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ABSTRACT

Since 1944, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, through its radio network, has been the prime disseminator of drama to Canadians. CBC radio reaches virtually every inhabited region of the country, including remote areas where little or no professional stage drama is presented. Canadian playwrights have often adapted their stage plays for CBC radio production in order to reach the largest potential audience.

This study examines the techniques which have been used by seven playwrights to adapt their stage plays for CBC radio. The plays examined are: The Abdication by Norman Newton; The Action Tonight by Tom Grainger; Captives of the Faceless Drummer, by George Ryga; Do You Remember One September Afternoon?, by David Watmough; The Great Hunger, by Leonard Peterson; Women in the Attic, by Leonard Peterson; Quiet Day in Belfast and its radio version "Murder in the Betting Shop," by Andrew Angus Dalrymple; and Yesterday the Children Were Dancing, by Géatien Gélinas, translated and adapted by Mavor Moore.

The stage scripts and their radio versions were examined to ascertain the changes that had occurred in the adaptation process. The playwrights and several CBC producers were interviewed.

Comparison between the stage and radio versions revealed
differences in the order of speeches, and additions or deletions of verbal and non-verbal elements. Dialogue was cut or condensed to shorten the script for radio. Occasionally the order of events was rearranged for the adaptation to insure clarity after elements had been cut. Some visual elements of the stage play received verbal equivalents in the radio script, while others were translated through radio production techniques, such as sound effects. In addition, radio production techniques which had no stage equivalent were added in the adaptation process to help create a mood or emphasize a character. These alterations appear to have been made for two reasons: to compensate for the lack of the visual element on radio, and to shorten the script to conform to the CBC network's time restrictions.

The author of this study concludes that the adaptation techniques used in the scripts under consideration are relatively rudimentary. For the most part, the playwrights did only what was necessary to make the stage play understandable to the radio listener and did not fully exploit the potential of the radio medium. The radio listener can be stimulated to imagine an unbounded stage and need not be restricted by an aural translation of a physical stage setting. The author suggests that further investigations might explore techniques which would help the adaptor to transform his play more imaginatively for radio.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1928, the Parliament of Canada appointed the Aird Commission to study and recommend policies regarding the establishment of a radio service which could reach the entire country, provide a domestic outlet for Canadian talent, foster national consciousness, and further cultural growth. The Broadcasting Act of 1932 established the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, and in 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation came into being. With all domestic services in operation, CBC Radio now reaches ninety-nine percent of the Canadian population.

CBC radio drama productions, which have been broadcast at least once a week since 1944, have made an important contribution to Canadian drama. The CBC radio network has been unique amongst the mass media in being able to bring drama to virtually every inhabited corner of Canada, including the more remote areas of the country where professional stage productions are rare and television programming limited.

As Robert Martin notes, Canadians have been responding enthusiastically to CBC radio drama since

\footnote{FM, AM, French, English, and the Northern Service.}
Andrew Allan and his team hit the airwaves with the best dramatic series Canada ever produced. It was called Stage '44 or '45 or '46, depending on the year and at the height of its success was second in popularity only to that perpetual favorite, the Saturday night hockey game. ... Despite the competition from television and a burgeoning live theatre in Canada, the fact is that radio drama still draws audiences. The average number of listeners to CBC Stage, the network's drama flagship, last year was 40,000 per week or 208,000 per year.1

Since its inception, the CBC has been the most consistent employer of Canadian playwrights and has offered them the largest potential audience. Playwrights who write for the stage often seek wider exposure for their work by adapting their plays for CBC radio production. To adapt a play written for a medium which appeals to the senses of sight and hearing, for a medium which depends solely on the sense of hearing, an author must technically alter the original script. This study examines the techniques which have been used to cope with the transition from stage play to CBC radio production.

The source materials used in this investigation are Canadian stage plays and their CBC radio adaptations. The study has been confined to Canadian material because of the unique relationship which exists between Canadian authors and CBC producers. A formal agreement between the CBC and

1 Robert Martin, "Radio Drama: It's Still There and so are the Listeners," The Globe and Mail, September 30, 1972, p. 31.
the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists guarantees the playwright's control over his script after purchase of the radio rights by the Corporation (see Appendix). This control insures the integrity of the script in the translation from stage to radio.

Comparisons of scripts of original stage plays with their radio adaptations revealed a number of alterations: differences in the order of speeches, and additions or deletions of verbal and non-verbal elements. These alterations appear to have been made for two reasons: to compensate for the lack of the visual element on radio, and to shorten the scripts to conform to the network's time restrictions.

Eight stage plays and their adaptations were chosen for examination. Other examples exist, but either a published version of the stage play was unavailable, or the author of the play could not be reached for interview. The plays examined are: *The Abdication*, by Norman Newton; *The Action Tonight*, by Tom Grainger; *Captive of the Faceless Drummer*, by George Ryga; *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*, by David Watmough; *The Great Hunger*, by Leonard

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1The Society of Authors, the British equivalent of ACTRA, has concluded no such agreement with the BBC, and American writers have no equivalent organization which collectively represents their interests to the individual radio networks.

2The average stage play runs approximately two hours, while most radio plays produced by the CBC run one hour.
Peterson; Women in the Attic, by Leonard Peterson; Quiet Day in Belfast and its radio version, "Murder in the Betting Shop," by Andrew Angus Dalrymple; and Yesterday the Children Were Dancing, by Gratien Gélinas. The adaptation of Gélinas' play was written by Mavor Moore, who translated the French version for production in English, and co-directed, with Gélinas, the first English performance. For the purpose of this study, Moore is regarded as the author and adaptor because of his close association with the English stage version of the play.

The study began with a textual analysis of the scripts and an audit of the radio transcriptions to ascertain the changes that had occurred in the adaptation process. Then, each of the seven playwrights and several CBC radio producers were interviewed. This analysis revealed six types of alterations, or techniques, used by the playwrights in translating from stage to radio. Each chapter in the body of this study reports on a different technique. "Cuts" examines elements of the stage script which have no equivalent in the radio script. "Condensations" deals with passages of dialogue which have been retained in a shorter form in the radio adaptation. "Rearrangements" investigates alterations in the order of events for radio presentation. Examples of visual elements of the stage play which are given equivalents in the radio dialogue are discussed in the chapter, "Verbal Equivalents", whereas "Aural Equivalents"
discusses visual elements that are translated through radio production techniques, such as sound effects. Radio production techniques which have no equivalent in the stage script are discussed under the heading, "Production Additions". An Appendix including the CBC-ACTRA agreement follows the body of the study.
CHAPTER I
CUTS

Because the average stage play runs approximately two hours with intermissions, and most radio plays produced by the CBC run one hour,¹ time appears to be one of the prime concerns of an author adapting his stage play for radio. The stage version must be reduced in length, and a ratio established between the parts of the stage play and the corresponding parts of the radio script.

In this study, the term "cut" refers to an element from the stage play which has no equivalent in the radio adaptation. Such "cuts" fall into two categories: visual effects and dialogue.

Visual Effects

Blocking. When stage blocking² is not given an equivalent on radio, it is usually because an intricate physical movement cannot easily be translated aurally.

¹There are exceptions to this generalization. CBC radio dramas have been produced for half-hour series and the occasional two-hour play has been presented in two one-hour slots one week apart.

²Blocking is movement of characters on stage. It may be indicated in the stage directions or implied by the context of the dialogue.
Violent activity is often omitted from a radio adaptation, as in *The Great Hunger* and *The Action Tonight*. The deletion of the fight from *The Great Hunger* does not appear to affect the listener's$^1$ comprehension of the plot. However, with no indication of a fight in *The Action Tonight*, a significant difference in dramatic effect occurs.

In *The Action Tonight*, a young woman, Delores, wanders into the apartment occupied by Golden Echo, an amnesia victim, and his guardian, George. The police have been informed by Delores' boyfriend that they will find illegal drugs in the apartment, and in the ensuing raid they attempt to arrest the innocent three, who don't know the drugs are there. In the stage version, Golden Echo grabs a policeman's gun, and is then "jumped" by both policemen. The stage directions indicate that the gun "goes off. The policemen stand motionless for a second or two. They let go of Golden Echo. He slumps to the floor."$^2$ In the radio adaptation, there is no indication of a scuffle. Delores begs Golden Echo to drop the chain he is holding. When Golden Echo refuses, a gun shot is heard and Delores screams. The inference is that, without a struggle, the policeman has shot Golden Echo. In the stage version, when the policeman says that Golden Echo was accidently killed while resisting

$^1$The term "listener" refers to the radio audience. The term "spectator-listener" refers to the stage audience.

arrest, there is some truth to his defence. However, this same statement in the radio play rings false. On stage, Golden Echo fights and dies accidently, in a struggle to protect his friend. On radio, he is killed in cold blood for no apparent reason. Attention is focused at the end of the radio adaptation, not on the main character of Golden Echo, but on the "deus ex machina", the policeman.

The playwright Tom Grainger and the producer Don Mowatt agree that the stage play contains too much movement to translate unaltered for radio.¹ If the fight and its relevant movement were identified aurally in adaptation, the production would have become cluttered by overwriting.²

**Gestures.** The omission of a character's hand movement from the radio version of *Quiet Day in Belfast* results in possible listener confusion and the loss of an important plot element. At the end of Act II in the stage script, Tim, a simpleton, has been left with a gun to guard the BBC reporters. The stage directions indicate that "as the falling curtain cuts them off, Tim is seen to be slowly, but definitely, lowering the gun."³ As the curtain rises on

¹Interview with Tom Grainger, January 24, 1974.
²Interview with Don Mowatt, January 21, 1974.
Act III, "the gun is in Tim's belt,"¹ and the BBC men are filming a report. The radio equivalent of the curtain falling and rising for the break between acts is a musical bridge which fades into silence before the next dialogue begins. The scene opens with dialogue concerning the filming, but there is nothing which would indicate to the radio listener that Tim has been persuaded to relax his guard on the reporters.

**Setting.** Occasionally a scenic element will be cut from a radio adaptation. For example, an indication of setting is omitted from the radio version of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*. Describing the interior of the house where the old nuns live, Watmough says in the stage script that "Everything is protected by voluminous sheets that only half conceal the crucifixes and other holy objects they shroud."² This description of the setting is important to an understanding of the play, as it reveals the situation in which the nuns are living. Their home is "the yawning choir of a church"³ which appears to have been unused as such for many years. Against this background, the nuns are portrayed as strange, emotionally unbalanced old women, attempting to live in the past.

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¹Ibid., p. III.1.


³Ibid.
The radio adaptation contains no equivalent which would help the listener to visualize such a setting. True, the script calls for an echo-chamber effect during the interior scenes, which makes the women's voices sound as though they were in a vault. However, there is no verbal indication that this is or was a religious place that has deteriorated through lack of use.

Often a verbal indication of a visual element is cut from the stage dialogue because it would hold little relevance for the radio listener. For example, in *Quiet Day in Belfast*, the stage directions indicate that Tim brings out a sign bearing the legend "Business As Usual--Good Luck". Later when the BBC men are filming their interviews, the reporter tells the cameraman to "get a shot of that sign, Taff. It'll make a good cutaway."¹ The stage directions indicate that "Taffy shoots the sign which Tim placed in front of the counter."² In the radio version, Tim refers to the sign when he asks, "Mr. Slattery, will I put up the 'Business as Usual' sign till the parade goes by?"³ but the later reference to the men filming the sign is omitted. The stage business is purely visual and, not being dramatically important, can be eliminated.

²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 12.
Lighting. The stage version of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon* contains a lighting effect for which there is no equivalent in the radio adaptation. The nuns have led their Mother Superior to the garden to partake in a ritualized dance of murder - a repetition of the dance which occurred "one September afternoon" in which they killed the Jewish refugee. The stage directions indicate that as Sister Sarah's slow tango becomes more extravagant, "A light glows from the pit becoming brighter and brighter, flickering over the figures..."¹ The radio adaptation lacks both a reference to Sarah's grotesque dancing, and an indication of the strangely-silhouetted figures. It would appear that an aural equivalent of this visual effect would be too difficult to achieve without sounding stilted or overwritten. In fact, the playwright, Watmough, feels that the entire dance does not work on radio because it is totally choreographic.²

By not providing an aural equivalent of a lighting effect, Leonard Peterson has created a subtle new dimension in his adaptation of *Women in the Attic*. Bruno, a reporter, has hidden himself in an attic where he listens to the life story of Old Lil. Parts of Old Lil's past are dramatized

¹ David Watmough, *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?* (Vancouver: The Bau-Xi Gallery, 1967), p. 120.
² Interview with David Watmough, January 22, 1974.
by Lilian, her younger self. The spectator-listener is not
told whether Old Lil is a figment of Bruno's imagination.
At one point, Bruno's friend Hank enters the attic. On
stage the lights dim on the women until Hank leaves. This
would seem to suggest that Old Lil, invisible to Hank, exists
only in Bruno's mind. As there is no equivalent of this
lighting change on radio, the listener is uncertain as to
whether Hank sees Old Lil and Lilian. By not providing an
aural equivalent for a visual clue, the radio version rein­
forces the listener's dilemma by maintaining ambiguity.

**Dialogue**

In addition to blocking and scenic effects which are
not given an aural equivalent in radio adaptation, passages
of dialogue are often cut in the adaptation process. When
entire passages or portions of speeches are deleted, a pat­
tern of cutting a particular element throughout the play
often develops. For example, portions of one character's
dialogue may be cut consistently in the adaptation process.
A character may have less importance in the radio version,
or may be omitted entirely. Often the number of characters
in the stage play is reduced in proportion to the length of
the radio play. Since the listener must be able to distin­
guish the voices he hears, the number of major characters in
radio drama is usually kept to a minimum. The listener may
lose interest if he is confused by innumerable voices and a
complicated plot.
The elimination of a secondary character may result in a tighter script, but it also may cause a significant change in structure or meaning. More often, a character is reduced in importance by cutting parts of his dialogue and references to him.

In *The Abdication*, the characters Tristam and Pearl are less crucial to the plot than are Victor and Betty. Pearl is Victor's girlfriend whom he abandons for Betty. Tristam is Victor's Parasite - an alcoholic friend who philosophically reminisces about better days. Because Tristam's speeches of reminiscence are omitted from the radio version, he is no longer as full a character as he is in the stage play. His tragi-comic function in the stage play is altered in the radio version to that of a foil for Victor. The character of Victor, in turn, receives more attention on radio than on stage.

Norman Newton, the author of *The Abdication*, also minimized the character of Pearl in his radio adaptation. Because of these cuts, her dramatic function as Victor's girlfriend and Betty's competition is revealed much later on radio than on stage. Since her relationship with Victor is thus minimized, the radio listener, unlike the stage spectator-listener, is not concerned with what effect this other woman may have on Victor and Betty's budding romance. Similarly, the radio listener is not very concerned with Victor's dilemma of dealing with two possessive women
simultaneously. In the radio version, although references to Pearl are made by other characters, she is not the imposing force she is in the stage original.

In adapting The Abdication for radio, Norman Newton has remained consistent in his cutting procedure. In keeping with Pearl's diminished character, he has deleted from the radio adaptation references to her by other characters. For example, he has omitted the reference to Pearl walking out on Victor and a conversation in which she is discussed by Tristam and Victor. And, as her future is not important to the radio audience, Newton has cut the conversation involving Pearl, Victor and Willie, Pearl's new romantic interest, from the radio script.

These cuts result in an altered ending for the radio adaptation. In the original stage play, Pearl is a catalyst that disrupts and complicates Victor's life. At the final curtain, Victor has decided to stand by and wait until Pearl tires of Willie. On radio, as Pearl's future is unimportant to the listener, Victor has been left stranded by both women, with no future in sight.

Another example of a consistent reduction of a character occurs in Do You Remember One September Afternoon?. Unlike Newton who has de-emphasized the importance of two secondary characters, David Watmough has minimized a major character in his radio adaptation of Do You Remember One
September Afternoon? The play focuses on three old nuns, one of whom is dumb. The character of Dumb Dora poses a unique problem for a radio adaptation. On radio, the question of presence arises when a character is silent. On stage, the character of Dumb Dora is perceived by the spectator-listener through two senses. The spectator-listener sees Dora and hears her referred to by the other women. On radio, the listener must rely solely on the indications by the other women of Dora's presence and actions. Watmough believes that since the sense of hearing is less sophisticated than the sense of sight, action on radio must be affirmed with greater emphasis. While Dumb Dora's actions are unseen and cannot be indicated technically by her relationship to the microphone, they must either be given equivalents in the dialogue of the other characters or omitted entirely. Watmough has cut some of Dora's actions from his radio adaptation and has added dialogue to compensate for other actions.

The importance of Dumb Dora's character is reduced in the radio version - some of her actions are ignored and some are minimized. In addition, references to her background have been omitted from the adaptation. The listener is not told of Dora "as a plump, rosy-cheeked girl" who "would spend hours watching the blennies in the rock pools." 

1 Interview with David Watmough, January 22, 1974.
at the seaside, nor that "she always wanted to emigrate . . .
Begged to be allowed to go to the OUTBACK . . ."¹ Without
these personal details, Dora becomes a shallower, less im-
portant character in the radio version.

Dialogue cuts for the radio version of The Action
Tonight change the dramatic effect of a scene. In the
stage version, tension and suspense are heightened as
Binky, a young drug peddler, intermittently refers to po-
licemen who are preparing to arrest the occupants of the
house. George, Golden Echo and Binky's girlfriend Delores
are to be arrested for possession of illegal drugs because
Binky has given the police their address and hidden drugs
on the premises. The indications throughout the stage ver-
sion of an imminent threat of the police appearing are cut
for the radio adaptation. For example, the following lines
are deleted:

Golden Echo: There's a policeman at the corner,
Gee-Gee.²

George: Four cops now. Four armed bandits.³

George: (shouts) Them goddamn stinking bandits
still there, Goldy?
Golden Echo: They're still there, Gee-Gee. 4
They keep looking this way though.

¹David Watmough, Do You Remember One September Afternoon? 
²Tom Grainger, "The Action Tonight," Xeroxed copy of pro-
ducer's script, p. 48.
³Ibid., p. 49.
⁴Ibid., p. 50.
George: I just want to know why the cops are out there. 

George: (shouts) Let me know the minute them goddamn bandits move, Goldy. 

Golden Echo: (excitedly) They're moving, Gee-Gee. They're heading this way. 

And interspersed throughout the stage dialogue is Binky's repetition of "the place is surrounded." Since this statement and the warnings of the approach of the police are deleted from the radio script, Binky makes a much more relaxed, casual exit than he does on stage. The tension only begins to heighten fully when the policemen enter and accuse Golden Echo of being a "junky". 

Author Tom Grainger says that an element of foreboding is lost because these references to the police are cut. Without these references, the entrance of the policemen at the end creates a shock effect which could substitute for the loss of suspense. 

The chorus has been cut entirely from the radio adaptation of George Ryga's Captives of the Faceless Drummer. In

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2 Ibid., p. 53.
3 Ibid., p. 55.
4 Ibid., pp. 50, 51, 55.
5 Interview with Tom Grainger, January 24, 1974.
the stage version, the Chorus fulfills several functions. Its role is both visual and aural. Visually, it provides mimed reflections of the action and of the characters' responses, and aurally, non-verbal sound effects, songs and dialogue which exist in counterpoint to plot developments. Ryga says that the chorus was cut because it couldn't be translated aurally without that translation intruding on the existing mood. On stage, the Chorus is used to move the plot from the specific to the general; from the conflict between the revolutionary Commander and Harry, a middle class politician, to the conflict between unwitting oppressor and his victim. The radio version, lacking the Chorus and some of the functions it fulfills, works only on the specific level; whereas the stage version, through the Chorus, works on both general and specific levels.

Since Ryga decided to cut the Chorus from his radio adaptation, the moods of the main characters, which were reflected by mimed actions of the Chorus, are not as readily apparent to the radio listener as they are to the stage spectator-listener. For instance, in the stage play, the Chorus "reflects Harry's irony in their gestures and reaction." There is no equivalent exposition on radio.

1 Interview with George Ryga, March 6, 1974.

2 George Ryga, Captives of the Faceless Drummer (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1971), p. 44.
In addition, there is no radio equivalent for the grotesque reflection the Chorus presents of Harry's affair with the young Jenny.

Percussion clatter and panic shrieks of CHORUS. Against their will, two members lock themselves in a lascivious embrace, from which they break fearfully. 1

Occasionally the Chorus assumes individual personalities on stage, but these too are omitted from the adaptation. No equivalent is given for the stage dialogue between the student, the worker and the businessman, in which they voice their bitter argument and defences.

The effect of these visual and verbal omissions is that of rendering the plot more immediate and less universal. In the radio version, the action appears to be on one level with occasional flashbacks to Harry's past, whereas the Chorus provides the stage play with a concrete means of abstracting the theme.

An example of the omission of an entire scene from a radio adaptation occurs in The Abdication. The omitted episode is an enactment of Victor's drunken dream. In this scene, Victor's sense of victimization is dramatized in comic strip fashion, as Betty becomes the Bat Girl, her

1 George Ryga, Captives of the Faceless Drummer (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1971) p. 36.
sister Helen becomes the Queen of the Amazons, and Victor's best friend George becomes the Prime Minister. The radio script does not undergo the change of style that occurs in the stage version when the realistic style is temporarily interrupted by the dramatization of Victor's fantasy. The reason for this cut appears to be the time element, which required the stage script to be shortened by over an hour for radio. The omission of this scene does not seem to affect the quality of the radio version. In fact, the structure of the play would appear to be tightened by the omission of this rather rambling scene which has little relation to the plot.

In summary, passages of dialogue which are omitted from the adapted script generally are concerned with characters which are not of prime importance to the main plot. Also, stage directions regarding visual effects often are not translated for radio. Indications of blocking, gestures, setting and lighting have been omitted from the radio adaptations under consideration. The playwright attempts to retain the essence of his work while preparing it for a shorter running time.
CHAPTER II
CONDENSATIONS

To compensate for a shorter playing time the radio adaptor occasionally chooses to omit some subordinate dialogue and characters. However, these elements often contain essential information which the adaptor must re-incorporate in a condensed form. Two examples of the technique of condensation are discussed in this chapter.

In his radio adaptation of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*, David Watmough has shortened passages of dialogue, retaining the information they contain. In Mavor Moore's radio adaptation of his English translation of Gratien Gélinas' *Yesterday the Children Were Dancing*, the entire first act of the stage play has been condensed.

*Yesterday the Children Were Dancing* is essentially a dramatization of the conflict between the federalist and separatist ideologies in French Canada. Act I of the stage play sets the scene in the French Canadian household of a respected lawyer, M. Gravel. M. Gravel has just been asked to accept the position of Minister of Justice in the federal government. The reaction of his son André, a separatist leader, and the argument between father and son comprise
Act II. An element of urgency is created at the end of Act I when André announces that a bomb will explode somewhere in the city within an hour and a half. Gravel's desperate attempt to dissuade his son from committing this criminal act increases the element of suspense which Moore is most interested in retaining in his adaptation.

Moore explains that he adhered as closely as possible to the stage version. He writes that he "trimmed" Act II, while "drastically" reducting the portion of the play leading up to it, because "fundamentally the meat of the drama is the argument between father and son, which occupies Act II . . ." As an alternative to condensing Act I, Moore says he could have broken down the first part into a number of scenes, commencing with Gravel and Duranceau [the Minister of Justice he is to replace] emerging from the Forum on Saturday night, with a series of short scenes following - Gravel at his country place, at the urgent political meeting - and then into the scene with O'Brien [his brother-in-law].

Moore points out that these episodes would be additions, based on the information revealed in the first part of the

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1 Letter of Nov. 8, 1967 to Esse Ljungh, producer of the radio adaptation, CBC files, Toronto.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
stage version. Instead, he decided to incorporate the necessary information in condensed form in his radio adaptation.

In Act I of the stage version, the spectator-listener learns the details surrounding Gravel's decision. Roberge, the political organizer, interrupts the conversation between Gravel and his brother-in-law O'Brien, to try to persuade Gravel to accept the cabinet position. Roberge's reference to the failing health of Duranceau, the present Minister of Justice, is the spectator-listener's first clue to the reason behind the excitement.

In adapting for radio, Moore has cut the character of Roberge. The dialogue concerning Duranceau's condition is also cut: Duranceau is dead at the opening of the radio play. In the adaptation, Gravel explains his situation to O'Brien, revealing immediately that "At eleven-thirty this morning, Arthur Duranceau, the Minister of Justice, collapsed on the sidewalk in front of his house: a brain hemorrhage." Roberge's repeated phone calls to the hospital and the anxious discussions among the other characters throughout the first act of the stage version, are replaced by one line of dialogue.

Although Moore also cut the characters of Gravel's

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1Mavor Moore, "Yesterday the Children Were Dancing," CBC radio play translated and adapted from the stage play by Gratien Gélinas, p. 2.
son Larry and Gravel's secretary from his adaptation, the information these characters provided in the stage version is retained. Early in the stage version Gravel calls Larry into the room to send him on an errand:

**GRAVEL**, as **LARRY** starts to go back upstairs:
Wait a second: your mother has to be picked up.

**LARRY**: In St. Marc?

**GRAVEL**: It's five past seven: you can make it back by eight-twenty, without speeding. [As **LARRY** hesitates] Look: I know it's tough on you, on a lovely Sunday ... [Giving him the car keys] but keep the car for the rest of the evening if you like - maybe take out a girl.

**LARRY**, taking the keys: Okay. [He starts upstairs.]

**GRAVEL**: I'll do the same for you sometime.\(^1\)

Moore has condensed this passage into a single sentence in his radio adaptation. Gravel says to O'Brien, "I've already sent Larry out to St. Marc with the car to pick up his mother and bring her here."\(^2\)

Despite the omission of the three characters, Roberge, Larry and the secretary from the radio adaptation, the dialogue that remains is very close to that of the stage version. However, some of the urgency of the situation may be lost in

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\(^2\) Mavor Moore, "Yesterday the Children Were Dancing," CBC radio play translated and adapted from the stage play by Gratien Gélinas, p. 4.
the radio version due to the deletion of Roberge's fussing about and pressuring Gravel to accept the position. Moore appears to have recognized this problem and in attempting to compensate, has written a provocative opening for the radio adaptation. The preliminary dialogue between Gravel and O'Brien that opens the stage play has been cut and replaced with the following:

GRAVEL: I'm sorry to rout you out on a Sunday, Paul, but I really had to see you.

O'BRIEN: You said it was urgent, so I came at once.

GRAVEL: I've got myself into a fantastic situation.

O'BRIEN: Good or bad?

GRAVEL: I wish I knew. I'm at a crossroads in my life: I've got to make a choice - now, today - and you're involved.¹

This opening is a skillful example of dialogue designed to seize the radio listener's attention and quickly arouse his curiosity. Moore strengthens this passage by prefacing it with an ominous sound effect:

MUSIC: ...a distorted version of "O Canada". In particular, the opening cue should end with a sharp and unresolved cut-off, as if it were taking us "Bang!" ² into the middle of a tennis match ...

¹Mavor Moore, "Yesterday the Children Were Dancing," CBC radio play translated and adapted from the stage play by Gratien Gelinas, p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 1.
In the stage version the mood of the opening develops more slowly and reaches a later climax. Because of the shorter length of his radio adaptation, Moore has introduced the prevailing tone early and sacrificed some of the intensity of the original.

A major problem arises from Moore's decision to condense the first part of the play: without the interruptions made by Roberge, Larry and the secretary, the play stands as two potentially monotonous dialogues (O'Brien-Gravel and Gravel-Andre'). Moore's solution has come quite naturally as a consequence of his trimming - the focus is now entirely on Gravel. The first act becomes less of a drama of action and more of a psychological portrait of the main character.

A feature that prevents the loss of listener interest in the radio adaptation is that the action is contained within the existing dialogue, i.e., the plot develops as information is revealed through dialogue. Also, the fact that the debate between Gravel and his son is not a leisurely family discussion, but an emotionally-charged argument on which both their futures rest, adds to the suspense.

Because the facts are condensed, the rhythm of the radio adaptation is smoother than that of the stage version, and the action on radio appears to advance more swiftly than on stage. Moore has cut much of the dialogue which reveals character but which does not advance the plot. For example,
because the character of Roberge is cut, the facets of Gravel's and O'Brien's characters which are revealed in conversation with Roberge in the stage version are lost. Moore's emphasis in the first part of the play is on providing the listener with the salient facts of Gravel's situation in a briefer form than that which occurs in Gelinas' stage play. By shortening Act I considerably for the radio version, Moore was able to leave Act II almost completely intact in his adaptation.

David Watmough wrote the radio adaptation of his own stage play, *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?* Although the radio version is very similar to the original in style and content, its one-hour playing time is much shorter than that of the stage version, which runs two-and-a-half to three hours. Watmough explains that it was the shorter time allowed for the radio version that motivated him to condense passages of dialogue which are subordinate to the main action for his adaptation. He acknowledges, though, that the poetic quality of language which exists in the original play suffers somewhat because of his condensations.¹ Watmough's technique of condensation is apparent in the following examples.

Act II begins with a scene in which the three nuns are in their room, preparing for the visit of their Mother

¹ Interview with David Watmough, January 22, 1974.
Superior. Two of them reminisce about the past. In the stage version, Mary-Elizabeth pauses in her work to respond to Sarah:

I can see the first stars, the calm and wonderful stars... all their twinkling silence. Sometimes I think that's all we've got left, Sarah, just the old familiar sign we had as little girls. These same eyes look up into all that strangeness, and I can't say what stirs my breast now is so very different from the time when Papa took me in his arms. I'd had a bad dream and he carried me to the window from my cot. He smelt of wine and cigars, but I was not afraid as my eyes joined his and feasted on the Milky way.¹

Watmough has shortened this speech in his adaptation to read as follows:

I remember when I could see the first stars through there. The calm and wonderful stars. All their twinkling silence. I could feel the same things as the time dear Papa took me in his arms. I'd had a bad dream and he carried me from my cot to the window. He smelt of wine and cigars, but I wasn't afraid as we both looked and feasted on the Milky Way.²

Mary-Elizabeth's memories of her youth are communicated to the radio listener, although her perception of her present


²David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?" CBC radio script, p. 20.
situation - "That's all we've got left" has been omitted. Her habit of fondly reminiscing about a happier past, while ignoring her companion Sarah's cynicism, is retained in the radio version.

An example of a loss of poetic language occurs when the line, "The patch was only a scar, the wound lived under it" is omitted from the radio version. The line, "These same eyes I look up into all that strangeness, and I can't say what stirs in my breast now is so very different from the time when Papa took me in his arms." is reduced in the radio version to, "I could feel the same things as the time dear Papa took me in his arms." The economies of time dictated by radio adaptation have left this passage bereft of the best part of its imagery.

In summary, Moore has shortened Gelinas' play, *Yesterday the Children Were Dancing*, by using the technique of condensation. In his adaptation, he has adhered closely to Gelinas' style and content in the second part of the play, while compressing the information given in Gelinas' first act into a faster-paced opening section. Watmough has reduced the length of his play, *Do You Remember One September*

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1 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?", CBC radio script, p. 20.
3 Ibid.
4 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?", CBC radio script, p. 20.
Afternoon?, for radio adaptation partly by condensing passages of dialogue. He has retained the information pertinent to the main plot, while omitting secondary plot or character elements. In the examples cited, a poetic quality of language that exists in the stage version appears to have been lost in the adaptation process.
CHAPTER III
REARRANGEMENTS

In several of the adaptations under consideration, rearrangements have been made in the chronological order of events and speeches. Rearrangements may compensate for the lack of the visual elements on radio, or for cuts made during the adaptation process.

Compensation for the lack of the visual element

Shift of focus. The set required for Leonard Peterson's stage play, The Great Hunger, consists of two distinct acting areas, "a large igloo, Left of Centre stage, [which] has been cut away to reveal the interior," and, the wintery exterior of sweeping snowdrifts around the igloo. The spectator-listener's attention shifts from one area to the other. Occasionally both areas are used simultaneously, a silent action in one part of the set counterpointing conversation in the other part. A character may move from one area to another while speaking, as an important action is

occurring in the place he is leaving or approaching. This simultaneous arrangement presents difficulties for the radio adaptor because, while the stage can create a multifocal experience, radio can only present one focal point at a time. ¹ Peterson has rearranged a number of speeches in his radio adaptation to compensate for the uni-focal nature of radio.

In Act I, Scene I, Noona, a young man, and the woman Saodlu, are inside the igloo of Noona's family. Saodlu tells Noona that the man he calls father is, in fact, his real father's murderer. She insists that Noona must kill his step-father to appease the spirits. In the stage version, Saodlu's daughter calls from outside the igloo to alert her mother to a stranger's approach. Saodlu runs outside and then shouts back menacingly into the igloo, "You will thank Saodlu."² Before the sounds of the stranger's arrival are heard, Saodlu completes her conversation with Noona inside the igloo and says her line, "You will thank Saodlu!"³ as her voice fades off. The sound of a dog team effects the transition to the exterior of the igloo,

¹Although the potential for a dual-focus exists in stereophonic radio production, the limited number of listeners with stereophonic receivers requires that the plays which are produced for stereophonic receivers be equally appropriate for monaural listening.


³Ibid., p. 9.
while the voices of the women outside the igloo fade on. If Saodlu had called to Noona from off-mike in the radio version, the listener would continue to focus on Noona inside the igloo. Radio drama production requires a clear distinction between settings to enable the listener to follow a shift of focus.

A similar situation arises when a section of dialogue is again placed earlier in the radio adaptation than in the stage original to avoid excess focal shifts. On stage a short discussion between Akpik and Sheega, who are outside the igloo, interrupts a conversation between Kudlu and his wife within the igloo, creating a shift of focus. After the Sheega-Akpik interlude, the focus returns to Kudlu and his wife in the igloo. Peterson has placed the Sheega-Akpik dialogue in an earlier segment of his radio version, avoiding an indication of a complicated shift in setting.

**Character entrance.** On radio, a character's entrance is indicated by his speech or by another character acknowledging him. Dramatic irony, which is present in a stage version when the spectator-listener notes a character's presence while the other characters do not, is lost on radio. When a stage play contains this kind of dramatic irony, the order of the dialogue in the radio adaptation must be altered.

For example, in the stage version of *The Action Tonight*, George enters the room unnoticed by Golden Echo and
Delores, who are chatting. However, the radio listener only becomes aware of George's presence at a later point— with his first speech. In addition to the lack of dramatic irony, a possible humorous element is lost to the radio listener. The confrontation between Delores, an intruder, and George, the resident of the room, occurs as Delores "dances gaily around, sees George and stops, facing him." Delores has been ringing the hand bell, an act which Golden Echo has warned "Gee-Gee [George] wouldn't like." Her reaction to being embarrassed in the act by George is a light moment on stage, but absent from the adaptation.

Later in the play two policemen enter the room, unnoticed by the other characters. On stage, this entrance climaxes the suspense built by constant references to the policemen's activities outside. On radio, because these references are cut, the atmosphere becomes less suspenseful. The policemen's entrance occurs later on radio, indicated by George's question, "What the hell do you want?".

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2 Ibid.
3 A complete discussion of these deletions may be found in the chapter concerning "Cuts".
Another example of the rearrangement of a character's entrance occurs in *Quiet Day in Belfast*. In the stage version, O'Lurgan, the revolutionary, enters the betting shop with Goodman, the shop owner. Although O'Lurgan is mostly silent during the scene which follows, his physical presence on stage is forceful and rather ominous. At one point he moves towards Goodman. This silent movement might be understood as a threat and a demonstration of O'Lurgan's power over Goodman. In the radio adaptation, O'Lurgan's entrance is delayed until his first speech. Goodman enters the betting shop alone, and several speeches later O'Lurgan is heard coming on-mike. Because O'Lurgan's entrance comes later in the radio version, his silent move towards Goodman during Goodman's speech, has no radio equivalent and the opportunity to establish the O'Lurgan-Goodman relationship is lost.

Compensation for cuts

**Blocking.** The set in *The Action Tonight* has been established in both the stage and radio versions as having two levels: the upper level from which Golden Echo sits and watches over the freeway, and the lower level on which the main action takes place. In a scene from the stage version, Golden Echo is sitting on a chair on the upper level, while Delores is on the lower level, playing with the bell belonging
to Golden Echo's roommate George. Golden Echo becomes so alarmed that "he leaps off the chair, scrambles down the ladder, grapples with DELORES and takes the bell from her."\(^1\) Because Golden Echo's actions are not given an aural equivalent on radio, a rearrangement of blocking occurs. On radio, his movement down the ladder is placed later in the scene when he agrees to Delores' command, "Come down here and show me."\(^2\) By placing Golden Echo's descent later in the radio version, the playwright achieves an interesting difference in effect. In the stage version the conversation between Delores and Golden Echo takes place on the lower level, whereas in the radio version the listener imagines a greater distance between the two. Both characters are portrayed as eccentric. The dialogue on stage and the characters' names emphasize the strange plot: a man, an amnesia victim, watches over the traffic to prevent further accidents. The imagined radio blocking, in which two characters shout at each other, although they are in the same room, underscores the oddity of the situation.

**Dialogue.** The music which is interspersed throughout both stage and radio versions of *Captives of the Faceless*

\(^1\) Tom Grainger, "The Action Tonight," Xeroxed copy of producer's script, p. 38.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 40.
Drummer counterpoints the main dialogue between Harry, the kidnapped politician, and the Commander, his captor. George Ryga has omitted most of the songs from his radio adaptation and replaced them with parts of one recurring song. Portions of this song are rearranged in the radio version to compensate for the lack of the visual element. For example, during a particularly tense moment in the confrontation between the two men, the stage directions indicate that "Both men face each other, ready to pounce. HARRY shakes his head and turns away. COMMANDER also cannot face him." This break in the rhythm of the argument is provided in the radio version by a two-line refrain of the "theme" song.

Ryga explains that he reduced the number of songs for the radio adaptation in order to compensate for the shorter time period allowed for the adaptation. He also rearranged the positioning of the songs to maintain the contrapuntal balance between song and dialogue, which was disturbed by the cutting process.

In summary, the order of speeches may be altered in a radio adaptation to avoid focal shifts. Character entrances which are not indicated aurally in a stage play may be given an aural equivalent in a radio adaptation, or they may be postponed until an aural indication occurs in the stage.

2 Interview with George Ryga, March 6, 1974.
version. Adapting a dual-focus setting for radio may require the rearrangement of implied blocking. The purpose is to avoid confusing the listener with frequent focal shifts. Musical interludes may be rearranged in a radio adaptation to maintain the song-dialogue balance which has been disturbed by cutting.
CHAPTER IV
VERBAL EQUIVALENTS

One of the most difficult problems in adapting a stage play for radio is providing radio verbal equivalents for visual elements of the stage production. Though the stage setting is inevitably established by some visual stimuli, if only the physical presence of actors, setting on radio is created solely through aural stimuli. However, the purely aural medium permits a flexibility of focus which does not exist on stage. Radio is akin to film in this respect - with much greater subtlety than is possible on stage, the radio listener's attention may be focused on a setting, shifted to a "close-up" of a character and then switched to a different setting. The spectator-listener of a stage performance will always retain a sense of being a stationary observer. But film can convey to the spectator-listener an illusion of his own movement, by varying close-up and long shots. It may also convey a sense of perspective by occasionally shooting from one character's point of view. On radio, the listener's sense of location in relation to the characters, his "sound perspective", can be altered, for example, by changing the distance between the
actor and the microphone.

The translation of a specific area of a specific kind of stage into the unbounded "stage" of the listener's mind creates problems. Stage directions calling for gestures or blocking within a specific space are often given an aural equivalent to aid the listener in creating his own "listening space". In the plays under consideration, it would appear that the adaptor often does not consider this perceptual difference in "space". He assumes his listeners will all imagine a typical proscenium set, and in doing so, limits his listener's imagination by restricting it to the confines of a static set.

Because the listener relies solely on his sense of hearing in responding to a radio drama, those visual aspects of the stage play which are necessary for the listener's comprehension must be translated aurally. Verbal equivalents are of two types: those which substitute for written stage directions, and those which substitute for visual elements not directly indicated in the stage script, but implied in the context of action.

Verbal equivalent of visual element indicated by stage directions

In the adaptations examined, many of the directions from the stage scripts are given direct and rather obvious verbal equivalents. For example, the directions in the
stage version of *Quiet Day in Belfast* indicate that the betting office manager Slattery, "rings up 67p and hands Mrs. McDuatt [a customer] the money."¹ Because the radio listener must know that Mrs. McDuatt has received her winnings, additional dialogue is necessary in the radio version to indicate this action. The sound of the cash register ring has been retained in the radio adaptation so that the listener knows a money transaction is occurring. The implied action is clarified by a line added to the radio version, Slattery's "Now take your winnin's."²

Sound effects and additional dialogue provide an aural equivalent for a character's action on stage in *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*. In the garden, the nuns have found a buried liquor bottle and have started to drink its contents. On stage, Sister Sarah picks up the bottle and takes "a deep swig."³ On radio, a line is added. Sarah says, "Time for another swig. Me throat keeps dryin' up."⁴ The gurgling noise which she makes following these

⁴ David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?" CBC radio script, p. 7.
lines in the radio version adds to the image of her rather silly, childish manner of drinking.\(^1\)

Dumb Dora, a character who can hear, but cannot speak, is one of the four main characters in the stage version of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon*? In choosing to retain the character on radio, the author, David Watmough, has provided a large number of verbal equivalents for her actions, mainly in the form of additional dialogue spoken by other characters. Although non-verbal indications of Dora's presence (grunts, gutteral sounds, etc.) would help establish her character in the radio production, Don Mowatt, the producer of the radio version, for financial reasons did not want to hire a fourth actress to play Dumb Dora.\(^2\) As a result, Dumb Dora's character tends to be diminished. The listener must rely on the rather obvious dialogue of the other characters for information regarding Dora.

For example, after the Mother Superior has entered the nuns' room, Sisters Sarah and Mary-Elizabeth arrange themselves for tea. The stage directions indicate that "Dumb Dora, meanwhile, has shuffled through chairs . . . until close to Mother Placida's throne. She squats at Mother Placida's

\(^1\)To further emphasize her action, the actress in the first radio production spoke her lines in a manner that suggested drunkenness.

\(^2\)Interview with David Watmough, January 22, 1974.
feet like a dog, ignored."¹ In the radio version, Mary-
Elizabeth indicates Dora's actions with the added lines,
"That's it, Dumb Dora dear. You sit there by Mother's
feet."²

Similarly, Mary-Elizabeth's lines in the radio play,
"... Here have some tea in your saucer on the floor. Bend
over and you won't spill it,"³ provide a verbal equivalent
for the action indicated in the stage directions: "Dumb
Dora has already poured tea into her saucer, and [is] lap-
ping it up..."⁴

In the radio adaptation, Dora is always perceived in
relationship to another character. Because she is silent,
her actions are communicated only through another charac-
ter's observations. While the spectator-listener at the
theatre focuses on Dora as an individual entity on stage,
the radio listener perceives her only vicariously.

In another scene of the same adaptation, Watmough has
provided a verbal equivalent of an action, while incorporating

² David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?," CBC radio script, p. 28.
³ Ibid., p. 29.
information about the setting. This additional information aids the listener in creating the setting for himself. In preparation for their Mother Superior's visit, the nuns patch a hole in the ceiling. From the previous dialogue both the radio listener and the theatre spectator-listener learn that the rain comes in through that leak in the roof. The stage directions indicate that "together they [Sisters Sarah and Mary-Elizabeth] painfully drag it [a ladder] and erect it under a shaft of light."¹ In his radio adaptation Watmough has added Mary-Elizabeth's dialogue: "Here's the ladder. Goodness it's heavy. And this floor's so slippery here"² to help the listener imagine the women's struggle. Although there is no reference to a "shaft of light" in the radio version, the mention of the slippery floor, which was probably caused by the leak in the roof, stimulates the listener's imaginative creation of the setting. The important fact is not that light streams through, but that the rain leaks into the room, causing it to be mildewed and damp. The playwright further adds to the evocation of setting in the radio version by appending Sarah's comment, "Smell the mildew here? Like a proper Irish bog!."³

On occasion, a verbal equivalent, necessary for the radio listener's comprehension, sounds awkward and somewhat

²David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?," CBC radio script, p. 21.
³Ibid.
obvious. An example occurs in the scene in the garden at the end of the play. In the stage version, Mother Placida, Sister Mary-Elizabeth and Dumb Dora are on stage when Sarah enters,

... pushing an old baby carriage. It is piled high with junk. But among the contents are three newish nuns' habits and an old-fashioned gramophone, a few records...

At this point in his radio adaptation, Watmough has inserted a speech for Mary-Elizabeth in which she indicates Sarah's entrance and describes the props the latter is wheeling:

Oh, it's Sarah... She's brought your toys and things, Dotty, in that old perambulator. I can see an old gramophone with lots of records... I do believe she's found fresh habits for us.

This additional dialogue is crucial to the listener's understanding of the plot, yet it sounds unnatural and contrived.

One sentence inserted into the radio version of Quiet Day in Belfast provides several kinds of information. Sgt. McFiske, the local police officer, has been taken prisoner by Slattery, the manager of the betting shop, during a riot in Belfast. McFiske explains to the BBC cameramen who have become caught in the cross-fire that neither he nor Slattery are extremists, even though Slattery is aiming a gun at him. He asserts: "Resortin' to violence isn't in either one of

2 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?", CBC radio script, p. 43.
At this moment the stage directions indicate:

An explosion is heard from the street and all the shop lights go off for a full two seconds. When the lights come on, MCFISKE brings the chair crashing down onto the spot where SLATTERY had been standing.

In the radio version the listener hears the sounds of the explosion and of a wooden chair crashing to the floor. Slattery's following speech, added in the radio version, outlines the lighting change; the action which occurs during the blackout, and the length of time the action takes:

The lights! The lights! (SOUND - WOODEN CHAIR BEING SMASHED TO THE FLOOR) You wouldn't have been tryin' out a little violence with that chair during the two second black-out, would you McFiske?

A problem arises in the adaptation of a stage play in which the ending of the play contains important non-verbal action. The playwright may have arranged to conclude his stage play with a silent act or character gesture which "speaks" more effectively than words. A silent tableau

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3 Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 47.
obviously cannot have an exact equivalent on radio.

At the end of George Ryga's play, *Captives of the Faceless Drummer*, three soldiers rescue Harry, the kidnapped politician, and shoot his captor the Commander. These actions are unaccompanied by dialogue. The blocking is outlined in the stage directions:

HARRY mimes the action of trying to hold back the armed men from entering, from killing. Two of them push their way by him. The third shakes HARRY'S hand and begins to escort him out . . .

. . . COMMANDER begins slow mime of death by shooting, his revolver dropping, his limbs distorted with pain, his mouth opened wide in a death howl as he falls to the floor.

The howl COMMANDER does not make is voiced by HARRY as he is led out.1

In the same scene, the problem of aurally indicating a character's entrance arises. In his radio adaptation, Ryga signals the soldier's entrance by dialogue and the sound effects of a "door being kicked in" and "bolts on rifles thrown back."2 The single soldier in the radio version (in the stage version there are three soldiers) commands, "Stand where you are! . . . Drop that gun!."3 The listener realizes


2 George Ryga, "Captives of the Faceless Drummer," CBC radio script, p. 72.

3 Ibid.
what is about to happen as Harry cried, "No! . . . Oh God! . . .
No!" at the moment when a single shot is heard. Harry's howl
of pain, which the stage directions indicate reflect the
Commander's reaction, is heard in the radio version. Harry's
exclamation, "You've killed him! And he just stood there! . . .
Why?" verbally clarifies the action. Ryga explains that he
added the dialogue in the radio ending so that the listener
would know what happened, but he does not think the dramatic
impact of the ending has been lessened by this addition.

In addition to stage blocking receiving an aural equivalent
in a radio adaptation, a character's gesture on stage
occasionally requires an aural translation for radio. The
technique is usually a simple addition to the dialogue in which
a character draws the listener's attention to a gesture made
by himself or another character.

At the end of Act II, Scene I of Do You Remember One September
Afternoon?, the stage directions indicate that Dumb Dora "sinks
to the ground and begins to cry; Mary-Elizabeth stoops to comfort
her . . . .". In order to translate Dora's crying for radio, the
playwright added Mary-Elizabeth's consoling line, "There, there,
don't cry" to the end of the scene. It would appear that much

1 George Ryga, "Captives of the Faceless Drummer", CBC radio
script, p. 72.
2 Ibid, interview with George Ryga, March 6, 1974
3 Interview with George Ryga, March 6, 1974
4 David Watmough, Do You Remember One September Afternoon?
5 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?"
CBC radio script, p. 23
impact would be lost at this point in the transition from stage to radio.

A further addition occurs in the radio version of this scene which translates a response not directly indicated in the stage directions, but implied by the situation. In the stage version, "Sarah remains still"¹ as Mary-Elizabeth comforts the weeping Dora. From the context of the scene and the indications of Sarah's personality, it would appear that Sarah's silence at this point is a cynical one. In all probability, her facial expression would make her attitude clear to a stage audience. To compensate for the radio listener's inability to perceive visually Sarah's response, Watmough has added Sarah's line, "Why shouldn't she?"² to the radio version. If Sarah "remained still" in the radio version as she does on stage, the listener would wonder what she is doing while Mary-Elizabeth comforts Dora. The added line of dialogue clarifies Sarah's emotional response for the listener.

Lack of reaction by a character may be important to the listener's perception of the action and thus must be indicated aurally in the radio adaptation. Before the tea party scene in Do You Remember One September Afternoon?, the

¹ David Watmough, Do You Remember One September Afternoon? (Vancouver: The Bau-Xi Gallery, 1967), p. 93

² David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?", CBC radio script, p. 24
three nuns have fixed the leak in the ceiling by stuffing it with a human arm which they found in the garden. Because of the grotesque nature of this act, the listener would tend to remember it and anticipate the Mother Superior's reaction when she notices the arm. During tea, Sister Sarah tries to draw Mother Placida's attention to the place "where the daylight used to stream in." The stage directions indicate that while Mother Placida says, "Yes, yes. I'm sure it's all very nice, but I haven't very long," she is not looking at the ceiling. To inform the radio listener of Mother Placida's inattention to Sarah's "little surprise", Watmough has replaced the former's lines of agreement with the line, "Mm. The gin's a tince too warm." Because this unrelated comment is said in answer to a spoken demand to "look" and an implied demand to react, the radio listener realizes that Mother Placida has ignored the demand and not seen the grotesque sight.

The narrator, a character who is removed from or "steps out" from the story and speaks directly to the audience, is often used in a radio drama to explain an element which, if

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1 The identical phrase occurs in Ibid., p. 31, and in David Watmough, Do You Remember One September Afternoon? (Vancouver: The Bau-Xi Gallery, 1967), p. 100.

2 Ibid.

3 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?" CBC radio script, p. 31.
the play were performed on stage, would be seen by the spectator-listener. Narration normally is either in the first or the third person. The narrator may be used to help create the setting, to indicate a shift of setting, and to identify and describe characters for the radio listener.

Leonard Peterson uses the character of Old Lil in his radio version of *Women in the Attic* for occasional first person narration. Old Lil participates in both versions as a character, but in the radio adaptation she also describes some of the action which occurs in the flashbacks to her younger self, Lilian. For example, in the stage version the directions, "Slipping out of his coat" describe the movement of the young man about to rape Lilian. In the radio version, Old Lil verbally describes the same action when she prefaces the young man's speech with, "Slipping out of his coat, he makes it shield and weapon." 

The above examples deal with the technique of providing a verbal equivalent of a character's movement or gesture on stage. An entrance or exit indicated in the directions of a stage script may also be suggested by dialogue additions to the radio version. A character's arrival on-mike (at the focal point of the action) might be announced by a

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character already present, or the new character could introduce himself. Occasionally a character's voice is heard to grow louder, to "fade on" as he approaches the location of the other characters.

A rather obvious dialogue addition that indicates a character entrance occurs in the radio adaptation of *Quiet Day in Belfast*. To prepare the listener for the entrance of Nigel, the BBC reporter, Father Fleming's line, "Oh, I see you've another visitor,"\(^1\) has been added to the radio version. When Nigel says, "Oh, excuse me,"\(^2\) as he approaches the microphone, the listener is aware that another character, a stranger to Father Fleming, has entered the betting shop. Nigel's entrance could be accomplished on radio without this addition. However, there are several other characters present at this time, and the additional line indicating a newcomer clarifies the situation for the listener.

Just before Nigel's entrance, Father Fleming has come into the betting shop. Slattery has been describing the effect the name of O'Lurgan, the revolutionary, had on Mr. Goodman, the shop owner. In the stage version Slattery says Goodman "shied like a frightened fuckin .. ."\(^3\) and then

\(^1\)Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 17.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Andrew Angus Dalrymple, *Quiet Day in Belfast* ("Murder in the Betting Shop") (Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1972), p. 1.16.
"breaks off and puts his hand to his mouth as FATHER FLEMING and THELMA KALOWSKY come in."¹ In the radio adaptation, Slattery interrupts himself earlier and says, "shied like a frightened f ... Father Fleming, (UP) Well, Well, Well."² With this alteration and addition, the adaptor has avoided a censorship problem over the word "fuckin'", has provided a transition in the tone of dialogue, and has indicated Father Fleming's entrance. In addition, some humour has been added to the radio version because of the play on the letter "f". The listener is prepared for a word beginning with "f" to describe Goodman, and is surprised and amused by Slattery's ingenuity in turning a potential vulgarism into the priest's name.

Verbal equivalent of a visual element implied by the context

**Blocking.** While stage blocking is often specified in the stage directions, much of it is left to the director's interpretation. In adapting a stage play for radio production, blocking which is relevant to the plot, whether implied or specified, must be indicated aurally. An example of a verbal equivalent of implied blocking occurs in the stage version of *The Action Tonight*, when George enters his


² Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 17. *(UP)* is a radio production term indicating increase in volume.
room where Golden Echo and Delores have been chatting. Displeased, George orders Golden Echo, "Take your sandwich and watch over the freeway." ¹ The setting has been established for both the stage spectator-listener and the radio listener as having two levels: the upper level from which Golden Echo can sit and watch over the freeway and the lower level on which the characters are located at this moment. As George orders Golden Echo back to the upper level it is probable that the former would gesture to reinforce his command. In the radio version, the first part of his sentence, "Take your sandwich," has been cut and replaced by a verbal equivalent of the implied gesture, "Get up there." ² This command reminds the radio listener of the physical setting and the nature of the movement Golden Echo makes as he is heard moving off-mike.

Scenic elements. A scenic element not specifically described in the stage directions of a play but implied by the existing dialogue may be communicated to the radio listener by a dialogue addition to the radio adaptation. An example occurs in the radio adaptation of Do You Remember One September Afternoon?. In this play, the setting of the nuns' room is


² Ibid.
important to the audience's perception of the characters. A stage production would present visually the damp, decaying choir of a church. The playwright has added dialogue to this radio adaptation which, although it does not correspond directly to the set description in the stage directions, helps to evoke for the listener the feeling of the environment. For example, when Sarah refers in the stage version to a shaft of light coming in through the ceiling, she says, "That's where the rain always comes through." The additional line, "No wonder this marble floor's green with slime in places" has been inserted in the radio version to aid the listener in imagining the setting. The fact that the nuns live in a room which has slime on the floor suggests to the listener that these women are living in the past, unaware of their present surroundings.

This same radio adaptation contains a dialogue addition which demonstrates the need to emphasize the absence of a prop. Generally, if a prop is referred to, the listener believes it is real in the same way he believes the characters are real. While the nuns are preparing for tea, Mary-Elizabeth predicts that their guest, the Mother Superior, will "glide in as she always did . . . first to the


2 Ibid.
On stage the absence of flowers in the nuns' decrepit room would be visually obvious and would reinforce the idea of the women's decadence. However, the radio listener, imagining all the action and setting as he hears about it, would assume that there are flowers for the Mother Superior. Sarah's query in the radio version, "What flowers?," tells the listener that there are none and that once again Mary-Elizabeth is trying to return to the past.

In summary, verbal equivalents are provided in the radio adaptations to substitute for visual elements indicated in the stage directions or implied by the context. These visual elements are predominantly concerned with character movement. Often the verbal equivalent which translates this movement simultaneously informs the radio listener of a scenic element. In some of the examples cited, the aural translation appears heavy-handed because the adaptor tried to aurally create a traditional stage for the radio listener, rather than exploit radio's potential for creating an "unbounded" stage of the mind.

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2 David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?" CBC radio script, p. 25.
CHAPTER V

AURAL EQUIVALENTS

Sound effects can be used to translate a stage direction for radio. A stage direction indicating character movement can be represented by manipulating the distance between the microphone and certain actors. Occasionally this variation of the actors' relationship to the microphone is accompanied by additions to the dialogue.

A sound effect, the equivalent of a stage direction, is added to the radio adaptation of Andrew Angus Dalrymple's *Quiet Day in Belfast*, along with an expository line of dialogue. The stage direction indicates that "Slattery opens the hatch in the blackboard."¹ On one wall of the betting shop set is a blackboard, behind which is a pub. Beer is delivered to the shop through the hatch. To achieve an equivalent effect, the radio script contains the direction, "Sound Cue: Hatch being opened..."² and the additional line of dialogue by a newcomer to the shop, "Oh, I say,


a secret hatch!".  

There is much silent intrigue in the stage version of this play. Some of the mystery has been translated for radio by recording the actor whispering into the microphone. For example, at one point the stage directions indicate that "... while Slattery has his back turned, O'Lurgan hands his canvas bag to Tim and points to the office." To approximate this intimacy, the radio adaptation contains the direction that O'Lurgan whispers "close-on" while delivering the added line, "Here Tim... take me bag to the back out of sight behind the curtain... quick!".

It is possible to translate a visual element for radio by controlling the actor's relationship to the microphone without adding dialogue. An example of this occurs in Tom Grainger's The Action Tonight. The stage directions require the character George to cross down stage right. George moves away from Delores, with whom he is talking, to show her something. The idea of his movement is communicated on radio by the actor speaking his lines as he moves away from...

1 Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 20.

2 Andrew Angus Dalrymple, Quiet Day in Belfast ("Murder in the Betting Shop") (Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1972), p. 1.16.

3 Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 16.

4 Ibid.
the microphone. The listener's focus stays with Delores until both characters speak on-mike again.

Many of the plays under consideration are divided into acts. The end of an act may indicate a change in setting or a time lapse. Sound effects are often used to indicate an act change to the radio listener. Act I of Quiet Day in Belfast ends with a curtain; Act II opens with the curtain rising on the same set, later in the same day. Sound effects are inserted in the radio adaptation to signify the time lapse:

Jig being played on a fiddle—excited music—bridging over to silence and then the sound of a telephone being dialled.¹

Silence at the end of a scene may be used as the aural equivalent of a curtain falling and then rising, or of lights dimming and coming up. At the end of Act I of the stage play, Do You Remember One September Afternoon?, the characters exit and "the lights dim rapidly."² A break in the action is signified in the radio adaptation by the sound of "Organ music up to crescendo, dying gradually away. Silence next to signify scene change."³ Dumb Dora has found a human arm—the organ music heightens the note of suspense. The silence preceding the next scene prepares

¹Andrew Angus Dalrymple, "Murder in the Betting Shop," CBC radio script, p. 32.


³David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?" CBC radio script, p. 15.
the listener for a lower-keyed atmosphere.

Act II of the stage version is set indoors. Act III returns to the outdoor garden setting of Act I. On radio, the scene change is effected by following a pause in the dialogue with the same sound effects that established the setting in Act I - birds chirping, feet crashing through heavy undergrowth. The reoccurrence of the sound effects reminds the listener of the first setting and presumably helps him in visualizing the nuns back in the garden. Here again the silent moment followed by sound effects aids the listener in recognizing a break in the action.

The effect of a lighting change on stage is approximated by sound effects in the radio version of Leonard Peterson's *Women in the Attic*. The stage directions require that the light be "reduced to an uneerie blue . . . the light fades away to black, then fades up to blue again in a continuing flow . . ."1 In this episode of the play, Bruno, the reporter, tries but fails to burn the disturbing autobiographical manuscripts of Old Lil. The light turns blue, he leaves the attic. The light fades to black. He returns when the light fades back to blue. As Old Lil continues her reminiscences, the light returns to normal. The music additions to the radio adaptation follow a pattern similar to the lighting changes on stage. At the point where the light changes to blue, there is a sound cue for music in

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the radio script:

MUSIC: The smothering sweep of one of Old Lil's glad rags, that swirls Bruno into a new awesome awareness.

The music continues through some dialogue, "peaks and slides down ... Cut at (X)." The "X" in the radio script corresponds to the point in the stage script which specifies that the light becomes more normal.

In summary, the radio adaptation of Dalrymple's *Quiet Day in Belfast* contains sound effects added to provide an aural equivalent for the opening of the secret hatch. For the listener's clarification, some dialogue supplements the sound effects. Also in this adaptation is an example of a radio actor whispering into the microphone to approximate secretive, mimed communication on stage. The movement of a character is indicated in the radio adaptation of *The Action Tonight* when the radio actor delivers his lines while moving off-mike. The conclusion of an act can be shown on stage by a curtain falling or the lights dimming. In the radio adaptations of *Quiet Day in Belfast* and *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*, this change is designated by added sound effects and a pause in the action. The repetition of earlier sound effects in the radio version of *Do You*

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2. Ibid.
Remember One September Afternoon? returns the listener's imagination to a previously-established setting. The radio version of Women in the Attic contains added music which corresponds to a complicated lighting change on stage.
CHAPTER VI
PRODUCTION ADDITIONS

Some sound effects which have been added in the radio adaptation process have no corresponding stage directions. These effects appear to have been added to establish a setting or a change in setting, to create a mood, to develop a character, and to facilitate the use of the flashback.

The stage version of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?* opens with Dumb-Dora's entrance and movement about the garden. Sister Sarah enters, searching for something. Directions in the radio adaptation indicate the addition of sound effects which establish the setting for the radio listener:

Up on wind, creaking branches, rustle of long grass, then the heavy crashing of someone through bushes and treading on dry undergrowth.¹

The stage set for Leonard Peterson's *The Great Hunger* has an igloo, part of which is cut away to reveal the interior. The rest of the set represents the Eskimo camp. The action of the play moves in and out of the igloo. To

¹David Watmough, "Do You Remember One September Afternoon?," CBC radio script, p. 2.
indicate a change of setting on radio, Peterson has added sound effects. On radio, movement to the outdoors is accompanied by the sounds of dogs barking and wind howling. A shift to the interior setting is indicated by fading the voices of characters who are outside, while the characters in the igloo speak on-mike. The added sound effects also help to contrast the moods of the harsh, chilling outdoors and the warm, secure igloo interior.

Peterson also adds a sound effect to strengthen a character's importance and the mood she creates. Saodlu, an old woman with supernatural powers, insists that the camp is doomed unless Noona kills his step-father. Early in the radio play her presence is associated with the beating of a drum.

MUSIC: Saodlu's small drum... First sounded to underline what she has said quietly to the others of the camp... Then subsequently sounded to punctuate her remarks and emphasize her passionate feelings and concern...1

Throughout the play Saodlu's presence and her warnings of the "Great Hunger" are reinforced by the beating of the drum.

Len Peterson is also the author of the stage and radio versions of *Women in the Attic*. He has added music to the

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radio adaptation to ease the transition between the scenes which occur in the main character's past and the present. Old Lil tells her life story to a reporter. As she reminisces about her younger self, the character of the young Lilian takes over. Music "that accompanies her nightmare of anxiety and loss"\(^1\) establishes the mood and clarifies the shift in time. The music recurs throughout the radio play, beginning in the background and continuing through parts of the dialogue, reinforcing the unsettled mood of the flashbacks.

In the radio adaptation of *Captives of the Faceless Drummer*, George Ryga has used another technique of presenting a flashback sequence. Interspersed with the dialogue between Harry, the kidnapped politician, and his captor, the Commander, are scenes from Harry's past. These scenes are presented on radio with a reverberation, or echo effect. The two qualities of sound should help the listener differentiate between speeches that are part of the flashbacks, and those occurring in the present. In addition, Ryga has added sound effects to the radio adaptation to aid the transition from flashback to present. For example, he uses the sounds of shouting and a gunshot to return Harry and the Commander from the flashback to the reality of the tension of the present.

\(^1\) Leonard Peterson, "Women in the Attic," CBC radio script, p. 18.
In summary, sound effects with no equivalent stage directions are used to establish the opening setting of David Watmough's radio adaptation of *Do You Remember One September Afternoon?*. Explanatory dialogue can also be used to create setting.¹ Leonard Peterson adds sound effects to his radio adaptation of *The Great Hunger* to help the listener distinguish between interior and exterior settings, and to emphasize the character of Saodlu. Excessive shifts of setting can be avoided by rearranging the dialogue for radio production.² In the radio adaptation of *Women in the Attic*, Peterson uses music to help his listener shift between the present and the flashback. In *Captives of the Faceless Drummer*, George Ryga deals with the same problem by recording the flashback with a reverberation, and prefacing the shifts to the present with added sound effects, such as shouting and a gunshot.

¹See Chapter IV, "Verbal Equivalents".
²See Chapter III, "Rearrangements".
CONCLUSION

The techniques delineated in this study are those which compensate for the two basic differences between the radio and stage dramas: lack of the visual element on radio, and the shorter playing time of the radio plays. While the playwrights involved in this study have retained the essence of their plays for adaptation, they have met the demands of the radio medium with varying success. In each case, the translation to the second medium has been made without fundamental changes to the original script. Perhaps this reluctance to depart from the stage original sometimes has lessened the dramatic impact of the radio production. The playwright's work, devoted to recreating the stage setting for the radio listener, has often resulted in stilted translation, rather than exciting transformation. Some of the energies which have been applied towards compensation for the loss of time and visual elements might have been directed towards exploiting radio's potential appeal to the unbounded "stage" of the listener's imagination. Through evocative language and sound effects, the radio listener can be stimulated to imagine settings and characters more vivid than those created for the visible stage.
McWhinnie, in *The Art of Radio*, notes:

...the more 'unlike' the original, the more successful an adaptation is likely to be as a radio experience complete in itself... 'adaptation' is, or should be, interpretation, restatement in a different form, in terms of a different medium.

The techniques used in the adaptations considered in this study were relatively rudimentary. Further investigations might explore techniques which would more thoroughly exploit the potential of the radio medium.

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APPENDIX

Agreement Between the Canadian Broadcasting Company and the Association of Radio and Television Artists

Article 9 - Editorial Modifications

901 a) The writer of a script shall be consulted in regard to changes, modifications, additions or deletions, affecting meaning, intent, theme, characterization, changes of a major nature unless he is not available. It is further agreed that, where possible, the writer will be asked to do this work. However, the Corporation reserves complete editorial freedom to make script changes with regard to production needs.

b) The writer may indicate in the script elective cuts for timing purposes.

Article 10 - Obligations of the Corporation

1006 Attendance at Rehearsals: The Corporation agrees that the writer has the right to attend all the work sessions at which production personnel are present in the production of a program based upon the script he has written, provided that he obtains permission from the producer. It is understood that such permission shall not be unreasonably withheld. The writer agrees not to discuss the script, rehearsal or production with anyone other than the producer.