

Title of Document: SONIC WAVES OF GRAIN: PAUL HARVEY'S AMERICAN EVANGELISM

J Inscoc, Doctor of Philosophy, 2021

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This dissertation investigates the cultural significance of legendary radio broadcaster Paul Harvey. Harvey's voice and rhetoric have echoed posthumously in the conservative Christian soundscape in ways which cite a cultural decay in the United States. At the same time, conservatives who use Harvey's voice tend to do so as part of their own straight camp, which reveals its own bankruptcy. Harvey's significance as a voice of the morally superior past obscures the tensions and cultural anxieties Harvey was party to, and responded to, through his long tenure on the airwaves. How does Harvey, whose history is marked by failure and a conformity to commercial success, come to "sound like god" and resonate with "amber waves of grain?"

In this dissertation, I argue that Harvey's place in the American cultural imagination is mythologized in ways which render him an American success, "tomorrow's historian," despite of (and perhaps resonating with) the cultural tensions and anxieties he was party to. This interdisciplinary work draws from the fields of linguistics, radio studies, and gender and sexuality studies to understand the sonic significance of a voice so celebrated and the troubled history about the speaking body behind it.

In doing so, this dissertation brings to light both the timeless significance of radio and the radio voice. This dissertation examines the mechanisms by which discourses on language and the human voice, gender and sexuality, and political and moral identities are carried and transformed in ways which encourage the maintenance of prominent ideologies and their mouthpieces. This dissertation allows one to hear the past today: the constant (external and internal) threat of communism and the remedy of patriotic nationalism; the continued popularity of a politically active and commercially successful broadcast evangelism; and the insistent gendered and sexual harmony between the two.