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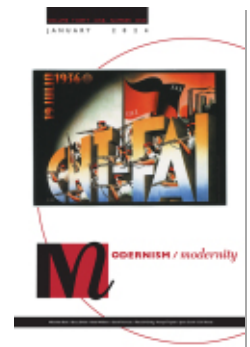
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*Early Radio: An Anthology of European Texts and Translations*  
ed. by Emilie Morin (review)

Debra Rae Cohen

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in 1942 and are some of the most powerful images in the show, demonstrating Lange's ability to construct a visual, political narrative even as the subject's world is collapsing around them.

Lastly, there is "Nettie Featherston, Wife of Migratory Laborer with Three Children, near Childress, Texas, June 1938," for which the subject is photographed alone in a field, in a work dress, with her hand pressed against her head in a worried gesture, her other hand to the side of her neck, as if seeing something she would rather not take in. This image is also one of the few with a more recent pairing, as the National Gallery includes a 1979 photograph by Bill Ganzel of Featherston taken in her home, a four-room house that she shared with her son in Lubbock, Texas. Ganzel made a project of seeking out some of the subjects of Lange's 1930s FSA photographs for his mix of oral history and portraits published as *Dust Bowl Descent* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Ganzel also featured Florence Thompson and her daughters, of "Migrant Mother." The contrast of Featherston in the field and Featherston forty-one years later in an overlarge armchair, gaunt arm pressing her hand against her head, still immersed in economic struggle despite the decades between the portraits, illustrates for the viewer the lasting effects of the Depression on a generation.

Money is the unspoken factor here, for both exhibits highlight the labor of women artists subsidized by the US government and how such monetary support led to experimentation and innovation in the arts, and affects how we now envision the period of the Depression. For modernist studies more broadly, the BMA exhibit showcases an under-studied aspect of modernist visual culture—printmaking—and, in doing so, allows scholars to take the pulse of this kind of artistic production under the FAP. These exhibits enrich not only our field by bringing before us questions of how these images, their creators and subjects, considered their historical moment, but also how we consider art, labor, and gender in new ways with new captions and contexts. Lastly, both exhibits underscore that for modernist visual scholars interested in Depression-era visual culture, the National Gallery of Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art are under-utilized resources.

## Notes

1. Elizabeth Fortune, in *Dorothea Lange: Seeing People* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2023), 84.
2. Sarah Greenough, in *Dorothea Lange: Seeing People*, 67.
3. Andrea Nelson, "Picturing *The American Country Woman*," in *Dorothea Lange: Seeing People*, 187.

**Early Radio: An Anthology of European Texts and Translations. Emilie Morin, ed., with translations by Emilie Morin, Marielle Sutherland, and Nicolette Ascianto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023. Pp. xv+ 352.**

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It's almost impossible to overstate the amount of labor that has gone into the assembling of Emilie Morin's valuable new anthology, *Early Radio*. The culling of speculations, analyses, and encomia about the new medium of broadcasting from a wide range of general and specialist publications across the European continent; the painstaking translation from French, German, and Italian of new radio terminology that (as Morin's informative opening note points out) is often affectively incommensurate across linguistic lines; the grueling ordeal of obtaining permissions—all of these have produced an anthology unprecedented in its scope, one that will be essential

174 for any scholar of modernist radio studies. Morin rightly points out in her superb introduction that our understanding of radio history has “suffered from the paucity” of comparative and multilingual approaches—something this volume will go a long way in correcting (22). And yet the multi-year scope of her project has had its own shaping effect on the resulting anthology; at times the dominant concerns of the volume (other than its fundamental transnationalism) and its allocation of space feel more attuned to this rapidly-changing field as it was a decade ago.

Morin’s own background is in radio drama, via her scholarship on Beckett, and thus it makes perfect sense that her anthology would be primarily oriented toward the work of *literary* radio studies, and that one of its key goals would be to “stimulate interest in radio’s . . . long-standing ties to literary and artistic creation in a wider sense” as well as in its “transnational history” (23). This has, of course, been fundamental to modernist radio studies since early attention to the participation in broadcasting of modernist writers (previously noted mostly in terms of drama) was jump-started in 2006 by Todd Avery’s *Radio Modernism* and Timothy Campbell’s *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*. But Morin makes a point of distinguishing this anthology from such earlier studies that traced the influence of radio on, and the thoughts on radio of, the “celebrated writers who appeared punctually on the airwaves,” whose observations about the medium, she observes, “are at best anecdotal” (6). Rather, she relies heavily on the writings of the journeymen of the profession, the practitioners who both labored behind the scenes at the new broadcasting institutions and speculated about the possibilities of the new medium in the press. One can conjecture to what extent this position involves making a virtue of necessity based on the obstacle course of copyright (she does include, for instance, George Bernard Shaw giving his position on the possibilities of radio drama at a time when he had never yet heard a play broadcast, which feels beyond anecdotal), but it results in a fascinatingly varied collection, in terms both of style and sophistication; Morin alludes to the “lively, high-quality radio press informed by transnational influences and dialogues” of continental Europe, but she draws, in fact, from a range of variably directed publications (3).

Most materials here will be unfamiliar to any but scholars of French or German broadcasting history, as articles appearing in the continental press or national fora on broadcasting between 1925 and 1938; Morin’s copious footnotes refer tantalizingly to many more. Though Brecht is not here, nor Rudolf Arnheim, nor John Reith, nor more than snippets from F. T. Marinetti and Walter Benjamin, nor, sadly, the poetic utopian flights of Velimir Khlebnikov, all of these major figures, and many others whose works are more readily available in English translation, factor into the wide-ranging introduction. If their absence somewhat limits the potential use of the anthology as a classroom tool, it increases its value for scholars, allowing Morin to bring to our attention, notably, the work of the Prague-born journalist and broadcaster Egon Erwin Kisch, the German leftist writers Alfons Paquet, Hermann Kasack, and Kurt Tucholsky, the French broadcast executives and playwrights Carlos Larronde and Paul Deharme, and also Enzo Ferrieri (the artistic director for Mussolini’s Ente Italiano per le Audizioni Radiofoniche), whose manifesto “Radio as Creative Force” serves as the centerpiece of the volume’s first section, “Radio as Technology, Radio as Art.”

Ferrieri’s piece (new to me, and thus one of the volume’s most welcome gifts) could itself serve as a kind of précis of the touchstones of interwar radio debate: the training of voice, the need for immediacy, the affordances and dangers of liveness, the importance of radiogenic composition, the distinction between radio’s creative and popularizing (or as others put it, educative) powers. The selections from “Radio Investigation,” a series of commissioned responses to his manifesto, do a great deal to establish the range and diversity of Italian radio work—too often defined, for English-language readers, entirely by Futurist utopianism. Though this first section of the anthology brings together a host of general pieces and excerpts extolling the potentialities of radio as “a harnessing of elemental forces” (Hilda Matheson), “the first ambassador of any country” (Ferrieri), “the invisible, breathtaking waves that are connecting the continents” (Suzanne Malard), the word “art” in its heading bespeaks the volume’s orientation. Here as elsewhere, even when the ostensible focus is otherwise, the examples and specifics are often drawn from the practices and challenges of radio drama (27, 62, 46)—so much so that the dedicated long fifth section, “A Theatre of the Air,” can feel like too much of a good thing.

Thus the next three sections, “Behind the Microphone,” “The Art of Listening,” even “Radio Genres,” which attends most specifically to non-dramatic categories of radio work, offer up as part of the mix tips about *acting* in front of the microphone (France Darget, Sheila Borrett) and observations from dramatists (Fritz Zoreff, Kurt Weill, Barbara Burnham). While these are often fascinating—especially in pointing up areas of disagreement vis-à-vis what constitutes proper radio affect, and whether adaptation as opposed to born-radio works can ever be really effective—more intriguing and timely are those moments when Morin’s selections feel in sync with the research attention to listenership catalyzed by the work of Kate Lacey, or in the increased interest in the workings of media institutions exemplified in the work of David Hendy. Insider pieces like producer Hans Flesch’s on “The Future Shape of Radio Programming,” Charles Siepmann’s and Desmond MacCarthy’s on talks, and, especially, Kasack’s on what he terms “Micro-Reportage”—the immediacy of news produced by changes in mobile broadcasting capacities—give insight into the institutional and technological conditions that mediated radio production.

We should also remember, though, that broad social discussions of radio’s cultural and political significance also came from outside the realm of practitioners; the anthology can’t possibly do justice (no anthology could) to the intra-audience discussions that went on in the daily and weekly press across class and national borders. Some of the more interesting observations in Morin’s anthology, in fact, do come from those only glancingly associated with radio institutions. The film director Walter Ruttmann appears here via his observations in the *Film-Kurier* a year before the broadcast of his single radio montage, *Weekend* (1930). Fascinatingly, Ruttmann seems to be arguing *against* the possibilities of a “true” radio composition as opposed to the affordances offered by the sound film, in which “[e]verything audible in the whole world becomes material”; by contrast, he argues, “it erects signposts to experience without forging any pathways” (34). Ruttmann’s observations are a salutary reminder—especially when surrounded by the writings of those deeply invested in the artistic possibilities of the medium—that radio was not uniformly embraced or admired, and for the magnates of other media it represented unwelcome, and therefore often disparaged, competition.

Some of this context would have been useful here, though it would be unfair to ask the volume’s introduction to do even more than it does. While Morin does give a summary of the various radio institutions’ mandates and configuration with respect to the state, there is little here to reflect the field’s more recent engagement with the role of those institutions within the complex media ecology of the period; and most of the salient contextual information about the particular political pressures on those institutions appears piecemeal, in the copious and welcome notes.

And indeed, the last section of the anthology, “Radio Politics and Radio Frontiers,” which makes explicitly literal what Ferrieri refers to, all too aptly, as the “violent, totalitarian character of the radiophonic medium’s speed and power of dissemination” (71), gives a welcome balance to the volume’s emphasis on art. There is wonderful material here, much of it explicitly leftist and/or antifascist—Tucholsky’s invocations against radio censorship, Kisch’s sardonic parody of contemporary denunciations of communist broadcasting, Paul Vaillant-Couturier’s Radio-Liberté manifesto, written during the Spanish Civil War, urging that “to unite humanity: such is radio’s vocation” (340). Like the line that jumped out at me from Malard’s piece earlier in the volume, “Radio, An Autonomous Art”—“To spread panic across a whole region, all it would take would be to propagate false news on the air waves”—much of this writing feels urgent and immediate, speaking out of the archive to mobilize readers not just in the writers’ own moment but in our own as well (46).