creative radio might sound like. From *All Things Considered* to *Prairie Home Companion*, and encompassing a wide variety of innovative programs in between, public radio helped to redeem the cultural status long denied the medium as a whole.

Furthermore, radio's demographically fragmented status made it a perfect arena in which to observe the operations of the many "subaltern counterpublics," to use a term borrowed from Nancy Fraser, that had adopted the relatively low-cost and interactive medium as a place to mark out new forms of cultural identity and debate (Fraser, *passim*; Squires). The rise of syndication in the '80s meant that formerly small, scattered populations could now rally around a unifying, nationally distributed minority forum. From stations directed at one primary ethnic group—notably to black, Latino, and Asian populations—to programs targeted at different age groups, identities, musical tastes, specialized interests, and political opinions, radio's capacity for "nationalized locality" made it a valuable medium for communication, discussion, and cultural cohesion across geographical boundaries. The idea of community, so central to broadcast regulation, began to shift from its former definition as a purely local phenomenon to something that might extend across an entire nation. The alternative and community radio pioneered in the turbulent '60s and '70s struggled on in hundreds of cities and towns, providing a setting for local voices and concerns to be heard and contributing to the vitality of US cultural and political life.



However, at the corporate level the 1990s witnessed an explosion of mergers and ever-narrowing control. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 removed some of the previous barriers to ownership of multiple stations in the same market, provoking a wave of station purchases and consolidation of territory. Many smaller cities woke up one morning in 1997 or 1998 to find that a single radio conglomerate now owned half of their local broadcasting stations. By early 1999 the merger of Chancellor Media, Clear Channel Communications, and Capstar made the resulting company, Chancellor Media, the single largest owner of radio stations in the world, with over 488 stations across the country. Its ownership of five or six stations in large cities such as New York and Los Angeles may not represent an enormous percentage of the lively radio market there, but in cities such as Fresno, California, where Chancellor now owns nine radio stations, or Spokane, Washington, where it owns eleven, the giant conglomerate dominates out almost all other radio voices in the area. The four largest companies together (Chancellor, CBS, ABC, and Emmis) control over 75% of the radio audience in the ten largest US metropolitan areas. This squelching of radio's much-prized diversity by corporate behemoths at the top has once again thrown radio into cultural disapproval. Yet so far, despite the spread of standardized formats on a national level, the local scene appears fairly diverse, supplemented as it is with public, community, and a few holdout locally owned stations. In most cities there are more radio stations operating today than ever before, giving an impression, at least, of something for everyone. And the rise of Internet distribution of both music and traditional broadcast radio promises even greater diversity for those who can receive it.

Yet increasingly radio forms just one component of the media conglomerates organized in the 1990s, working toward the much-vaunted "synergy" that promises to integrate all media into a giant publicity and promotion machine. Will being the audio arena for music videos, movie soundtracks, news coverage, and discussion of all these matters raise radio's profile? Or will the very definition of radio change, as wired Internet connection evolves to wireless and music, talk, and entertainment can be called up program by program, source by source? Will there still be a role for the over-the-air station, on a local if not a national level? The recent push for creation of a system of low-power radio stations reminds us that technology penetrates to all levels of the population slowly and irregularly. And why can't we, in this age of media abundance and diversity, enjoy here in the United States the variety of radio forms still available in less commercial national systems? Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and other countries where public broadcasting has a strong tradition preserve bastions of radio drama, serials, documentaries, music alternatives, and art radio that have long been forgotten in the United States. It is easy to overlook radio's long history of creativity, flexibility, innovation, and experimentation in a culture dominated by market-driven formats.

### What Next?

This volume marks and celebrates the new era of radio resurgency and, in the vitality and currency of its authors' approaches, signals the relevance of radio to issues of culture, politics, nation, identity, history, and the media developments of today. It also points out the areas that have received so little attention as to practically leap off the page when they are mentioned. Clearly much more remains to be done in radio studies, particularly in the more contemporary period but also in the fascinating decades of radio's reign as our primary national medium. One area that has received little attention in this country since the publication of Rudolf Arnheim's singular work in 1936 is the field of radio aesthetics. Again, radio as a field and as an artistic endeavor had reached a point in the late 1940s at which its unique properties as a medium, and the art and technique of aural expression, had just begun to receive some attention, but then television erased the memory banks. Since then film scholars have begun to devote attention to sound in film, inclusive of music, dialogue, and effects, and much of their work has direct relevance for those interested in radio.<sup>8</sup> However, in the absence of a vital creative radio production tradition in the United States, much of the groundbreaking work in this field is being done in other countries, whose broadcasting institutions have allowed the field of radio to continue on a number of fronts without the artificial narrowing so prevalent in this country.<sup>9</sup> But even commercial radio can be illuminated by an approach that treats musical formats not as mere commercial formulas, but as important culture-defining and boundary-reinforcing exercises, such as Tim Wall's recent article on black music formats in Britain (see also the essays by Douglas, Apostolidis, Rothenbuhler and McCourt, and Keith in this volume). More of this kind of scholarship would broaden radio's theoretical base and strengthen its ties with a variety of disciplines.

Another area needing further exploration is the field of radio in everyday life. Television has received some excellent attention as a medium of popular use, and analysis of television's uses and functions in domestic and national life has benefited from the groundbreaking work of such scholars as Ien Ang, David Morley, Julie D'Acci, and many more. Little exists that extends such an approach to radio, though Susan Douglas's most recent work, *Listening In*, goes a long way in this direction. Susan Squires uses public sphere theory to assess the impact of black talk radio on Chicago's political and cultural scene (see also the essays of Smith, Lenthall, Vailant, Newman, and Fiske in this volume). Such approaches are more common in the realm of international media studies, since radio still remains the primary communications medium in many countries, especially the third world. A greater attention to audience and meaning making from a cultural studies perspective could help to bring radio into the mainstream of academic study and provide a necessary and provocative corollary to the many

important findings in the area of television. For instance, why do radio stars such as Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger thrive on radio but fail to draw audiences on television? What is it about both media that encourage certain kinds of content or address? What roles does radio fill in the television information and entertainment universe—for instance, why does the new cultural wave of hip-hop thrive on radio while remaining marginalized by other media? Can we understand audiences' patterns of news consumption without taking radio into account? How might radio drama operate alongside the narrative possibilities so abundant on television? These are a few questions that rest fundamentally on patterns of use and habits of understanding the two media, and they can be answered only by paying attention to radio's functions in everyday life.

Third, radio has been largely overlooked in the recent political discussions about media and power. As noted above, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 had enormous implications for the structure of the radio industry, yet these went even more undiscussed and neglected than that act's impact on television. Radio remains perennially the stepchild of media attention despite its demonstrated ability to sway political opinion, set cultural trends, and figure in the world of advice, discussion, and identity formation (Lewis). Yet ironically, the focus on the big-business-dominated side of radio, exemplified by concentration of ownership and homogenization of formats, works to obscure the immense variety and vitality still present in most US cities. In this case neglect may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If critics and social observers are convinced that there is nothing to be said about radio, their observation may indeed come true. More attention needs to be paid to the resistant side of radio, to the public and community broadcasters presenting lively and innovative radio work, and to the low-power movement in all its forms, including the illegal pirate stations so prevalent in the '90s (see the essays by Mitchell, Fiske, Rismandel, and McCauley in this volume).

Finally, work on radio tends to maintain a narrowly nationalistic focus. Most media scholars working in the United States today know little, and seem to care less, about what is going on outside our national borders in the invisible, evanescent field of radio. In fact, radio presents unique opportunities around the globe, from the art sound of German experimenters and the complex dramas and documentaries in the United Kingdom, to the voices of revolutionary movements in Central America, memories of the Holocaust, and the call for long-lost relatives in Israel. Even more so than television, radio's international dimensions are overlooked, unless it is the output of government-sponsored international organizations such as the Voice of America or the BBC World Service. Not that these organizations have been sufficiently studied—anyone interested in the face of US nationalism abroad over the last fifty years overlooks our aural propaganda outlets, however invisible, at his or her own peril.<sup>10</sup> More than this, however, a truly cross-cultural historical approach to radio has much to teach us, as

Kate Lacey, Susan Smulyan, and William O'Connor point out in this volume. Neither radio nor television developed in a nation-bound cocoon, despite the dominant discourse (produced so strongly by the broadcasters themselves). In fact, they took shape within an active dialogue with each other around issues of political structure, public service, economics, populism, and cultural carryovers and resistances—a dialogue that has never ceased. These mutually constructive tendencies have only recently begun to be limited at, as national boundaries break down under globalizing media. National systems constructed in opposition to each other—such as those of the United States and the United Kingdom—used each other as necessary components of their own identities and structures (Hilmes, "Who"). They cannot be truly understood in splendid, flag-waving isolation.

## Conclusion

The rise, and fall, and rise of radio's status as an important cultural medium thus has lessons for those in many fields. Its most striking aspect is the virtual disappearance of meaningful recognition of a creative, powerful, and enormously influential cultural form from the histories and collective memory of a significant portion of the twentieth century. What else is out there, lurking at the margins of the barely knowable? A few things immediately come to mind in the field of media alone: magazine culture generally, an amazingly neglected field of study; local forms of radio and television, difficult to research but still accessible; the overlooked tradition of Latina/o media in the United States, only now gaining some attention; and the elided histories of such important media "middlemen" as our ratings systems, research organizations, funding institutions, and lobbying groups. Another important factor to consider might be how nostalgia (particularly for "old-time" radio) works as a cultural filter, preserving aspects of neglected social phenomena while actively obscuring many others. And finally there is the issue of nationalism, the national myopia around the study of media and of cultures, which this volume does a little to remedy but on which much more remains to be said. Why not global media, including radio, in everyone's home? Perhaps Americans would at last be stimulated to learn to speak other languages, and there is much diverse work either done in English or needing no translation (as the international music scene has showed us). With digital technologies, radio is entering a new era in this century. Both its past and its present need reawakened attention if we hope to learn the media lessons of history.

## Notes

1. Besides Erik Barnouw and his groundbreaking three-volume *History of Broadcasting in the United States*, written between 1966 and 1970, J. Fred MacDonald provided one of the very few histories of radio programming in *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American*

*Life, 1920-1960* (1972), and Raymond Stedman traced the evolution of one of radio's most prominent forms in *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment* (1977). Arthur Wertheim's *Radio Comedy* (1979) preserved the legacy of early broadcast comedians and the influential forms they innovated. Harrison B. Summers published his meticulous tracing of thirty years of network radio schedules as a dissertation in 1958, but Arno Press reprinted it in 1971, to the eternal gratitude of radio historians everywhere. A few invaluable encyclopedias of radio programming also began to appear in the '70s, notably Buxton and Owen's *The Big Broadcast* (1972) and Vincent Terrace's *Radio's Golden Years* (1981). Lichy and Topping's highly useful *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television* (1975) helped to preserve many original articles and documents for historical memory. And broadcasting, both radio and TV, got its first textbook in the late '70s in the form of Christopher Sterling and John Kitross's comprehensive *Stay Tuned* (1978), though its focus is primarily on industry and regulation.

2. Many organizations dedicated to preserving the memory of old-time radio sprang up in the '60s and '70s. Some of the larger ones include the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), based in the Los Angeles area (<http://www.pe.net/~movak/sperdvac.htm>); the North American Radio Archives, in Cincinnati; and the Friends of Old Time Radio, run by Jay Hickerson. Popular books such as Jim Harmon's *The Great Radio Heroes* (1967) and *The Great Radio Comedians* (1970) began to appear in the 1960s, along with many memoirs and biographies of radio's pioneers and celebrities.

3. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer had laid down the basic components of Marxist thinking on the commercial media in their 1947 "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception." Adorno revisited the issue with an even more ringing condemnation in 1967 in "The Culture Industry Reconsidered."

4. The book combined a section headed "Television and Radio," but all five essays concerned themselves with television.

5. For a compelling narrative of radio's last-minute rescue from public funding exclusion, see Hoyne's, *Public Television for Sale*, and Ledbetter, *Made Possible By*...

6. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* saw fit to recognize this phenomenon in 1999 with an article on the new radio research, focused around a few panels at the 1998 American Studies Association conference; see Peter Monaghan, "Exploring Radio's Sociocultural Legacy."

Many of the contributors to this volume have published significant works in the renaissance of radio study in the United States; see the bibliography of this essay.

7. For instance, Warren Susman was one of the earliest historians of the twentieth century to turn his attention to the importance of cultural industries and texts as part of the social context, including radio; see *Culture As History*. Ann Douglas's belated *Terrific Honesty* sees technologies such as recording and radio as key elements of the negotiation of ethnicity and race in the New York of the 1920s. Burton Peretti's history of jazz in its early decades centrally locates radio. Elizabeth Cohen's history of the Depression and the New Deal analyzes radio as well as film and chain retailing as important facets of social cohesion that enabled labor organizing in the '30s and '40s.

8. See, for instance, the sound-studies list maintained by the University of Iowa Sound Research Group at [sound-studies@uiowa.edu](http://sound-studies@uiowa.edu).

9. At the Audiophyperspace site (<http://www.swf2.de/hoerspiel/audiophyperspace/>), there are links to information on the history of acoustic media art, the history of everyday life's sounds, acoustic web art, experimental radio on demand, audio archives, radio stations live online, artists' audio presentations, and background materials. The Radio Studies list, based in Britain, offers discussion and resources about radio as a field at <http://www.jicmail.ac.uk/lis/radio-studies.html>.

10. And information about them is now widely available to citizens of the United States for the first time on the Web, at <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/broadcast.htm>. This is the State Department's site for the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty,

Radio/TV Martí, and Radio Free Asia. Interestingly, you still can't link to it directly from the [usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov) site, in keeping with the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, which forbids propaganda to be distributed domestically.

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. "The Culture Industry Reconsidered." 1967. *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*. Ed. S. E. Brown and D. M. Kellner. New York: Routledge, 1989. 45-63.
- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception." 1947. *Mass Communication and Society*. Ed. James Curran et al. London: Sage, 1997. 349-83.
- Allen, Robert C. *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina P, 1985.
- Anderson, Christopher. *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties*. Austin: U. of Texas P, 1994.
- Ang, Ien. *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Appleby, Joyce, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. *Telling the Truth about History*. New York: Norton, 1995.
- Armheim, Rudolf. *Radio*. London: Faber and Faber, 1936.
- Barlow, William. *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999.
- Barnouw, Erik. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. 3 volumes. New York: Oxford UP, 1966-70.
- Boddy, William. *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics*. Urbana: U. of Illinois P, 1990.
- Buxton, Frank, and Bill Owen. *The Big Broadcast: 1920-1950*. New York: Viking, 1972.
- Cohen, Elizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago 1919-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Curtin, Michael. *Rediscovering the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995.
- Crutmon, Daniel. *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina P, 1982.
- D'Acci, Julie. *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney and Lacey*. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina P, 1994.
- Dohy, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P, 1993.
- Douglas, Ann. *Terrific Honesty: Mongrel Menhaden in the 1920s*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1995.
- Douglas, Susan J. *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.
- . *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Media*. New York: Times, 1994.
- . *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination from Amos 'n' Andy to Edward R. Murrow and Wolfman Jack to Howard Stern*. New York: Times Books 1999.
- Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. London, New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Forman, Peter, and Joshua E. Mills. *Radio in the Television Age*. New York: Overlook, 1980.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT P, 1992. 109-42.
- Firth, Simon. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Pantheon, 1981.
- Gray, Herman. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P, 1995.
- Hall, Stuart, and Tony Jefferson. *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Routledge, 1983.

- Haddon, Jim. *The Great Radio Heroes*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967.
- . *The Great Radio Comedians*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970.
- Hedberg, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Hilmes, Michele. *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1990.
- . *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- . "Who We Are, Who We Are Not: Battle of the Global Paradigms." *Planet Television*. Ed. Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar. New York: New York UP, 2001.
- Horren, Gerhard. "Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II." Diss. U of California, Berkeley, 1995.
- Hoyes, William. *Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market, and the Public Sphere*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994.
- Keith, Michael. *Voices in the Purple Haze: Underground Radio in the Sixties*. Westport: Praeger, 1997.
- Kompare, Derek. "Renn Nation: The Regime of Repetition on American Television." Diss. U of Wisconsin, Madison, 1999.
- Land, Jeff. *Active Radio: Pacifica's Brash Experiment*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.
- Lasar, Matthew. *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000.
- Leibetter, James. *Made Possible By . . . : The Death of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. London: Verso, 1997.
- Lewis, Peter M. "Private Passion, Public Neglect: The Cultural Status of Radio." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 3.2 (2000): 160–67.
- Lichty, Lawrence W., and Malachi C. Topping. *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television*. New York: Hastings House, 1975.
- MacDonald, J. Fred. *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960*. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979.
- MacFadden, Margaret T. "America's Boyfriend Who Can't Get a Date: Gender, Race, and the Cultural Work of the Jack Benny Program, 1932–1946." *Journal of American History* 80.1 (1993): 113–35.
- McRobbie, Angela. *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*. Boston: Unwin, 1991.
- Monaghan, Peter. "Exploring Radio's Sociocultural Legacy." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 19 Feb. 1999: A17–18.
- Morley, David. *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Peretti, Burton W. *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race and Culture in Modern America*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992.
- Radway, Janice. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984.
- Rosenberg, Bernard, and David Manning White. *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*. Glencoe, IL: Free, 1957.
- Savage, Barbara. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938–1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999.
- Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1922–1934*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution P, 1994.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- . "The Making of a TV Literate Elite." *The Television Studies Book*. Ed. Christine Geraghty and David Lusted. London: Arnold, 1998. 68–85.
- Squires, Catherine R. "Black Talk Radio: Defining Community Needs and Identity." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 5.2 (2000): 73–96.
- Steelman, Raymond W. *The Scribe: Suspense and Drama by Installment*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1977.

- Sterling, Christopher H., and John M. Kiross. *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1978.
- Summers, Harrison B., ed. *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926–1956*. New York: Arno, 1971.
- Susman, Warren. *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Terrace, Vincent. *Radio's Golden Years: The Encyclopedia of Radio Programs*. San Diego: A. S. Barnes, 1981.
- Tichi, Cecilia. *The Electronic Heart: Creating an American Television Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Torres, Salisha, ed. *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.
- Viannello, Robert. "The Power Politics of 'Live' Television." *Journal of Film and Video* 37.1 (1985): 26–40.
- Wall, Tim. "The Meanings of Black and Dance Music in Contemporary Music Radio." British Musicology Conference. University of Surrey, England, July 1999.
- Wertheim, Arthur F. *Radio Comedy*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.
- Zook, Crystal Brent. *Color by Fox: The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

---

## CHAPTER 12

### A DARK(ENED) FIGURE ON THE AIRWAVES Race, Nation, and *The Green Hornet*

Alexander Russo

From 1936 to 1952 *The Green Hornet* radio program followed the adventures of Britt Reid and Kato as they fought criminals who were "outside the reach of the law." By day, Reid was a newspaper publisher and carefree bachelor and Kato was his valet, driver, and chef. But at night Reid assumed the identity of the Green Hornet and, assisted by Kato, battled criminal figures who, according to the opening narration, "sought to destroy our way of life." In a typical episode, broadcast in June 1941, Kato offers some sage advice on a frustrating case: "In my native Philippines, we have a saying 'It is easier to drown in a little wave than a big one' (*Green Hornet* episode 509).<sup>1</sup> "Eastern wisdom" dispensed in folk sayings was not atypical of Orientalist representations of Asians in popular culture during the 1930s and 1940s. However, longtime listeners of the show must have been surprised by Kato's professing Filipino ancestry, as just three years prior, the show had explicitly identified him as Japanese! The ease with which the show's producers felt they could and should ascribe a new ethnic identity to one of the show's main characters raises a variety of questions about how radio represents race in an imagined community.

In its symbolic constructions of the United States, *The Green Hornet* represents the intersection of race, citizenship, and the public sphere. This essay addresses both the explicit cultural work that the producers intended the show to perform and the implicit assumptions that structured the program's representational strategies. By engaging with questions regarding the legitimacy of the nation, its government, its public institutions, and its status in the world, *The*

*Green Hornet* played an important role in defining the contours of the national community during the tumultuous 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, *The Green Hornet* proves especially valuable because the racial representations it used to structure narrative solutions to social anxieties were produced through an aural medium. Thus this show not only provides a picture of cultural tensions surrounding the idea of nation during the 1930s and 1940s but also demonstrates the centrality of culturally constructed racial fantasies to radio's engagement with these issues.

During the 1930s and 1940s radio played a special role in defining the national community. Building on Benedict Anderson's conception of an imagined community as well as historians' and theorists' understanding of "whiteness," Michele Hilmes has argued that in this period radio programming uniquely performed the single "American" voice. Radio was the only medium capable of addressing the entire country simultaneously, and its voice was both literal and symbolic, consisting of an address to a national "we" by radio networks as well as providing a model for what a "real American" should sound like. As Hilmes suggests: "Radio created not only a marketing and distribution system, but a system of meanings, a system of transmission of cultural values and mediation of cultural tensions that valorized and 'made common' some aspects of everyday experience and marginalized or excluded others" (Hilmes, *Radio 6*). Hilmes argues that race played a central role in radio's address, an address that worked to erase distinctions between European ethnic groups while emphasizing differences between "black" and "white" (xix). Hilmes's suggestion to simultaneously consider the role of radio as a product of culture and as a system for producing cultural meaning is a valuable tool with which to explore *The Green Hornet*'s ideological stance and modes of address. This program articulates a complex relationship between anxiety about the status of the nation and the position of racialized groups within that community. By examining *The Green Hornet*'s mediation of cultural anxieties through racial categories we can begin to address the ways in which radio's performance of Asian and Asian-American characters complicates our understanding of the cultural constructions of race to include those that do not fit into a binary black/white framework.

### The Production of *The Green Hornet*

A programming staple on network radio for twelve years, *The Green Hornet* provides a model for exploring the relationship between race, national community, and radio. On a weekly or biweekly basis, audiences followed the adventures of Britt Reid and Kato as they fought "criminals and racketeers." In a typical episode Reid would learn of a suspicious or overt criminal scheme through a newspaper article or a conversation with a reporter or other social contact. After ascertaining as much as he could from legitimate contacts at the newspaper or the police department, Reid would return to his apartment, discuss the events with Kato, and formulate a plan to pursue their own avenues of research, as the

### A Dark(ened) Figure on the Airwaves

*Green Hornet* and his sidekick. Very often the duo would interfere with the police or leave false clues (especially the *Green Hornet*'s identifying seal) in order to gain time to conduct their own investigation. The *Green Hornet* frequently used his reputation as an underworld figure to intimidate the criminals involved into revealing clues about their plans. Likewise, the *Hornet* repeatedly tricked criminals into double-crossing one another or into revealing enough evidence that he could knock them unconscious with his gas gun and make an anonymous tip to the police. However, these activities prevented Reid from clearing the *Hornet*'s name from involvement in the criminal acts and creating ever more danger should his secret identity be revealed.

*The Green Hornet* was a product of the network radio system that was dominant from the late 1920s to the 1950s. Radio in the 1920s featured a wide array of programming, including amateur and professional performers with local and national orientations. However, by the time *The Green Hornet* went on the air in 1936, debates surrounding radio's economic structure and the role of commercial sponsors had been largely resolved, leaving series and serials as the dominant programming forms.<sup>2</sup> Shows such as *Amos 'n' Andy* demonstrated to networks and advertising agencies the financial value of serials. Unlike anthology shows, which aired only once, series and serials could build a loyal audience by featuring the same characters week after week. Additionally, series and serials were much cheaper to produce because they did not require new actors or writers for every show and often were written by teams of writers instead of a single well-known author. The combination of audience loyalty and inexpensive production attracted advertising agencies looking for a national audience. Networks and ad agencies were able to spend more and achieve higher production values, further adding to the shows' appeal.<sup>3</sup>

*The Green Hornet*'s content and political views stem from its position in this network system and from the show's producer, George Trendle, who had an unusually large influence on its production.<sup>4</sup> Although it was broadcast on network radio for the majority of its sixteen-year run, *The Green Hornet* was not produced by one of the major networks or a national advertising agency. Rather, it originated from WXYZ in Detroit, Michigan, a part of the Mutual network.<sup>5</sup> The relatively small scale of production placed ultimate authority in the hands of the station owner, George Trendle. While he was not involved in day-to-day program production, oral histories of the station provide repeated examples of Trendle's control over the station's product, ranging from providing story ideas to prohibiting any mention of sex or divorce (Osgood 62, 103–4, 120, 193). Trendle claimed to want to use *The Green Hornet* as an educational tool, a way of stressing to young people the necessity of vigilance against corrupt politicians and of voting as a political tool to achieve those ends (Bickel 134, 192; Osgood 107–10). While Trendle's influence is significant, the show's social relevance and political outlook also depended on its construction as a formula-driven series.

A series, *The Green Hornet* used commonly understood formulas and recognizable types to appeal to audiences.<sup>6</sup> The program drew heavily on its sister show, *The Lone Ranger*, which was also written by Fran Striker and produced at WXYZ. The two programs shared a basic template: a courageous, white hero, a faithful sidekick of a different race, a classical music theme in the public domain to avoid sidestick of a different race, a deeply corrupt setting.<sup>7</sup> Fran Striker, *The Green Hornet's* royal payments, and a deeply corrupt setting.<sup>7</sup> Fran Striker, *The Green Hornet's* chief writer, used a highly rationalized and formula-driven system that allows us to consider each element of the story in terms of how he felt it would resonate with its intended audience.<sup>8</sup> This system, which Striker termed the "Morphological Approach to Plotting," was composed of modular pieces, archetypal forms, or everyday experiences, arranged in columns according to whether they referred to character traits, objectives to be reached, obstacles to be overcome, or solutions to problems. Striker would generate plots by combining different elements in end-less variation. In the broadest possible terms, Striker referred to the writing process in this way: "Drama consists of a character in conflict 'A' desiring 'B' is opposed by 'C' This is conflict" (Striker, "Part I" 2). Likewise, "DESIRE opposed by OBSTACLE produces EMOTION" (Striker, "Part II" 1). Because the approach is so formulaic, plot elements were chosen carefully so that they would appeal to audiences in a given cultural context.<sup>9</sup> As Fredric Jameson suggests, the narrative structures that these formulas create lead to certain genre structures and expectations in audiences (Jameson, "Reification" 1990 19). In this process, mass cultural forms function to relieve, repress, or otherwise manage cultural anxieties; they reinforce an existing status quo by presenting those anxieties and then resolving them through the narrative. For Jameson, this ideological work accounts for the popularity of mass cultural forms: audiences are drawn into narratives that engage with their hopes and fears, and they take enjoyment from the narrative solutions to those anxieties that the shows provide.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Green Hornet and the Failure of the Civic Institutions*

*The Green Hornet's* appeal to audiences was linked to its engagement with cultural anxieties surrounding the state of the nation during the 1930s and 1940s. The tremendous changes caused by the Great Depression and the New Deal and the increasing antagonism in world politics leading up to World War II were all sources of political and social conflict as different interests fought over the proper direction for the country. The status and proper role of the state became a central debate, as New Deal programs that attempted to bring the United States out of the Depression massively increased federal authority and military aggression challenged the state from abroad. Opposed to the idea of an interventionist state, Republicans and conservative businessmen attacked federal expansion, and eventually, in a series of decisions, the Supreme Court ruled many of the first New Deal programs unconstitutional. Perceived state receptivity

to labor activism resulted in organizing drives and waves of strikes. The slowdown strike campaign of 1936 and 1937 run by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (including the infamous Flint strike that began in December 1936, an event that surely must have influenced WXYZ staff) also raised questions about whether the federal government should mediate labor/capital conflicts.<sup>11</sup> Even after Roosevelt's successful reelection in 1936, a new slate of New Deal programs and the controversy over his attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court kept debates over the size and scope of the federal government in the national spotlight (Leuchtenburg 231–51; McElvaine 264–305). Moreover, the success of politicians such as Huey Long and Father Coughlin during the first half of the 1930s demonstrated the popularity of solutions to the Great Depression that appealed to older American traditions of individualism and community, but that also took on a rhetoric of outsider status (Brinkley 143–68). With its similar focus on the individual's ability to effect social change, *The Green Hornet* addressed issues of national community through its focus on the state of civic institutions.

During this period of extended crisis, popular cultural forms engaged with these cultural anxieties and offered resolutions to social problems that competed with the New Deal's philosophy of government intervention. *The Green Hornet* represents one example of these alternative discourses, as the central organizing feature of the program is its profound lack of faith in civic and governmental institutions, which the series portrays as all incredibly corrupt. The program directly links crime to the failure of public and private officials to perform their jobs and be accountable for their performance. Within a dysfunctional body politic, administrators are corrupt and the police are helpless. A disproportionate number of crimes committed in the series involve graft, corruption, racketeering, and blackmail and often they are perpetrated by public officials. For example, in "Gas Gets the Blood," the Green Hornet exposes a political crook who economized on materials in a tunnel construction job to get kickbacks (episode 337); in "Not a Drop Worth Drinking," members of the city administration bribe a chemist to fake a report saying the water supply was contaminated so the officials could collect graft money from contracts for a new water system (episode 339); in "Charity Takes It on the Chin," the head of a special welfare office embezzles funds earmarked for relief (episode 347). In *The Green Hornet*, any official will betray the trust society has put in him or her.<sup>12</sup>

*The Green Hornet's* focus on civic corruption and criminality is an example of the ways in which social debates around the state's authority were being enacted in popular culture. At the core of debates around New Deal programs were assumptions about the proper extent of federal regulatory authority and how a state should function. Questions about a state's ability to perform properly were connected to questions about its right to regulate. Because the state's chief function is to maintain order, its ability to do so and the means by which it accomplishes that goal define whether a state is functioning properly. As such, the



government used popular culture to respond to events such as high-profile crime sprees that challenged its authority. The FBI and other agencies simultaneously attempted to apprehend criminals while also presenting themselves as representatives of an honest, interventionist state. Coverage in newspapers, radio, and newsreels as well as fictional representations meant that policy choices were being enacted in popular culture as a means of securing consent for the state (Potter 4). But beyond simple publicity, Claire Potter suggests, "[t]he figures of the policeman and the criminal were also deeply political, discursive locations for exploring the relationship between the state and citizen" (4).

In this context, when *The Green Hornet* repeatedly challenged governmental claims to moral state authority by depicting completely corrupt civic institutions, it was essentially arguing against the expansion of federal power. Indeed, in light of this civic decay, *The Green Hornet* regards attempts at government regulation to be worthless or even dangerous. In one example the show explicitly connects the sources of public corruption with attempts to regulate industry. The plot synopsis for "Appeal from Extortion" reads, "Britt Reid as Green Hornet protects the life of a businessman when a dictatorial state law allows a corrupt politician to use his office for extortion. State insurance law allows for state regulation of insurance companies with irregular business practices" (episode 437, 1). During this episode, Reid expressed to Kato the dangers posed by attempts by voters to reform and regulate business: "THE TROUBLE WITH THE PUBLIC IS THEY TRY TO LOCK THE BARN DOOR AFTER THE HORSE IS OUT! Well now it's too late" (episode 437, 13).<sup>13</sup> By depicting legitimate avenues of achieving social change, such as voting or government regulation, as ineffectual or counterproductive, *The Green Hornet* challenged a position that supported government regulation as a means of redressing social ills while also advancing the argument that individual action, not collective action, is the best way to achieve those goals.

If, for *The Green Hornet*, the complete corruption of civic institutions necessitated individual solutions to social problems, then the character of Britt Reid provided an example of how the failure of public institutions made operating outside of legal boundaries necessary. In some ways Reid appears as the pinnacle of participation within a bourgeois public sphere. He is wealthy, educated, and the publisher of the *Daily Sentinel*. Reid's status places him in a position where he has a great deal of influence on the discussion of matters of social importance. However, despite his position, Reid's power has only a limited effect on corruption. According to the show, Reid creates the Green Hornet because of his frustration with the inability of the state to convict criminals. The show's opening narration describes the Green Hornet's origins:

Britt Reid was the happy go lucky young millionaire and was the manager of his father's newspaper, *The Sentinel*. Its reporting staff brought him many unpublished stories concerning lawbreakers within the

law, who could not be reached through the courts. To mete out justice where the law could not act, he secretly created the character of the Green Hornet! In this role he was able to avoid legal red tape and strike at the source of unfair dealings. Because of the manner in which he operated, both the police department and the underworld as well as his own newspaper sought the Green Hornet. Orders were, "Dead or Alive, Get the Green Hornet." (Episode 53, 1)

The themes of rampant corruption unchecked by law enforcement directly challenged the claims made by government organizations and perhaps contributed to one of the enduring rumors about the show, that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover objected to the tag line "He hunts the biggest of all game! Public enemies that even the G-men cannot reach!" The replacement line continued the sentiment, but less explicitly: "He hunts the biggest of all game! Public enemies who try to destroy our America" (Dunning 299). However, the Green Hornet himself continued to remain at large, hunted by the police and criminals alike.

*The Green Hornet* repeatedly emphasizes the extralegal aspects of the Hornet's actions, which it deems necessary to gather enough proof to convict the criminals. Frequently the Hornet takes credit for crimes he did not commit, giving the police false leads in order to prevent them from interfering with his own plans. Very often these investigations involve muscling in on extortionists' rackets, gaining information on the scheme, then tricking the criminals into double-crossing themselves, facilitating their capture. In the episode "Katz with Nine Lives" (episode 729), one of many examples, *The Green Hornet* demands a cut of the payoff in a bribery scheme involving faked auto accidents and phony injuries. He claims to one partner that the other has sold him out. Then, with the first criminal hidden but listening to the conversation, the Hornet convinces the second criminal that the first has already turned on him. The criminals' willingness to betray one another allows the Hornet to gather enough evidence for a conviction, use his knockout gas to ensure they do not escape, and then make an anonymous tip to the police. Importantly, the Hornet is never exonerated or cleared of any of the charges against him; instead, they continue to mount with each episode, a point the program foregrounds with a concluding motif. The program's ending narration features a newsboy shouting a typical "Extra! Extra!" followed by the conclusion of the episode in headline form. Very often the final words the listener hears are "Green Hornet still at large!" or "Police still seek Green Hornet!"

### **The Green Hornet and Kato: Invoking the Oriental "Other"**

While vigilante heroes were not uncommon during the 1930s, *The Green Hornet* is significant for its use of racial difference to structure the hero's movement outside of mainstream society.<sup>14</sup> Racial archetypes played a central role in allow-



ing the heroes of radio programs to negotiate a double identity in both "legitimate" and "criminal" public spheres, even when it seems as if the latter has supplanted the former. As Jason Loviglio has shown in his analysis of *The Shadow*, radio in the 1930s was responding to a matrix of anxieties surrounding the perception of a collapse of distinctions between East and West, public and private, and high and low culture. Within this racial imaginary, Orientalist archetypes were mobilized both as external threats to the social order and as the source of power that the hero draws on in "restoring a provisional order on this encoded, shadowy, noisy world" (Loviglio 322).<sup>15</sup> But in either scenario, radio uses racial fantasy of the Oriental as a "complex site on which the anxieties of the U.S. nation state have been figured" (Lowe 4).

Edward Said's now familiar discussion of Orientalism defines it as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient." This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is a whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasions when that particular entity "The Orient" is in question (3). Said's formulation considers Orientalist discourses not simply as a way of seeing or categorizing but as the use of particular types of representations to discursively manage and control cultural elements. One of the strongest elements of Orientalist representational strategies is the "yellow peril." The long tradition of yellow peril discourses identifies an Oriental figure with immense, unknowable power. John Dower defines the essence of the yellow peril as "Asian mastery of Western knowledge and technique," access to "mysterious powers" and "obscure and dreadful things," and "mobilization of the yellow horde" (Dower, *War* 159). Referencing Orientalist themes of the yellow peril, *The Green Hornet's* representational strategies allowed Reid to draw upon the power, support, and knowledge of the Orient to rectify problems that cannot be solved within the law.

By invoking the idea of the yellow peril, *The Green Hornet* literally and figuratively domesticates the power of the Oriental to structure its own ideological position. In his study of Orientalism in popular culture, Robert Lee suggests that yellowface representations define Asians against the white norm, marking the Oriental as "indubitably alien" and a "contaminating element" (Lee 2). In the home, Lee continues, the presence of Oriental domestics indicates destabilized domestic relations in terms of sexuality and labor (83–105).<sup>16</sup> But how does the influence of the Oriental on the domestic (both familial and national) change when, as in *The Green Hornet*, you have a homosocial domestic relationship defined against a corrupt or otherwise dangerous outside world? There is also a long history in popular culture of an Asian male acting as a surrogate parent to a white child. In this relationship, the Asian paternal presence endows the child with special powers, which are then used to defend the father or other, weaker, Asian figures (Hamamoto 6–10; Chang). Falling within this tradition, *The Green*

*Hornet* elides ideas of the familial domestic with the national domestic, reverses the terms of Orientalist fear of an "other," and uses it as a source of power.

Kato's dual function as domestic servant and crime-fighting sidekick encapsulates the show's racial logic, allowing Reid to symbolically leave and reenter the national community as part of every show. Kato quite literally performs all the necessary tasks that allow Reid to operate within the public sphere, both as a newspaper publisher and as a dispenser of vigilante justice. Kato is Reid's valet. He cooks the meals, cleans the house, and acts as chauffeur. However, his duties extend beyond domestic tasks and also facilitate Reid's entrance into a parallel criminal sphere. Kato is a skilled driver and the mechanic who maintains "Black Beauty," the Green Hornet's car. A college graduate, Kato is also a master chemist and responsible for the Green Hornet's signature weapon, a gun loaded with knockout gas. The gas, of course, is based on secret Oriental ingredients found in Chinatown shops.<sup>17</sup> The show's narrative of vigilante justice turns, week after week, on Reid's movement back and forth between legitimate and criminal public spheres and his successful bridging of the cultural codes of each. Lauren Berlant has argued that in the United States cultural legitimacy derives from the privilege to suppress and protect the body as the abstract subject within the public sphere. A measure of women's access to the public sphere is through their ability to suppress the signifiers of their own racialized and gendered bodies. She writes, "One of the ways a woman mimes the prophylaxis of citizenship is to do what we might call 'code crossing.' This involves borrowing the corporeal logic of an other, or a fantasy of that logic, and adopting it as a prosthesis" (200). Reid takes the ability to selectively suppress the body one step further. In his role as newspaper editor, he utilizes the privilege his class, race, and gender status provides. However, when these reach their limits because of corruption within the public sphere, Reid turns to a fantasy Oriental body to facilitate his movement into the criminal sphere.

Reid's "code crossing" is accomplished through his adoption of a new identity as the Green Hornet. Elaine Chang has suggested that "recent history offers green as the most recognized and serviceable multipurpose signifier for human (oid) 'otherness'" (292). Referencing Gumby, Kermit the Frog, and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Chang describes the process whereby ethnic, racial, and cultural signifiers are cobbled together and "marshaled, precisely in their capacity as free-floating and interchangeable signifiers, toward old and new mythologies of identity and difference, or insiders and outsiders" (296). In a similar way, by passing Reid's white body through a domestic relationship with a "yellowface" Oriental, its new, green manifestation is now endowed with "mysterious" powers that enable him to cleanse the corruption within the national domestic. As an Orientalist fantasy, Kato has access to mysterious powers, powers untouched by the contamination of membership in the national body politic. The multiple, even contradictory elements within Orientalist discourses

allow the show to mobilize a variety of racial signifiers in this colorization process. Moreover, Reid's identity as the Hornet also allows the show to disavow his privileged subject position as he reenters into the public sphere unencumbered by precisely the white male privilege that allows "legitimate" (although for Reid powerless) access. The white body thus retains its ultimate authority in the public sphere, the ability to make the body signify "everything and nothing" (Dyer 3).

However, if the show sees Kato's identity as a source of power that can be used to reassert order in the public sphere, it also takes steps to contain that power by using other common Orientalist stereotypes. These function to assure the listener that the threat of the Oriental would never supplant the white characters (and by extension, white society) it helps to define and support. Like minstrelsy, there is a long tradition of Orientalist representations of Asian characters in popular culture that the producers and audiences drew upon as a type of cultural shorthand. Kato fits into the pattern of Asian characters depicted as houseboys and gardeners. During the 1930s Mr. Moto and Charlie Chan served as counterpoints to the evil Dr. Fu Manchu and provided a series of associations through which audiences could interpret Kato in a nonthreatening manner.<sup>18</sup> Like those characters, Kato manifests many typical Orientalist characteristics. The most readily apparent are Kato's scripted pidgin-English speech patterns. Despite his education, Kato always speaks haltingly, using improper grammar and sentence syntax. He inevitably refers to Reid as "Missa Britt," unable to pronounce *r's*. In addition, *The Green Hornet* relentlessly stresses Kato's devotion to Reid, always referring to him as "loyal valet," "faithful valet," or "the only living creature to know Reid's secret."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the show foregrounds the danger caused by that faith, which created tension in the show by appealing to the public's anxiety over whether Asians could be trusted. A typical example of where the show elaborately draws attention to the danger posed by Kato's knowledge of Reid's identity comes in episode 53. The narrator states: "Britt Reid was followed by Kato, the only living creature who knew the grim secret that meant death to the Green Hornet,—to Britt Reid—if it ever became known" (10). Kato's loyalty, when combined with his skill and intelligence, provided a model of the domesticated yellow peril, one with characteristics that are both "childlike and genius," but with the threat diminished (Dower 157).

### *The Green Hornet and World War II: Changing Threats, Changing Identities*

The Orientalist representational modes employed by *The Green Hornet* do not simply comment on the domestic dynamics of the United States; they were also intricately intertwined with the relationship between Western and Asian nations. Faced with increasing Japanese militarism and a negative public opinion of

Japan within the United States, *The Green Hornet* fundamentally changed its ideological address. The program continued to use Orientalist modes of "understanding" Asia and Asians to "explain" world events to the American people, but it was put in a position where real-world events ousted the power of the representations to manage them. In response, the show altered its strategies of representing Kato and its ideological position regarding state power. These changes were part of the process through which race and nationhood were renegotiated as the country moved toward World War II. A reconfigured Orientalism helps to explain the persistence of racial stereotypes about the Japanese within the United States, even as conflict grew increasingly likely, as well as how those same Orientalist tropes could be reworked, once the country entered World War II, to allow certain Asian groups to be viewed as "like us" while others could be labeled evil and "less than human."

During the 1930s and 1940s American public opinion of Japan and China underwent a complete reversal. At first Asian countries were merged into a single Oriental entity in the public consciousness. Among the few distinctions that were made, Americans viewed Japan as the most Western of Asian countries, while yellow peril discourses were generally applied to the Chinese (Dower, *War* 10; Hunt 140). The United States maintained an isolationist foreign policy, and except for periods of open military conflict, there was very little public consciousness of events occurring in Asia (Hauser). In 1931 the Manchurian incident first forced Americans to begin to engage with notions of differences between Asian countries. In 1934 Pearl S. Buck's book *The Good Earth* (later made into a movie) created a powerful representation of the Chinese as dignified and hard working, humanizing them considerably (Isacs 155–58). The efforts of interventionist publishers such as Henry Luce also focused attention on Sino-Japanese conflicts (Gregory 5). Indeed, studies of newspapers' attitudes toward Japan and China linked the decidedly unfriendly attitudes toward Japan and the somewhat more friendly attitudes toward China to the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries (Wright and Nelson 47). By the end of the decade Japan alone assumed the mantle of yellow peril stereotypes.

During the show's first seasons *The Green Hornet* foregrounds Kato's Japanese identity. His position as valet is inseparable from his identity as a Japanese. By episode 8, broadcast in late February 1936, Kato is referred to as Reid's "faithful Jap valet," and the three words were often repeated as a single stock phrase. Not only did a Japanese identity allow the show to draw upon Orientalist stereotypes, but it allowed *The Green Hornet* to draw on particular Japanese stereotypes of loyalty and industriousness. Japan's reputation as the most civilized of the Asian countries allowed the program to combine tropes of the inscrutable butler, the mechanical genius, and the implicit threat of the "other" within one character.

By the end of the 1930s negative connotations associated with Japan likely influenced the show's producers to consider Kato's Japanese identity a liability

in their quest for the broadest possible appeal and for attractive characters. Public opinion in the United States began to turn against Japan when that country attacked China in July 1937. Widespread international condemnation followed the Japanese bombing of civilians in September 1937 and news of atrocities committed during the "rape of Nanking," which occurred after the capture of the city in November. A month later the Japanese sank the US gunboat *Panang*, again increasing the profile of the Asian conflict in the United States (Borg 390). During this period newspaper coverage of the events in China increased substantially. Among newspaper editorials, support for the Chinese reached a two-year peak in early February 1938, while America's opinion of Japan was at its lowest between the months of August and March (Wright and Nelson 48). Thus at the point where awareness of Japanese militarism was rising and public opinion of the Japanese was decreasing, Kato lost his Japanese identity. Beginning with episode 203, broadcast on 18 January 1938, Kato began to be referred to as simply the "faithful valet." For the next month Kato was referred to as both "Japanese valet" and "faithful valet," with references to the Japanese identity in the interlude sheet but not the script proper (episodes 208 and 212). By late February, however, his Japanese identity had completely disappeared.

*The Green Hornet* could not erase Kato's Asian identity completely because its racial associations were too important to the program's narrative structure. This limbo created an ambivalence in the show's address and treatment of Kato. At times it seems as if the program wants to eliminate any references to Kato's Asian identity, such as in an August 1939 episode, where Kato is identified as an "Oriental valet," but curiously "Oriental" is crossed out in the script (episode 360, 16). However, Orientalist modes of representation only increased in importance as the show attempted to manage anxieties caused by Japanese aggression. In a temporary solution, the program simply decided to ignore the issue and draw upon stereotypes of undifferentiated Orientalness. For example, "The Trapped Witness," (episode 422), broadcast in February 1940, builds on stereotypes of Asian secretiveness and resistance to outsiders. In this episode the Hornet uses Kato to get information that he, as a Caucasian, would not be able to obtain. States Reid: "You're an oriental, Kato, get down to that restaurant and ask a lot of questions! Those Chinese may not tell all they know to the police but they'll have confidence in you! FIND OUT WHO THAT THIRD WITNESS IS!"<sup>20</sup> Despite such advantages, the prospect of a universal Oriental identity also posed problems. Significantly, the idea of Asian unity was uncomfortably close to pan-Asiatic Japanese propaganda regarding the "East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (Dower 6). Fortunately, the show found a way out of this dilemma: it made Kato Filipino.

Like his earlier Japanese identity, Kato's new Filipino identity allowed *The Green Hornet* to apply specific cultural traits that responded to the set of anxieties conjured by US-Japanese tensions. By 1941, when many in the United States

believed that involvement in the war was inevitable, Kato, still an Orientalist fantasy, began to be explicitly identified as a Filipino. By affixing a specific ethnic identity, Kato's Filipino status allowed the show to maintain its Orientalist modes of representation without the disquieting connotations of the Japanese co-prosperity sphere. An August 1941 episode, "Murder in Chinatown," is particularly revealing of the way the show attempted to manage the contradiction involved in Orientalist stereotypes of Asiatic unity and national identity. When the white reporter and police officer are not able to get any information on a killing that occurred in Chinatown, Kato is called in. Discussing their failure, Kato says, "Chinese not like talk to stranger," but then proceeds to visit Hop Sing, the Chinese man framed for the crime. The audience is left to assume that Kato's Asian identity automatically grants him familiarity with other Asian cultures. Talking with Hop Sing, Kato appeals to their shared Asian identity: "I am Filipino, velly close with Chinese. Mebbe you tell me, yes" (episode 519).<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the murderers in this episode are the Purple Dragon Society, Chinese gangsters. Yet they are only operating as a front for American mobsters. Examples such as this support Dower's suggestion that Orientalist stereotypes led to an underestimation of Japanese military power (Dower, 94–111; Hunt 138–45). An Asian gang does not constitute a threat. Any actions they take are confined to an insular Asian community and thus are not the concern of the larger American society. It becomes a threat only as an extension of the power of American organized crime.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor shattered the Orientalist stereotypes of incompetence and forced a reconceptualization of American ways of understanding Asian nations, a change reflected in *The Green Hornet*. As John Dower has shown, American outrage at the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was influenced in part by white supremacist sentiments, placing the conflict in the context of a race war against all of Asia (*War* 161). At this moment Kato's Filipino identity increased in importance because it allowed the show to disseminate propaganda messages that attempted to manage this crisis. During the war, many programs integrated propaganda messages into their plot structures voluntarily, under the direction of the Office of War Information (OWI) (Horten 162).<sup>22</sup> After the United States entered World War II, *The Green Hornet* continued to be concerned with threats to the body politic, but its basic orientation shifted as the threats changed from internal to external in origin. Throughout the war, but especially during the first six months of 1942, *The Green Hornet*'s focus on public corruption and organized crime was combined with plots addressing the dangers of saboteurs and blackmail for military secrets. The opening narration was altered, now declaring: "With the help of his faithful Filipino valet Kato, Britt Reid, daring young publisher matches wits with racketeers and saboteurs. Risking his life that criminals and enemy spies may feel the weight of the law by the sting of the Green Hornet" (episode 572). Like earlier shows, the plot fre-

quently turned on issues of identity; however, these were now magnified as the show addressed public anxieties about the ability to determine loyalty. In one typical example, "The Corpse That Wasn't There," the Green Hornet and Kato foil the attempts of German agents to sneak a saboteur into a defense factory by impersonating a man with a clean record (episode 566).

However, meeting the OWI's demands to integrate war messages into programs forced *The Green Hornet* to fundamentally restructure its ideological address, demonstrating a changing relationship between race and nation. *The Green Hornet* began by openly championing the government in the most direct way possible for a radio program, commercial sponsorship. Often broadcast on a sustaining basis, the show now opened with this solemn request: "In the interest of our government, the King-Trendle Broadcasting Corporation ask you to accept Uncle Sam as sponsor of the Green Hornet program" (episode 572). During a number of programs, such as "Invasion Plans for Victory," the show requested that its listeners buy war bonds (episode 556). In essence, *The Green Hornet* asked its listeners to view the United States government as they would any other company and purchase its products. Thus while it is not surprising that the program moderated its earlier antigovernment tone during the war (although it never fully stopped), the fact that the show actively became an agent of the government demonstrates the changes in both the show's ideological position and the political climate.<sup>23</sup>

While many network radio shows integrated war messages into their plots, *The Green Hornet's* racial logic of a non-Japanese Asian fighting against infiltration countered US fears of an Eastern race war against the West. Simultaneously, it authorized a race war against Japan. Kato's role in these propaganda messages, like the role occupied by Filipino characters in World War II combat films, served to further delineate "good" Asians from "bad."<sup>24</sup> A non-Japanese ally was necessary to counter the same Orientalist stereotypes that conflated all Asians. It also countered fears of an Asian "yellow horde" uniting to attack the West. Like the figures of African-American and Japanese-American soldiers, Kato's presence also allowed the disavowal of racist practices in American society. The image of Filipino soldiers fighting alongside American at Corregidor only strengthened these types of associations and allowed the relationship between Reid and Kato to reinforce such ideas in the listeners' minds.<sup>25</sup>

### Radio and Cultural Constructions of Race, Nation, and Sensory Experience

The most striking thing about *The Green Hornet's* use of Orientalist stereotypes is that despite their seeming banality, they were crucial to the program's narrative structure. The show's mobilization of racial categories to mark Reid and facilitate his movement outside of the "legitimate" public sphere, as well as to ease anx-

### A Dark (ened) Figure on the Airwaves

eties about growing Japanese militarism, demonstrates the link between constructions of race and nation. *The Green Hornet* serves as an example of Lisa Lowe's suggestion that "[t]hroughout the twentieth century, the figure of the Asian immigrant has served as a 'screen,' a phantasmatic site, on which the nation projects a series of condensed, complicated anxieties regarding external and internal threats to the mutable coherence of the national body" (18). Initially, as *The Green Hornet* entered debates about the role of the state and the status of the national body politic, the program drew on racial modes of representation, because as an Asian, Kato was, by definition, within yet outside the nation.<sup>26</sup> For a program concerned about civic corruption, Orientalist fantasies of "mysterious powers" provided a useful device to address real fears about how the government was responding to the Great Depression. Later, as events overran these representational strategies, *The Green Hornet* was able to use a reconfigured Orientalism to respond to the military threat posed by Japan and internal fears about distinguishing ally from enemy. In both cases, the solution to cultural anxieties lay in invoking an Orientalist fantasy: first of a domesticated yellow peril, later of an Asian "like us" who fights the Japanese. But while it is significant that a popular cultural text used race as a way to address cultural anxieties, more important are the ways in which the same general modes of racial signification could operate to fill a variety of ideological roles. Their malleability allowed the show to use race as a flexible tool that adjusted to changing situations. While this functioned to shore up notions that "our" national community is stable, well defined, and natural while "they" are constantly changing, slippery, and unreliable, it also demonstrates how notions of race and identity, far from being natural and static, are culturally determined and linked to a specific social context. Finally, the ease with which the show could alter racial characters forces us to reevaluate the means through which racial identity is perceived through the senses.

If the cultural significance of *The Green Hornet's* Orientalist modes of representations comes from the cultural context of their production and consumption, this also informs our understanding of the relationship between racial formation, radio, and sensory experience. Radio's "dramatic economy"—its "greatest strength," according to Rudolf Arnheim—lies in the fact that radio does not have to physically account for the presence of its characters: "the art of radio drama sets 'existence' very clearly in relation to artistic function: one only exists as long as one has a function" (156). What, then, is the aesthetic function that drives the existence of racialized representations on radio? On radio, race becomes reduced to pure sign. Dialect and its cultural references are merged with narrative forms and narration to construct ways of hearing race without seeing bodies that are racially marked. As Michele Hilmes has suggested, the threat generated by radio's potential to escape visual overdetermination necessitated an "endlessly circulating and performing structured site of social and cultural norms—all through language, dialect, and carefully selected aural context"

(*Radio 21*). However, operating in an arena where skin color is not necessarily linked to racial identification, aural markers of racial difference are denied the protective cover of a physical body to refer to and use to naturalize themselves, thereby drawing attention to their cultural specificity. Thus even as these markers struggle to maintain the social divisions they signify, they expose their own cultural construction, as well as the social construction of all sensory experience. As Ruth Benedict said of Franz Boas: "He returned [from the Arctic] with an abiding conviction that if we are to understand human behavior we must know as much about the eye that sees as about the object seen. And he understood once and for all that the eye that sees is no mere physical organ but a means of perception conditioned by the tradition in which its possessor has been reared" (qtd. in Jacobson 10). Ultimately, then, we might make the same suggestion for future investigations into aural constructions of race on radio and account for the ear that hears as well as the object heard.

## Notes

1. The first 260 episodes of *The Green Hornet* were untitled and were only given a show number. Shows produced after 9 Aug. 1938 had titles as well as numbers. Scripts referred to are in the Fran Striker Script Collection, Lockwood Memorial Library, State University of New York at Buffalo.
2. There is a growing literature on the history of radio from the 1920s through the 1940s. See, for example, Douglas, *Listening In*; Hiltner, *Radio, Hollywood*; Horren; McChesney; Sage; Smulyan. See also Barnouw (1968, 1966). Smulyan and McChesney, in particular, chart the process through which programming choice and quality were defined through commercial terms. So while network radio forms continued to evolve throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, the economic relationships and structures within which those programs were produced remained fairly static.
3. For an excellent discussion of soap opera serial form, see Allen.
4. For the role of the producer in another medium during this era, see Thomas Schatz's work on David O. Selznick.
5. WXYZ later affiliated with NBC Blue but continued to be an independent producer of programming.
6. Recent questions about the status of the television text are equally relevant to network radio shows. Is a text a single show, a season, the entire run? Serialized programming forms, repeats, and syndication all complicate our understanding of how television programs work. Intertextuality increases those difficulties. Coverage in other media or film/television crossovers are but a few examples. *The Green Hornet* is no exception. While I am bracketing the radio program for analysis, we cannot discard other Green Hornet texts that existed alongside it. A thirteen-episode Green Hornet film serial was produced by Universal Studios in 1940. Fran Striker wrote several Green Hornet pulp novels, and a Green Hornet comic book ran from 1940 to 1948 (the comic book was especially anti-Japanese during the war). The multiplicity of Green Hornet texts surely influenced the ways in which people listened to the radio program.
7. For a discussion of the relationship between *The Lone Ranger*, *The Green Hornet*, and *Challenge of the Yukon*, see Schwartz and Keimel 77-80. *The Lone Ranger* and *The Green Hornet* also shared mythology as well as genealogy. Supposedly the Green Hornet was a blood relative of the Lone Ranger. The Lone Ranger had raised Britt's father, Dan, because he was his nephew, making Britt Reid his grandnephew.

## A Dark(ned) Figure on the Airwaves

8. There is some discrepancy about the number of shows actually written by Striker. While he is given official credit for at least the first five years, a biography written by his son contends that actually scripting the show was a joint effort among the WXYZ writing staff (Striker Jr. 73-74).
9. For an introduction to genre analysis and television, which functions in a similar way, see Feuer.
10. While audiences may view these resolutions with varying degrees of skepticism, as numerous reception studies have suggested, it is clear that the producers and writers of *The Green Hornet* intended it to do this kind of ideological work. For some useful introductions to reception studies see, for example, Arg; Morley; Silverstone.
11. The Flint strike has particular resonance here not only for its proximity to WXYZ but also as a focal point for debates surrounding the role of the government. The refusal of Michigan governor Frank Murphy to use National Guard troops to evict the workers certainly focused conservative fears while also embodying worker hopes for governmental aid (which would remain equally elusive).
12. This show also serves as an example of the show's conservative position regarding social welfare. At one point Britt Reid states: "For a city of our size, more money is being spent on relief than conditions warrant."
13. *The Green Hornet* was not alone in voicing skepticism about the wisdom of the mass public. As Jason Loviglio has shown in his examination of *The Shadow*, there was considerable cultural anxiety during this period about the crises of the public sphere generated by the "loss of control over the means of communication, information and entertainment" (Loviglio 322).
14. On vigilante heroes, see, for example, Warren Susman's discussion of pulp fiction characters in this period (18-20).
15. There are a number of similarities between Lamont Cranston's mastery of cultural codes as he moves between private and public spheres and Reid's movement between legitimate and criminal public spheres. Both maintain upper-class social positions. Both draw upon mysterious Oriental powers. Ironically, however, it is the failure of legitimate communications technologies in Reid's world that prefigures his incarnation as the Green Hornet, whereas the Shadow's power stems from his control over these modern means of communication (Loviglio 321-25). Moreover, *The Shadow* is obsessed with the threat of "alien contamination" of the public sphere whereas in *The Green Hornet* it is already so thoroughly contaminated that one version of the Oriental "other" must be brought into the private domestic space in order to fight it.
16. Lee makes an argument based on the coming of domesticity to the western frontier in the late 1800s. However, given the self-conscious link *The Green Hornet* makes to the frontier through the bloodline of the Lone Ranger, the metaphor seems appropriate.
17. See for example, *The Green Hornet* episode 56. In this episode, Reid is concerned about a scientist who has found the formula for the knockout gas, and sends Kato out to follow him. Kato reports back: "Scientist Hainsworth thinks he has found formula of the Green Hornet's knockout gas." Reid responds: "I know you told me that he was searching the drug stores in the oriental section of the city for certain drugs chemicals, but I didn't think he'd FIND THE SECRET SO SOON" (13).
18. For sources on Fu Manchu see Dower, *War* 157-60, 345 n. 16; Lee 113-17. For other discussions of Asian representations in popular culture, including Fu Manchu, see Choy; Lee; Marchetti; Oehling; Isaacs; and Hamamoto.
19. There are, of course, homosocial elements to the Reid-Kato relationship that bear investigation. Citing literary critic Eve Sedgwick, Lee suggests it is in the boundary of the frontier that the register of the homosocial is expressed: "Although the homosocial is constituted by that which is not sexual and is distinguished from the homosexual it does not exist independently of the erotic but rather is deeply infused with desire" (87). *The Green Hornet* essentially transferred the western setting of *The Lone Ranger* to a contemporary urban set-

ting. Reid, Axelrod, and Kato live together in the homosocial world of the Reid mansion.

Axelrod was supposedly contracted by Reid's father to act as a bodyguard—to guard, we ask, from what? Kato supplies the domestic labor, both cleaning and preparing the meals, but also maintaining the crime-fighting equipment of the Green Hornet. In spite of his playboy reputation, Reid does not date women. The listener may well assume that he finds nocturnal crime fighting with Kato more enjoyable than pursuing women. Given Kato's complete competence at both domestic tasks and his public role as superhero sidekick, it seems he is able to serve all of Reid's needs. The listener can speculate as to what other unspoken roles Kato might play. Reid and Kato carry on a secret and illicit relationship without the knowledge of their chaplaine. Indeed, there are repeated instances when Reid and Kato fret because they worry their nocturnal activities will raise the suspicions of Axelrod. See Marchetti for the dangers implied by interracial sexual relations.

20. Similar to other episodes, the murder in question is the result of lack of payment in a "cigar store racket."

21. Ironically, the name Hop Sing later was taken by the creators of *Bonanza* for the Asian houseboy character (Hamamoto 7, 33–39).

22. For more on the role of radio in broadcasting propaganda and managing cultural conflicts, particularly around race, during World War II, see Douglas, Himes, *Radio* 230–70; Horton, Savage, and Meckiffe and Murray.

23. Similarly, by 1948 the Green Hornet had begun to operate as an agent of the police commissioner, with whom he has shared his secret identity. By this point the program had completely reversed its prior position and now acted as an agent of the state (episode 84). I was not able to discover the exact date that this agreement was reached only that it had occurred by 1948. The television series takes this even further. In it the secret state approval is highlighted in the title sequence. "Another challenge for the Green Hornet, his aide Kato, and their rolling arsenal The Black Beauty! On police records a wanted criminal, the Green Hornet is really Brit Reid, owner-publisher of the Daily Sentinel. His dual identity known only to his secretary and to the District Attorney" (Van Hise 12).

24. For examples of the role of Filipinos in World War II combat films, see Slotkin 324 and Basinger 45. See Dower (*War, Race*) for examples of racial attacks on Japanese and Japanese Americans during the war. This racial logic is true of other Green Hornet media as well, even more explicit when in a visual medium. In one example, a Green Hornet comic book from 1944, titled "Unwelcome Cargo," the cover art features the Green Hornet and Kato boarding a ship at dock. The ship's crane is unloading a Patton tank. The Green Hornet and Kato are shooting Asian figures who had taken over the ship. One of the Asians, peering out of a ventilation shaft, has a rising-sun bandana, and all have simian features.

25. See Meckiffe and Murray for more on the function of the discursive figure of the African-American soldier during World War II.

26. For more on Asians and on Asian Americans' status as within, yet outside the national community, see Lowe.

## Bibliography

- Allen, Robert. *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985.
- Ang, Ien. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Amheim, Rudolf. *Radio*. New York: Arno, 1971.
- Barnouw, Erik. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. 3 vol. New York: Oxford UP, 1966–70.
- Basinger, Jeanine. *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
- Berlant, Lauren. "National Brands/National Body: Initiation of Life." *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Ed. Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. 173–208.

## A Dark(ened) Figure on the Airwaves

- Bickel, Mary. *George W. Tenille*. New York: Exposition P, 1973.
- Borg, Dorothy. *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1933–1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stages of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964.
- Brinkley, Alan. *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*. New York: Vintage, 1982.
- Chang, Elaine. "Spaghetti Eastern: Mutating Mass Culture, Transforming Ethnicity." *Restoring Lily: National Identity and Global Culture*. Ed. Beverly Allen and Mary Russo. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 292–313.
- Choy, Christine. "Images of Asians in Film and Television." *Ethnic Images in American Film and Television*. Ed. Randall Miller. Philadelphia: Bloch Institute, 1978. 145–56.
- Dennings, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Douglas, Susan. *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899–1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.
- . *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. New York: Times, 1999.
- Dower, John. "Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures: World War II in Asia." *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II*. Ed. Lewis Enebery and Susan Hinsh. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. 169–201.
- . *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon, 1986.
- Dunning, John. *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Dyer, Richard. *White*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Ely, Melvin Patrick. *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon*. New York: Free, 1991.
- Feuer, Jane. "Genre Study and Television." *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. Ed. Robert C. Allen. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992. 138–60.
- Gregory, Ross. *America 1941: A Nation at the Crossroads*. New York: Free, 1989.
- Haendiges, Jerry. *Vintage Radio Log for the Green Hornet*. 17 Aug. 1998. 6 Aug. 1999. <http://www.oursite.com/logs/loge1005.htm>.
- Hamamoto, Darrell. *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994.
- Hauser, Ernest O. "News of the Far East in U.S. Dailies." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2.4 (1938): 651–58.
- Himes, Michele. *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- . *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1990.
- Horton, Gerhard Jakob. *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II*. Ph.D. Diss. U of California at Berkeley, 1994.
- Hunt, Michael H. *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.
- Isaacs, Harold. *Images of Asia: American Views of China and India, 1958*. New York: Harper, 1972.
- Jacobson, Matthew Fye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Retication and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Signatures of the Visible*. New York: Routledge, 1990. 9–34.
- . *The Political Unconscious/Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1983.
- Lee, Robert. *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999.
- Leuchtenburg, William. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1940*. New York: Harper, 1963.



- Longiglio, Jason. "The Shadow Meets the Phantom Public." *Fear Itself: Enemies Real and Imagined in American Culture*. Ed. Nancy Luriegnan Schultz. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1999. 313-30.
- Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996.
- Marchetti, Gina. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
- McChesney, Robert. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
- McElvaine, Robert. *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*. New York: Times, 1984.
- Meckle, Donald, and Matthew Murray. "Radio and the Black Soldier during World War II." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15.4 (1998): 337-59.
- Morley, David. *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Oehling, Richard. "Yellow Menace—Asian Images in American Film." *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups*. Ed. Randall Miller. Englewood, NJ: Ozer, 1980. 189-206.
- Osgood, Dick. *Wynzie Wonderland: An Unauthorized Biography of WXYZ Detroit*. Bowling Green, OH: Popular, 1981.
- Potter, Claire. *War on Crime: Bandits, G-Men, and the Politics of Mass Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1998.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1978.
- Salomonson, Terry. *A Radio Broadcast Log of the Drama Program The Green Hornet*. St. Louis, MO: Salomonson, 1990.
- Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999.
- Schatz, Thomas. *Genesis of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. New York: Pantheon, 1988.
- Schwartz, Jon D., and Robert C. Reinehr. *Handbook of Old-Time Radio: A Comprehensive Guide to Golden Age Radio Listening and Collecting*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1993.
- Silverstone, Roger. *Television and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Stokem, Richard. *Gungfelter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution P, 1994.
- Striker, Fran. "Part I: The Morphological Approach to Writing." *Creative Writing Workbook and the Morphological Approach to Plotting*. State University of New York at Buffalo. Lockwood Memorial Library. *Collection*. Lockwood Memorial Library. *Part II: Text. "Creative Writing Workbook and the Morphological Approach to Plotting."* YWCA course. Buffalo, NY, 1962. *Fran Striker Script Collection*. Lockwood Memorial Library. State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Striker, Fran Jr. *His Typewriter Grew Spurs: A Biography of Fran Striker—Writer, Rummernede, NJ: Quest, 1982.*
- Summers, Harrison B., ed. *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926-1956*. New York: Arno, 1971.
- Susman, Warren. *Culture and Commitment, 1929-1945*. New York: Braziller, 1978.
- Van Hise, James. *The Green Hornet Book*. Las Vegas: Pioneer, 1989.
- Wright, Quincy, and Carl J. Nelson. "American Attitudes toward Japan and China, 1937-1938." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3.1 (1939): 46-62.

## CHAPTER 13

### EXPATRIATE AMERICAN RADIO PROPAGANDISTS IN THE EMPLOY OF THE AXIS POWERS

William F. O'Connor

THE WORD *propaganda* HAS ITS ROOTS in religion. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV announced the establishment of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, one purpose of which was to regain through catechizing and other forms of proselytizing the lands lost to the Protestant Reformation. *Propaganda* eventually acquired other meanings, the ones with which contemporary laymen are familiar, and a close association with politics. Indeed, the words *political* and *propaganda* constitute a rather high-frequency collocation in present-day American English.

War provides the propagandist with employment and opportunities to take his or her art to a higher level of development through experimentation with new techniques and emerging media. In the years preceding the outbreak of hostilities between the Allies (Great Britain, the United States, and others) and Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan, and others), it became practicable to use the medium of radio in efforts to persuade foreign audiences of the legitimacy of one's cause. Once the conflict had begun, the medium could be employed to wage verbal and psychological warfare to supplement efforts made on the battlefield. The number of international radio stations operating in Europe stood at a paltry three in the 1930s. By the beginning of the next decade there were over forty such stations, with Germany being responsible for much of the growth (Wasburn 13).

The Third Reich clearly valued the power of radio. Joseph Goebbels, minister for propaganda, was keenly aware of the utility of the medium. Domestic