

Research in Brief

“The Story Is Only the Platter On Which the Personality Is Served”: The Debate Over Media Integrity on CBC Radio’s Literary Arts Programming, 1948–1985

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ABSTRACT *The early efforts of CBC Radio to promote Canadian literature through programs such as Canadian Short Stories and its successor, Anthology, gave rise to various issues related to media integrity, including the selection of content, the use of language, and the format of presentation. Even before Robert Weaver retired in 1985, the approach he developed in the 1950s gave way to a different philosophy of literary arts programming, one focusing less on the needs of CanLit and more on the contingencies of radio. As in other cases of textual migration across media, the ontological requirements of the destination medium eventually took precedence. The process by which this shift occurred is examined using the relatively unexplored papers of Weaver and Howard Engel and other documents.*

KEYWORDS *CBC; Literary arts programming*

RÉSUMÉ *Les premiers efforts de la part de CBC Radio pour promouvoir la littérature canadienne au moyen de programmes tels que Canadian Short Stories et son successeur, Anthology, ont soulevé diverses questions concernant l'intégrité des médias, y compris la sélection du contenu, l'usage de la langue et le format de présentation. L'approche développée dans les années 50 par Robert Weaver s'est vue supplanter, même avant sa retraite en 1985, par une philosophie différente envers la programmation en littérature, portant moins sur les besoins de la littérature canadienne et davantage sur ceux de la radio. Comme dans d'autres cas de transfert de texte d'un média à un autre, les besoins ontologiques du média destinataire ont fini par avoir la priorité. Cet article examine le processus par lequel cette transition a eu lieu en se fondant sur les papiers relativement inexplorés de Robert Weaver et de Howard Engel, ainsi que sur d'autres documents.*

MOTS CLÉS *CBC; Programmation en littérature*

The transfer of content originally or normally intended for one medium to another medium has often engendered debate over questions of media integrity, especially in

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the case of public institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which sees itself as playing an important cultural role. In the mid-1960s, for example, the question of whether the requirements for “good television” should prevail over traditional standards of objectivity in print journalism pitted the producers of *This Hour Has Seven Days* against CBC management. A lesser-known conflict over cross-media production involved the CBC Radio’s literary arts programming. Robert Weaver, who spearheaded the attempt to promote Canadian literature (CanLit) and poetry on radio, has been uniformly praised for his contribution to the rise of CanLit in the post-war period. Although Weaver would not have described the formative years of CBC Radio’s nurturing of literature as any kind of golden age, a celebratory narrative has arisen around his role.¹ What has generally been overlooked, however, is that from the outset his philosophy of literature on radio involved choices of selection and presentation that were criticized internally by both production staff and management, and were eventually displaced by a different set of options for advancing literature through radio. This article will argue that although various factors, such as audience numbers, contributed to this change, the shift was ultimately a matter of giving precedence to the ontology of radio.

Early studies of the movement of texts across media focused on the migration of books to film and films to television. But recent work has broadened this focus considerably. Keith Johnston (2011) has looked at how the structure and style of film trailers in Great Britain were altered by their use on commercial television, while J.P. Telotte and Gerald Duchovnay’s (2012) anthology, *Science Fiction Film, Television, and Adaptation*, is subtitled *Across the Screens* and includes a section on adaptations from television to film. Studies of newer forms of cross-media genres resulting from digitally based convergence include Ivar Erdal’s (2009) examination of the adaptation of journalistic content on the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK and Alexis Weedon, David Miller, Claudio Franco, David Moorhead, and Samantha Pearce’s (2014) study of new media forms, such as e-books and fan-produced digital books. An underlying theme of these studies is what happens to the integrity of the original content “when media collide” (Howells, 2002). The general finding is that the aims and characteristics of content in the originating medium give way sooner or later to principles governing the destination medium. The case of CBC Radio’s literary arts programming bears this finding out, but also suggests another possibility: that in the initial period of flux, a new but fleeting art form may appear.

Following the creation of the Third Programme in 1946, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) might have broadcast a complete symphony, but it did so in violation of normal listening habits. In the case of CBC Radio’s literary arts programming, integrity involved at least six considerations. First, there was the question of what kinds of literary content should be broadcast and in what proportions. Second, there was the issue of who should make decisions about content (e.g., an external literary elite or program producers). Third, there was the contentious matter of the extent to which the original language of a text should be considered inviolable. Fourth, there was a range of questions related to the format or manner of delivering the selected content. Fifth, there was the question of whether the emphasis should be on broadcasting lit-

erature or providing commentary on it. And finally, there was an overriding debate about the degree to which the repositioning of content was also a matter of its repurposing (e.g., to promote Canadian national identity). Between the late 1940s and the late 1970s, the answers to these questions were fundamentally altered to produce a new philosophy of literary arts programming at the CBC.

The first proposal for literary arts programming on Canadian radio was made by Gladstone Murray, the Canadian-born director of public relations for the BBC and later the first general manager of the CBC. In a report prepared for the federal government on the troubled situation in Canadian broadcasting, Murray (1933) suggested that “periodical reviews of new books, plays and films” should be part of talks programming. “Reviews of new books are of special importance,” he wrote, “in that, if acceptably and efficiently done, they will direct the reading of a large part of the public” (p. 20). While this idea fell on deaf ears, there were occasional talks about literature and poetry on Canadian radio, even before the CBC went on the air in November 1936, though they usually dealt with British novelists and poets. On February 4, 1932, for example, CNRO, a Canadian National Railway station in Ottawa, broadcast a 15-minute lecture on “T.S. Eliot and the Spirit of Modern Poetry” by University of Toronto professor G.W. Knight (Weir Fonds, Vol. 21, File 3). Fifteen years later, the CBC devoted an entire series of talks to famous authors, but all eighteen were still British.

E.K. Brown, a Canadian-born professor of English at Cornell University and one of Canada's earliest literary critics, offered an explanation for this bias in a talk on CBC radio on June 7, 1944. In “Our Neglect of Our Literature,” which was later published in the magazine *Canadians All*, Brown repeated the argument of his award-winning publication *On Canadian Poetry* (1943): that not much had changed since Archibald Lampman lamented the state of Canadian literature in a lecture to the Literary and Scientific Institute in Ottawa in 1891. Lampman had predicted that it would take two generations before Canadians, preoccupied with creating the material foundation of the nation, would become discriminating and appreciative enough as readers to support a national literature. “Well,” said Brown, “two generations have come and gone, or almost. What would the great poet say if he were alive today? Would he be satisfied with the quality of reading in Canada today?” Probably not, Brown told his listeners. Canadians remained too “practical”—they still did not take literature, especially Canadian literature, seriously enough; they did not “hunger” after it for aesthetic pleasure or regard it as “an interpretation of their lives”; and they continued to be “colonial” and insular as an audience, preferring British or American writers to Canadian authors and having no interest in writing about regions other than their own (Brown Fonds, Vol. 5).

Brown's bleak assessment was confirmed by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences—otherwise known as the Massey Commission or the Massey-Levesque Commission—which found that in 1948, English-language publishers issued only fourteen new works of fiction and thirty-five books of poetry and drama. As Roy MacSkimming (2003) points out, “that output was far lower than at the turn of the century or during the 1920s” (p. 24). Brown acknowledged that structural factors endemic to Canadian publishing were probably more to blame for this situation than any lingering colonialism on the part of readers. He also thought

that it might be possible to “lessen” these factors through measures such as the endowment of literary magazines, the establishment of literary fellowships, and the creation of university courses on Canadian literature. Ironically, given the medium of his remarks, he did not see a role for CBC Radio. But a decade before the creation of the Canada Council in 1957, the CBC’s Talks and Public Affairs department, headed by Neil Morrison, launched a series of programs aimed at promoting Canadian literary production.

Books for the Times, the first CBC effort to use literary content on a sustained basis, began as a fill-in program in the summer of 1946 and remained on the air as *Booktime* until the 1980s. Typically, it still relied on non-Canadian authors. But it was followed by *The Readers Take Over*, a half-hour program produced with the help of the Toronto Public Library on which Canadian authors discussed their books with selected readers. At the same time, the CBC’s French network started *La Chronique littéraire*, a weekly review of new French books in Canada and abroad. Although neither program provided an outlet for Canadian fiction, the department began airing *Canadian Short Stories* on the Trans Canada network in the fall of 1946. The show was organized on an experimental basis for the CBC by Ontario writer James Scott, and was without precedent in Britain or the United States. It was normally 15 minutes long, but was sometimes extended to an hour to accommodate longer submissions.

As these programs were taking shape, steps were also being taken to compensate for the fact that at this time, as Toronto critic Nathan Cohen pointed out two decades later, “criticism was scarce in our few journals of opinion, and virtually non-existent except on the most superficial level in our newspapers” (quoted in Edmonstone, 1977, p. 104). Critic Clyde Gilmour began a 15-minute program of movie reviews on the Trans Canada network; Gerald Pratley did the same on the Dominion network; and Cohen began reviewing theatre and ballet. Their success led the Talks and Public Affairs department to create *Critically Speaking* in the fall of 1948. A 30-minute national magazine of review, it was broadcast on Sundays on the Trans Canada network and featured regular film reviews by Gilmour and rotating reviewers for books, radio, and the performing arts.

Canadian Short Stories and *Critically Speaking* constituted an incipient literary public sphere on Canadian radio that bolstered the one in print, much in the same way the CBC’s forum programs—the *National Labour Forum*, *Farm Forum*, *Citizen’s Forum*, and *Servicemen’s Forum* (Faris, 1975; Klee, 1995; Romanow, 2005; Sandwell, 2012)—created a political public sphere in broadcasting. According to Jürgen Habermas (1989), it was the literary public sphere (*literarische Öffentlichkeit*) in print that facilitated, especially in France and Germany, the rise of a political public sphere (*politische Öffentlichkeit*) in the press. In the case of Canadian broadcasting, however, the literary public sphere lagged somewhat behind its political counterpart and remained the more fragile and imperiled of the two. It should be seen as encompassing the broadcasting of literary works and discussions related to those works—insofar as both provide a channel for freely expressing individual viewpoints on issues of public interest.

That CBC Radio was able to establish a literary public sphere of any consequence and durability in the postwar period, when Canadian literature itself was in the neglected state described by E.K. Brown, was owing almost entirely to the vision and drive

of Robert Weaver, whom Morrison hired in November 1948 just as *Critically Speaking* was preparing to go on the air. A 27-year-old graduate from the University of Toronto, Weaver was placed in charge of all of CBC Radio's English-language literary arts programming. Born in Niagara Falls, he worked in a bank for three years, entered the army in 1942, and studied English and philosophy at the university after the war. "If we were told almost nothing about Canadian writers," he later recalled, "we weren't much better off when it came to the Americans – or contemporary writers anywhere. So, impatiently, we founded the Modern Letters Club, and began to teach ourselves about modern writing" (Weaver, 1977a, p. 61). He wrote for the *Varsity*, helped to edit the *Undergrad*, and ended up at the CBC "purely by accident."

I'd done a bit of reviewing on a local Toronto radio program which was produced by Ross McLean. Ross told me there was a job coming up in what was then the Talks and Public Affairs department, so I came and applied. Much to my surprise, I ended up getting the job. I had thought of a job in the literary area, but hadn't considered radio specifically. (Weaver, 1977b, p. 5)

Though he was supervising all English-language literary arts programming, it was programs like *Canadian Short Stories* that were always closest to Weaver's heart. He thought that by bringing literature and poetry directly onto the air, these kinds of programs did the most to assist the careers of writers like Alice Munro, Mordecai Richler, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and many others. In response to a proposal by Robert Harlow, one of Weaver's program producers in Vancouver, *Canadian Short Stories* was transformed into *Anthology* in 1954, and the new program included book reviews, critical essays, and discussions of cultural matters in addition to short stories and poetry. But throughout Weaver's 37-year career at CBC Radio, it was the actual broadcasting of Canadian literary works, rather than commentary about them, that provided his main sense of purpose. The driving ambition here was not to use literature to promote national identity; on the contrary, he had "an international outlook that would later fall out of step with a resurgent Canadian nationalism" (MacSkimming, 2002, p. 38). Neither was it simply a matter of wanting to help writers make their mark by giving listeners a taste of their work. For Weaver, hearing a finely written story or poem on the air could, if properly done, be a rewarding experience in itself, regardless of whether it encouraged book-buying behaviour.

Weaver's most basic problem for many years was simply to get enough material capable of generating a memorable listening experience. In the year before he took over, *Canadian Short Stories* received only twenty-two submissions. This number doubled during Weaver's first year, leading him to write to Morrison in April 1949 that "in general the quality of the programme seems to have been steadily improving." In the past, writers such as W.O. Mitchell and Joyce Marshall had been inclined to send material they could not place elsewhere. "Now I think they are becoming interested in the programme as first market possibility." A report prepared that year by Bernard Braden Productions in Toronto listed 307 authors who had submitted stories since the show's inception, some "ten or more times, all more than three times." By 1950 the program was providing an outlet for about 50 stories a year, making it a larger market than *Maclean's* or the

National Home Monthly, and in 1952 Weaver gathered the best of these for an anthology published by Oxford University Press (OUP). However, these figures belie the fact that, as Weaver stated in February 1950, it was “still very difficult to obtain any large quantity of first-rate fiction from Canadian writers” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

The potential harm from broadcasting bad material was evident in the reactions to the OUP anthology. On the one hand, a *Globe and Mail* reviewer wrote that *Canadian Short Stories* is “one of the national dividends which the CBC is paying.” Similarly, a reviewer in the *London Free Press* enthused that “just as it seemed the Canadian short story would disappear for lack of market, along came the CBC to play the part of fairy godmother.” At the same time, nonetheless, the stories themselves received mixed reviews. A commentator in the *Windsor Daily Star* thought they demonstrated that Canadian writers could “compete on equal terms with others in the literary world.” But Arthur S. Bourinot in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* was “not impressed by the fact that any of these stories is truly great,” while a reviewer in *Saturday Night* found them “remarkably unsophisticated and very often pretentiously solemn.” Bourinot judged the translation of Roger Lemelin’s story, “The Station of the Cross,” to be “the leaven in the loaf” and two other reviewers observed that only it and one other story had any element of humour. Elaborating on *Saturday Night*’s complaint that “laughter is apparently unliterary,” a *Montreal Gazette* review lamented the “strong tendency toward the ‘Only Tragedy is True Art’ attitude which characterizes so much of CBC’s programming.” Apart from their preoccupation with death, the stories were criticized for continuing, as the *Winnipeg Tribune* put it, to privilege “forests, plains and Indian encampments” over urban locales (all quotes are from Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

To encourage better submissions, Weaver raised payments to \$50 for a regular 15-minute story (2,200 words) and \$85 to \$100 for a half-hour story (3,000 to 4,500 words). In the mid-1950s, the fees for first broadcast rights to a story generally ranged from \$60 to \$200, depending on length (the maximum being 4,400 words), while the payment for poetry was 50 cents a line. Yet getting sufficient good material remained a problem. “It’s still difficult to get enough passable poetry and fiction from writers in Canada,” Weaver wrote to Robert Patchell in Vancouver in October 1957, “and after nine years of trying, I sometimes wonder if I haven’t done more harm than good.” Asked to recommend a Canadian short story for an anthology being compiled by Beacon Press, he responded that he had “checked though the stories I’ve broadcast on the CBC in 1957, and I must tell you frankly that they aren’t a very exciting lot.” Canadian short story writers, he lamented, were in a “slump.” “I think that 1957 is a bad year.” In March 1958, he continued this refrain, saying “the short story is in a depressed state in Canada just now” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Apart from the challenge of keeping standards high enough so as not to damage CanLit’s profile, Weaver was confronted from the outset with the question of how to reconcile creative freedom with radio’s peculiar language standards. The issue arose in December 1949 when Ross McLean, the production manager of CBR, suggested to Weaver that the broadcast of Henry Kreisal’s *Annerl* by the Vancouver talks unit might have “crossed [the] boundaries” of acceptable content. While not advocating a “namby-pamby editorial attitude,” McLean wondered whether scripts were being adequately

vetted. Weaver, who knew Kreisal from his University College days, replied that there had been no objections in Toronto, but acknowledged that some listeners in Newfoundland had taken exception to “the use of profanity and fairly frank comments on sex life.” “It may be,” he speculated, “that living in this callous metropolitan atmosphere I am inclined to think that we can get away with a good deal on this series.” In his “entirely personal view,” he did not think the story went beyond the bounds of “good taste” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

The matter did not end there, however. In a memo to Morrison, Kenneth Caple, the BC regional representative, “object[ed] strongly to such scripts going on the air. The script had parts in it which were profane, blasphemous, suggestive and lewd.” In future, he said, “every script originating in this Region must be cleaned up before it goes to rehearsal or the individual producer will be held personally responsible.” Weaver chose to say no more internally. On a copy of Caple’s memo, Morrison scribbled: “R W any comment before I reply?” Weaver added below: “No comment.” In February 1950, however, he did send the following response to a listener in Edmonton praising the story: “I was very pleased to be able to get it for our program. I agree with you that *Annerl* is the kind of story which appears all too rarely in Canada” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7). What he meant by “rarely” was not explained.

Complaints were also forthcoming after the August 1951 broadcast of *Asters for Teddy*, which contained the description of the dead body of a child. While agreeing that it was “a strong and, in some respects, distressing story,” Weaver thought it was “well-written” and “dealt with an incident which, however shocking, might well have happened.” In a memo to the director general of programs, however, Davidson Dunton, chair of the CBC board of governors, questioned whether “in spite of its qualities,” it was “common-sense broadcasting to have it going into ‘the relatively unguarded atmosphere of the home, reaching old and young alike?’” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Bureaucratic sensitivities were also upset by *The Sandcastle*, written by John MacEwen, a talks producer in Halifax. After a few listeners objected to the phrases “honest to Christ” and “carried the little bastard,” Caple wrote to Ira Dilworth, the director of program evaluation, in November 1952 to “add my violent protest to this sort of stuff.” He could not understand why such “cultural junk” was still making it onto the air, especially since the CBC was currently “fighting a fierce battle” in British Columbia over articles in the *Vancouver Sun*. In this case, profanity was not the only issue. One listener was worried about what the story’s “exquisite horror and cruelty ... would do to the soul of a child, if he happened to be listening” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Noting that *Canadian Short Stories* “unfortunately isn’t too popular within the CBC in some quarters,” Weaver took steps to ensure that profanity was eliminated. However, he did not yield on the matter of graphic material generally. When the program was shifted in the fall of 1952 from Friday evenings at 7:30 p.m. EDT to a later time on Saturdays, he wrote to CBC producer Catherine MacIver in Winnipeg that the move would make it easier to accommodate “rather tough stories” by setting them off with “stories of a somewhat easier and more popular nature” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

The question of profanity reared its head again in the late 1950s. In February 1959, Weaver had to remind his talks producers that “a few years ago both in short stories

and a good deal of drama a certain number of four letter words and profane language of other sorts began to creep in so consistently that we got a fairly negative reaction from listeners." The occasion for this memo was a half-hour-long story by Vancouver writer Jane Rule called *On the Way*, which contained a number of profanities. Following its airing in the east, and before its time-delayed broadcast in the west, Eugene Hallman, the director of English radio networks, learned of several protests about its language and, after failing to get through to Weaver, cancelled the western feed. Weaver told Robert Patchell that he agreed with the practice of watching questionable language so as to avoid the possibility of official censorship. It was, he said, "my fault that the story was broadcast," adding that "I don't know how this story slipped by without bothering me a little." "In any case," he said, "we have accepted in principle the fact that words like 'goddam', 'bastard', 'Jesus Christ', and so forth will not be used in short stories."

Whereas Weaver did not question Hallman's interference with the broadcast, Peter Garvie, the regional program director for British Columbia, thought cancelling the western release was not "a wise decision." "I think a writer can reasonably expect to hear her work broadcast," he wrote Hallman, "when she knows it has been accepted, produced, taped and scheduled and she has been paid for it." There had been no "great outcry" in Toronto and "we certainly did not do ourselves any credit with the writing community by pulling the story." Hallman acknowledged that, "statistically it was not a massive protest," but said, "in a similar situation I would have to make the same decision again." "We must be very careful in our desire to serve the writers' purposes that our own specialized tastes do not offend significant sections of our audience." In response to Weaver's suggestion that a future broadcast might use a Toronto writer in the east and carry Rule's story in the west, Patchell telexed Weaver on February 27: "PLS ADV IF 'HELL', 'WHORE' AND 'HALF-ASS' SHLD BE REMOVED FROM RULE'S SCRIPT." But the same day, Rule phoned Patchell and asked that the story not be used. "She said she just did not feel like making the textual revisions at this point," he reported, and had "had an opportunity to publish it ... and ... would let it go at that" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7). In fairness, the CBC was not the only source of editorial opposition to Rule's use of profanity in her stories. A few years later, when she finally found a publisher for her first novel, *Desert of the Heart*, there were still objections to its obscenities, leading Rule to remark that she thought "all of this had been settled at the trial of *Lady Chatterley*" (quoted in Morra, 2014, p. 129).

By subscribing to radio's language standards in the case of profanity, Weaver won increased support from management for *Anthology*. In December 1958, for example, Ira Dilworth confessed that the previous night's show had given him "a great deal of pleasure. I have always liked this show and have seldom been disappointed." While allowing that *Anthology* "certainly is a programme for which we should not expect to have anything approaching a mass audience," he thought "we ought to be satisfied if it caters to the taste and good judgment of even a small minority." It was, he concluded, "well within the terms of reference of the CBC." This assessment was confirmed by a more formal evaluation in Ottawa by Charles Wright, who said that *Anthology* was "obviously not a mass appeal type program," but added that "even though it is intended for a minority of listeners, [it] has a definite place in our schedule" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

In this audience environment, there was pressure from those around Weaver to make the readings on *Anthology* as lively as possible, raising a further issue about integrity. Weaver wanted to avoid, as he put it in a 1958 memo, “dull and monotonous voice quality.” But he also thought that stories and poetry should be read as naturally and straightforwardly as possible without unnecessary vocal embellishment; he wanted them to be read, one might say, as they would be heard in the mind’s ear. For example, in response to an audition disk from a prospective reader in March 1950, he allowed that he had “a pleasant and flexible voice” and “managed the straight narrative sections ... very competently.” But he also pointed out his tendency “to burlesque certain types of characters a bit too broadly” and “to read narrative on one level and dialogue on a sharply distinct level.” In a “fairly blunt report” after a Vancouver broadcast of *Canadian Short Stories* in July 1952, he told Robert Harlow that he was “not very happy” about how the story had been read, even though he “found the story itself amusing.” He thought the reader was “inclined to dramatize his voice too much” and that “it was a mistake to try to add further dramatic impact by self-conscious breathing and tricks of this sort.” He reminded Harlow how he “used to have arguments with Ross [McLean] about his desire to pull some bit of sprightly dialogue from the text and use it as a teaser opening” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Arguments between Weaver and Harlow over matters of presentation came to a head after *Anthology* replaced *Canadian Short Stories* in the fall of 1954. The idea for the new program format had come from Harlow in a memo to Weaver on June 23, 1953, in which he argued that Canada needed “a national literary ‘little magazine.’” With little chance that “private interests” would take on this project, he thought the CBC might enter the field “with impunity.” His hope was for “a prestige show, perhaps the class show of the department.” He wanted a program created by, and for, the literary elite, a space where the works of creative writers could be discussed and assessed. He even suggested the program have a “forum” element in which “the so-called eggheads” could have a good “fight” over Canadian writing (Weaver Fonds Vol. 7).

Although not enthusiastic about Harlow’s idea of “build[ing] up a body of literary criticism,” which was “almost totally lack[ing] at the moment,” Weaver did not oppose adding (in his words) “occasional reviews of books, debate and discussion about literary and cultural matters, spoken essays on a variety of subjects, and reports about cultural activities in various parts of Canada and also in centres like New York, London and Paris.” But this was probably because he was hopeful that Harlow was correct in suggesting their inclusion in a program of the same length would make it easier to improve the quality of the short stories and poetry. He later admitted that the writers themselves seemed to like the critical segments better. He was more interested, however, in giving writers, both new and established, an opportunity to showcase their work, rather than having that work criticized on the air. His own criticism of writers could at times be harsh, but it occurred behind the scenes. In his view, too much public criticism could be the death knell for a young writer.

It is not clear from his papers in Library and Archives Canada whether Weaver himself proposed calling the new program *Anthology*. But he doubtless liked this title better than Harlow’s suggestion—*The Little Review* or *The CBC Little Review*—which,

as one CBC bureaucrat pointed out, had been the name of an earlier CBC musical program. Harlow had come up with the *Review* titles because he wanted “our rose” to be “a literary review and proud of it” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7). But for Weaver, literary criticism was still secondary to the primary goal of getting literature and poetry on the air.

Harlow saw the new half-hour program as being “designed especially for intellectuals, and the more they can participate in their own program the better.” In fact, he recommended that it remain on Saturday evenings to “catch the eggheads at home. I don’t know personally of an intellectual in Canada who has money enough to go out on a Saturday night.” However, Weaver rejected the idea that it was “essential” for people outside the CBC to be involved in production—lest, as Harlow put it, the CBC be “accused of trying to influence the critical and literary trends in Canada.” The members of an advisory committee, he said, could not be expected to actively co-operate unless they were given “some definite functions” such as reading submissions. But “it is precisely this function which would most alarm me.” Having a board “spread across Canada” would delay the decision process “to the irritation of writers” and the program might “end up using only that material which had been able to pass six or eight literary people across the country.” Without offering any evidence, Weaver told Harlow “the best magazines and publishing houses have usually reflected the personality of a single editor.” Indeed, “the problem American publishing faces today is that the editor has become less important and many publishing houses no longer have a forceful editor to deal with writers.” “It is my firm conviction,” he concluded, “that we should keep editorial control ... in our own hands” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Though determined to keep editorial control within the CBC, Weaver was prepared to delegate some of that authority. Harlow proposed having three production centres “to give all parts of the country a feeling of having a hand in the program.” Weaver countered (in conjunction with Morrison) that there should be two: one in Vancouver with Harlow as editor, the other in Toronto under his own editorial hand. Dividing production in this manner would, he later said, “help to destroy the impression among some writers and listeners that too many of our programs come entirely from Toronto.” However, this concession opened the door to several acrimonious exchanges between himself and Harlow over the philosophy of the new program.

In July of 1954, *Anthology* was given the go-ahead by management and a weekly budget of \$250, which included payments to on-air readers and fees for two manuscript assessors: Joyce Marshall in Toronto and George Woodcock in Vancouver. Preference was to be given to unpublished fiction, but material appearing in small-circulation magazines would also be considered. Poets were encouraged to submit groups of poems rather than individual items. Broadcast on the Trans Canada network on Tuesday, October 19, 1954, at the “awkward” time of 11:00 p.m. EST, the first *Anthology* program consisted of six poems by Norman Levine and *The Secret of the Kugel*, a “folksy” and “slight” story (Foran, 2010, p. 156) by Mordecai Richler.

Harlow wasted no time expressing his displeasure over the first program’s content and production values. “Perhaps,” he wrote Weaver with reference to Richler, “you were worried about scaring away customers, and then again perhaps you felt the au-

thor's name would carry the day. Both reasons I hesitate to entertain." He further complained that the engineering was downright ludicrous," that the continuity "turned to ashes in the announcer's mouth," that the poetry reader "sounded bored," and that even Weaver's own short introduction "left the listener a little breathless" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

A month later, Harlow sent Weaver another critique of the program. In contrast to Weaver's concern to use radio as a means to promote literature, Harlow argued that literature should serve the performance requirements of radio, that radio should perform literature. While allowing that *Anthology* had "steadily improved," he emphasized that it was not yet a "success" and still fell short of its "noble" purpose. The reason for this failing, he explained, is that radio is not an art form but a medium of communication and what it communicates best is "the moment of impact of a personality." The reading of stories and poetry (as well as literary criticism) should thus be done by amateurs whose personalities would come across naturally, rather than by professionals who would use their training to read "bought lines" in formulaic ways. Whereas the professional has "slickness," the amateur has "magnetism." What matters most is to use "the full depth of the human personalities we are dealing with." If this was achieved, Harlow said, radio would be "freed of the many burdens of TV" and could "take on new meaning and direction." *Anthology* could lead the way by experimenting with ways of "bring[ing] the human element to radio." For example, a story could be read one week and discussed the next so readers could "understand why people write such stories and why we broadcast them." "The story," he concluded, "is only the platter on which the human personality is served" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

For Weaver, however, the story or poem was what counted most, not the personality reading it. It was the words that mattered—quality words reaching the listener in the dark silence of the night and providing a brief haven from the incessant verbiage of radio and life generally. The challenge was to get such words and have them delivered without excess. Ironically, it was Harlow, an accomplished writer in his own right (Bukowski, 1984), who wanted literature to serve the special nature of radio and Weaver, the programmer, who thought more exclusively in terms of keeping literature as true as possible to its original form. In an uncharacteristically long response, Weaver said it was "pretty pretentious" to think that *Anthology* could "re-make radio as a medium." The problem is to make professionals out of amateurs, not the reverse. "We have too many amateur writers, too many amateur critics, too many amateur artists of all kinds." He was not even sure what Harlow meant by the terms amateur and professional, and added "I'm not at all sure you [are] either" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

Harlow wrote back saying he had "explained perfectly clearly what [he] meant" about using amateurs and told Weaver to "re-read the passage." But the wind had clearly been taken out of his sails and he soon left the talks department to become a station manager. In 1955, he did an interview for *Anthology* and Weaver thanked him for a job well done. "I decided to wait for a while," he explained, "because I thought we had a pretty mad [sic] and I didn't want to continue a detailed and acrimonious argument with you. I think we were always pretty good friends while we worked together, and despite our quarrel last Fall maybe we still aren't very far apart." In late 1956,

Harlow submitted a short story to the program, but it was rejected; Weaver found it “dreadfully sentimental” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 7).

The departure of Harlow reduced internal debates over how best to present original literature and poetry on radio. During the 1960s, there seems to have been few confrontations between Weaver and his producers over the format of *Anthology*, although this conclusion must be tempered by the absence of correspondence for this period in the Weaver Fonds. In the same period, however, a new and more significant issue of integrity emerged: the balance between presenting actual stories and poems on the air and airing commentary on the literary arts scene. A related question concerned the manner of literary arts commentary. It was here that the first cracks in Weaver’s approach began to appear, as the 1960s saw a thrust toward informational programming, which affected cultural as well as public affairs and entertainment programming.

From the outset, the audience for *Critically Speaking* was miniscule. Although there are no reliable cumulative figures for its audience, a study of radio listening in the Halifax-Dartmouth area in December 1954, before television was introduced and there were only three radio stations from which to choose, found that 40 to 60 percent of *all* households (not just those with sets turned on) listened to popular American programs; that CBC entertainment shows such as *Wayne & Shuster* captured close to 20 percent of households; that even “serious” CBC programs such as *Citizens’ Forum* had ratings around six; but that the rating for *Critically Speaking* was a mere two (CBC Research, 1955). A follow-up study two years later found that only 2.8 percent of listeners designated “high culture” (the kind of thing associated with *Critically Speaking*) as a special interest, compared to 38 percent for soaps and serial drama, 29.6 percent for news, 24.1 percent for sports, 11.9 percent for religious programs, and 6.4 per cent for classical music (CBC Research, 1956).

As CBC Radio’s audience numbers continued to fall under the impact of television, especially after the CTV network was launched in 1961, program planners looked for ways to staunch the bleeding and the general strategy became one of placing increased emphasis on informational programming. Commentary on the arts was not eliminated, but in the mid-1960s, *Critically Speaking* was transformed into *The Arts This Week* to reflect the new informational emphasis. Instead of lively, often acerbic commentary (prepared in advance) by Nathan Cohen, listeners were treated to bland short reports and informal unscripted conversations, and interviews and the reviews were “sandwiched” between the news features (Edmonstone, 1977, p. 105).

An analysis of program content for a representative week in 1970 calculated that “criticism of arts” (CBC Annual Report for 1969–1970, p. 41) accounted for only 0.7 percent of English AM network programming or 54 minutes a week. In the *CBC English Radio Report*,² a philosophical justification of the “radio revolution’s” informational strategy submitted by Peter Meggs and Doug Ward (1970), it was suggested that this amount was likely to decrease further “as the need for a continuing service of information grows.” But this possibility did not particularly concern them, nor did the “danger that more of our arts programming [generally] could be shifted into minority program periods and even program ghettos” (p. 47). One reason was their feeling that the creation of a second CBC radio network might provide more “elbow room” (p. 52) for such programming.

But a more basic reason was their blunt rejection of the idea of using radio to nurture Canadian literature and poetry. "We are not in business merely to make grants to writers and musicians" (p. 46), they stated with revealing candor. "The Canada Council and the growing number of provincial and local arts boards fill this role" (p. 46).

In 1971, Weaver took a step back from his preference for airing new stories and poetry in as unpretentious a manner as possible by agreeing to oversee *The Bush and the Salon*. It not only featured historical letters, diaries, and journals, such as Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, but it presented them in a quasi-dramatic form. Broadcast initially for a full year on both the AM and FM networks, the series was shortened to twenty-six weeks in 1975 and discontinued a year later. Budget cuts in 1973–1974 took their toll, but so too did the difficulty of getting enough material. "We are still in dangerous short supply" of scripts, Weaver wrote in September 1975, urging program producers to be "a little more active about finding new material" (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 9).

The Meggs-Ward report had recommended creating an AM network (Radio 1) carrying news, current affairs, and popular music for a mass audience and shifting cultural programming, including literary arts and classical music, to the developing, but far from comprehensive, FM network (Radio 2). Despite complaints from rural Canadians and the express opposition of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the CBC proceeded with this plan in the mid-1970s. What was by then called the Radio Arts Department lost resources as its programs were removed from the dominant "informational" AM network. A memo to Weaver from his staff producers in May 1976 reflected their growing frustration, which was based in part on a sense that nothing was being done to preserve their traditional role. "Too many of our series have drifted rudderless in recent years, have gone soft creatively, and if we do not put our own house in order we can expect, and shall deserve, an even further attrition of our work until Radio Arts dies of its own inanition" (Engel Fonds, Vol. 38).

For Mark Starowicz, the head of CBC Current Affairs, the failings of Radio Arts were symptomatic of public radio in general. "Unwillingness to engage the market in all its facets," he told an international conference on "Radio in the Eighties" in Ottawa in June 1976, "is the current disease of public broadcasting throughout the world." In a paper entitled "Radio with a Fast-Forward Button: Technology and Content," Starowicz saw a basic conflict within CBC Radio between its "popular" and "in-depth" program producers or between the "sausage makers" and "elitist snobs" as each side labelled the other. He was sympathetic to the plight of the in-depth programmers with their "more sculpted and laboured craft." But the future lay with the popular programmers, who were "more acutely aware of audience patterns, the demography of the listening audience, attention spans, the uses of immediacy, of relations to the actual, present problems of the people" (Engel Fonds, Vol. 38).

A month before Starowicz's talk, a group formed to study CBC arts programming generally espoused much the same philosophy. In its "candidly audience-oriented" report, the group unanimously endorsed the principle that "all of CBC Radio's activities in the Arts and Music must be keyed" to serving the audience and "*programming towards anything else cannot be defended*" (Field, Douglas, Redekopp, & Blackwood, 1976,

p. xvii; emphasis added). Yet despite its emphasis on “meeting the audience needs” (p. 87) and “exploitation of audience listening patterns” (p. 89), the report was still willing to regard *Anthology* as a special case. As the “sole series devoted exclusively to literature and its commentary and criticism,” it gave the CBC a “commanding position ... as creator, performer and distributor of radio literature” and its weekly audience was “two to three times the *combined* circulation of the principal literary magazines of English Canada, which are its directly comparable alternate medium.” The report went so far as to suggest that “a comprehensive service of broadcast literature must include much more than the present scope of this one program” (p. 108).

In 1978, Weaver proposed a new program initiative—the CBC Literary Competition—that sought to combine an expanded presence of literature on the air with the drive for more popular audience-generating formats. The competition offered \$18,000 in prizes in three categories initially (short stories, poetry, and memoirs) and was promoted with the help of libraries, bookstores, and organizations such as the Writers Union of Canada, the League of Canadian Poets, and the Canadian Authors Association. Weaver and four or five other readers made a preliminary assessment of the entries and then passed on between 40 and 70 submissions to panels of three judges (among them Alice Munro and John Robert Colombo) in Toronto and Vancouver.

Some submitters resented the competition’s weeding process, and they wrote Weaver complaining that their masterpieces had not been given a chance with the judges. But in terms of participation, it was a huge success. In a “short history” dated May 7, 1985, Weaver related how he was besieged by submissions:

I had gathered some information about submissions to the literary annual *Aurora*, then being published by Doubleday, and *Best Canadian Stories*, the annual published by Oberon Press; both these manuscripts solicited manuscripts from Canadian freelance writers. I also had my own experience to draw on with *Anthology* and as one of the editors of the *Tamarack Review*. The number of submissions to these four outlets for literary material ranged between 500 and 800 manuscripts a year. We knew that the literary competition was going to be heavily promoted by the CBC. I guessed that we might receive between 1200 and 1500 submissions to the literary competition. (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 9)

Weaver actually received 2,900 entries in the first year, creating “an atmosphere of mild hysteria.” The number of submissions dropped slightly during the next few years, but increased to 4,500 in 1985.

The competition was praised by members of the literary establishment, such as June Callwood, chair of the Writers’ Union of Canada. “[I]t’s time for loud and hearty applause for you for your efforts in getting the competition off the ground,” she wrote Weaver in August 1979. “We are delighted to hear that there will be a second competition and that there is a good possibility that this may become an annual affair. In this time of budget cuts and fiscal restraint our writers are suffering from an ever diminishing market for their work: to see a new one and one that is so successful is very heartening.” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 17)

However, the CBC Literary Competition also generated criticism regarding its categories. After the first competition, Rota Lister, editor of *Canadian Drama*, asked why radio drama was not included. Weaver replied that nothing “effective” could be done in this area without providing writers with “workshop assistance.” The following year, he received a similar proposal “in light of the recent newspaper article concerning CBC’s intention to furnish its listeners with more radio drama.” “At the very beginning,” he explained again, “we . . . decided that we could not cope with the complications, and I must say that I am now convinced that the method now being followed by the Radio Drama Department in which they are giving actual training to writers and directors is the only way to proceed in this area.” However, the memoir category was proving problematic, receiving only 15 percent of the entries. So for the fourth competition in 1982, it was dropped and three new categories were added: children’s story and two forms of drama: drama comedy and drama adventure. The total prize money was increased to \$30,000 with \$2,500 for first place, \$2,000 for second, and \$1,500 for third in each category. As it turned out, the new categories were also problematic. “We couldn’t always tell,” Weaver wrote in August 1982, “. . . whether a drama submission was a comedy or an adventure script.” The next year the categories were reduced to short story, poetry, children’s story, and *radio play*, and the prizes for each were increased by \$500 (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 17).

Though joking about “what madness” had led him to start the competition, Weaver initially thought “the prizes were so nicely scattered among unknown people and other writers not really too well established, that the purpose of the whole thing seemed to be served fairly well.” After the second competition, however, he was much less satisfied that it was doing much good. “The general quality of the winning manuscripts,” he wrote in March 1980, “honestly does not strike me as being good enough to justify any kind of annual publication of them.” The third competition reinforced this feeling. “I have suggested,” he reminded one colleague, that at the end of the three-year trial, “we simply consider whether the project is a good one or the money and energy should be directed somewhere else” (Weaver Fonds, Vol. 17). After three years of running the competition, it was clear to Weaver that it was taking an excessive amount of work, much of it no doubt at his own personal cost, to generate a relatively small amount of actual program material.

Apart from the matter of workload, the \$30,000 devoted to prizes for the CBC Literary Competition was also a questionable investment given the resources available for *Anthology*, which was still the department’s flagship program. The cost of producing a regular segment of *Anthology* at the time was about \$1,000—at least according to a budgetary memorandum of 1979, which stated, in reference to *Anthology*’s third quarter, that “of the 11 regular Anthologies [i.e., not repeats or “best of” programs] we will spend a known \$9,783.00 with additional unknown costs of \$3,000.00” (Engel Fonds, Vol. 25). In 1968, *Anthology*’s budget was about \$48,000 (French, 1968), but this was for a larger number of original programs. In other words, the cost for the CBC Literary Competition was almost as much as an entire season of *Anthology*.

Despite its dubious economy and Weaver’s reservations about its contribution, the CBC Literary Competition continued and it was *Anthology* that was terminated. In

1984 the program celebrated its thirtieth anniversary and Weaver (1984) edited an anthology of the program in conjunction with the event. But a year later, budget cuts forced Weaver into early retirement and *Anthology* was cancelled the same year. Except for a period between 1974 and 1978 when writer Howard Engel produced the program, it had always been Weaver's favourite child. However, its demise was less the end of an era than a final reminder that the listening experience through which Weaver tried to promote Canadian literature and poetry had irrevocably given way to formats based on radio's talk-oriented informational principles.

In terms of audience numbers, the prevalence of talking about literature over the actual presentation of literature on the air has been a success. For most of *Anthology's* history, Weaver estimated that it had between 25,000 and 50,000 listeners, a range finally confirmed by a 1981 study that gave it 35,000—about half of that of *Booktime* (CBC Research, 1981). But when *Canada Reads*, using a survivor format to stimulate the discussion of select books by celebrity champions, was launched in 2002, an estimated 1.6 million Canadians tuned in to at least part of the competition. In terms of promoting “the reading of Canadian writing,” its innovative format clearly “serves Canadian authors and Canadian publishers” (Fuller & Sedo, 2013, pp. 119–120). More elevated approaches to literary discussion have also proven successful. In the fall of 2013, the audience for *The Next Chapter* with Shelagh Rogers was between 400,000 and 600,000, while the audience for *Writers and Company* with Eleanor Wachtel was between 300,000 and 400,000 (CBC Research, 2013). These are impressive numbers, even allowing for increases in population from the days of *Anthology*, and they reflect the high production values of these programs. But numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Valuable as it may be, listening to an author or critic discuss a book or story is not the same as hearing the work itself—any more than talking about a piece of art or a film is a substitute for seeing it oneself.

The reading of stories has not been entirely eliminated. *Wire Tap*, which went on the air in 2004 and has an audience reach of 250,000 to 350,000 on Saturday afternoons (CBC Research, 2013), features quirky comedic stories by producer Jonathan Goldstein and a stable of writers. But apart from its restricted access and genre, the program's production is governed by radio's current “collision” with digital media. The story is now clearly the platter on which personalities are served.

Notes

1. The author is indebted to one of the reviewers of this article for this point.
2. Following its presentation to the board of directors in May, the CBC placed an order of secrecy on the report. For the story of why it was embargoed, see Chapter two of Carter (1990).

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