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Thomas Hajkowski. *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. xii + 252 pp. $89.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7190-7944-3.

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Commissioned by Brendan Kane (University of Connecticut)

Thomas Hajkowski's book seeks to redefine our understanding of the role the BBC played in shaping British identity in the critical years between its founding and the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. Hajkowski argues convincingly that during its first thirty years the BBC neither strengthened nor undermined Britishness. Instead it reinforced a kind of Britishness that was more elastic and flexible in accepting diversity within the United Kingdom. The book features two sections; the first considers how the BBC developed programming to promote an image of Britain as a dynamic world power that gained strength through two important institutions, monarchy and empire. He argues that programs were developed that emphasized the strength and vitality of both the monarchy and the empire in a concerted effort to shape a British national identity. The second section explores the development of regional broadcasting in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, considering how regional stations supported the development of hybrid identities where citizens of each "nation" could embrace their own culture while still considering themselves British. This encouraged the development of dual identities as citizens could define themselves as being both Welsh and British or Scottish and British. Deep divisions within Northern Ireland meant that encouraging the embrace of a dual identity was problematic. Regional programming helped construct an Ulster identity for the roughly two-thirds of citizens in the province who also considered themselves British, Ulster Unionists who were overwhelmingly Protestant. This was done at the expense of the Catholic minority who defined themselves as Irish and rejected both a British identity and the British state.

Hajkowski argues that the BBC made a determined effort to produce programs that projected a positive image of the empire, an image that would encourage citizens to identify with it as a dynamic and powerful force. The managing director, John (later Lord) Reith, was a key architect of the BBC and an avid supporter of both the empire and monarchy. He took a personal interest in supporting collaboration with a number of initiatives, in-

cluding the Empire Day Movement and the Empire Marketing Board. In 1932 he created the Empire Service to broadcast throughout the British Dominions and other British "possessions" around the globe. Many of Reith's colleagues shared his political conservatism and imperial sympathies and this influenced the type of programming developed for public consumption both at home and abroad. For instance, Stephen Tallents, the BBC's public relations director, John Coatman, head of the News Department, and Sir Richard Maconachie, director of Talks, all had worked as official or senior civil servants with organizations and institutions deeply embedded within the structure of the British Empire.

During the period under consideration a wide range of programs including talks, plays, and features were developed to influence the way the public thought about the empire. The BBC worked to reinforce public perceptions of the empire as a living example of the vitality of Britain and the British. Many of these programs were educational, meant to instruct the public about the people and places in a diverse multinational domain. This desire to inform and educate listeners often clashed with programs designed to entertain audiences by offering compelling adventure narratives emphasizing the imperial hero defying the odds and courageously defending all that was great and good about Britain and the British. Hajkowski is adept at addressing the tension between the dissemination of educational programming and material designed for popular appeal as entertainment. BBC officials understood that many educational programs developed to inform and educate the public about the empire failed to find a wide audience, especially with the working class. This inability to connect with working-class listeners contrasts sharply with many of the more popular programs produced by the Features and Drama Department that found a wide and enthusiastic audience. Entertainment features such as A. E. W. Mason's ***The Four Feathers***, featuring an exciting narrative that emphasized "British values" of honor, selflessness, and duty, were tremendously popular. The author points out that these programs "offered a stark contrast between British 'civilization' and the 'backwardness' and 'barbarity' of the colonized world" (p. 24). Although these programs were popular as entertainment they were also important in affirming to listeners the superiority of the British over Africans, Asians, and other Europeans.

According to Hajkowski, in the postwar period the restructuring of the BBC into three divisions, the Home Service, the Light Programme, and the Third Programme, enabled program makers to continue to present what he describes as a "janus faced policy towards the empire," as serious discussions concerning complex imperial politics were relegated to the Third Programme, which did not have a substantial audience (p. 52). More popular adventure features such as ***King Solomon's Mines*** by H. Rider Haggard continued to find wide audiences on the Light Programme. These entertainment programs may not have taught Britons anything new but they "powerfully reinforced common representations of empire as a site of adventure, sexual and racial domination, and economic exploitation" (p. 77).

When considering the support the BBC provided the monarchy Hajkowski emphasizes that senior officials were keen to project the king as a unifying symbol of the great British "family." Again, Reith played a critical role in convincing a reluctant royal family to use radio as a means to reach out to citizens. Reith also cannily understood that by participating in and becoming part of BBC broadcasts the monarchy was lending the BBC the legitimacy it craved. In the 1920s many elites in British society still tended to underestimate the power and potential of radio, instead seeing it a vulgar modern device.

Buckingham Palace refused Reith's request for a royal Christmas broadcast by George V in 1923 but later agreed to allow the BBC to transmit his speech at the opening of the Wembley Exhibi-

tion in 1924. The broadcast was a tremendous success and slowly the king became more comfortable with the medium and agreed to address his subjects more often. The first of what became the "traditional" Christmas broadcasts took place in 1932 and a short time later the BBC dedicated itself to pushing past the embarrassment of Edward VIII's abdication to celebrate the coronation of George VI. The coronation of the new king was an elaborate and highly successful affair. It was preceded by Coronation Week, seven days of programming dedicated to celebrating the history and rich tradition of the monarchy. The coronation broadcast extended beyond the United Kingdom to reach audiences worldwide via the Empire Service.

The author also addresses the development of regional broadcasting in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In doing so he argues that London was not interested in trying to create a homogenized sense of Britishness. In this respect Hajkowski challenges the belief that the BBC was an engine of cultural imperialism, intent on eroding regional and national cultures to construct a unified British culture and identity. Instead he argues that within the United Kingdom regional broadcasting enabled programming to be developed that served listeners in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland and reflected their interests. Regional stations strengthened national identity especially in Wales and Scotland, where institutions were created that celebrated national culture and reinforced a sense of identity within these communities. This was especially important in Wales, which had few of the national institutions that other "nations" within Britain enjoyed. Although Scotland had its own capital, legal code, and educational system, BBC Scotland performed an important function in reinforcing a Scottish identity that contrasted sharply with that of England and Britain. Again Northern Ireland proved different, as its focus tended to ignore the Catholic community. Hajkowski maintains that the evolution of regional broadcasting in Scotland and Wales can be read as success stories as each station evolved to gain a high degree of autonomy. However, the same progress cannot be claimed for Northern Ireland because its "development towards broadcasting autonomy is marred by the fact that it meant giving in, to a degree, to a more conservative, triumphalist, and bigoted unionism" (p. 228).

This is a remarkably well-researched book that makes extensive use of a wide array of primary and secondary sources. In particular the BBC Written Archives at Caversham are used convincingly, as internal documents and memoranda offer valuable insight into the thinking of officials involved in policy decisions concerning broadcasts and program making. The journal of the BBC, the ***Radio Times***, is also used extensively to carefully address the nature and scope of programming during the critical thirty-year period covered in this book. In exploiting these sources the author presents a nuanced and convincing argument that questions the assumptions underpinning our understanding of the power and influence of radio at a critical time in the history of twentieth-century Britain. This is an important book that makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of modern British history and the evolution of British identity in the twentieth century.

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