11 The People's Radio between Populism and Bullshit

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Free speech has its dedicated media genre in the talk radio that puts the *vox populi* on air, a genre that has from its American origins onward attracted a wide variety of formats across the globe (Loviglio 2005). The broadcast of the voices of "the people," whether through phone-ins or interviews in the streets, often has at least an implicit ambition to counter the rhetoric peddled by other voices on the radio, such as those belonging to politicians, civil servants, and experts of various description. In this chapter, I consider two instances of the people's radio in strikingly different historical settings. A popular and long-standing program on Finland's national broadcaster contrasts in many ways with the work performed at the service of the people by a Zambian radio personality at a provincial and privately owned station. Apart from the obvious differences, some of which will be enumerated below, the comparison is an opportunity to pose questions about the role of radio journalists in mediating particular forms of free speech and *vox populi*. The comparison is, in effect, between the decision by a Finnish radio journalist to hide the true identity of a man in the street and the determination of her Zambian counterpart to expose such a figure as a fraudster. The comparison does not reveal the Zambian journalist as more morally upright than the Finnish one, but it does present a case for nuancing the apparent populism of *vox populi*.

Whatever else it has come to mean, "populism" might seem to take us beyond the general condition attributed by Mazzarella (2004) to mass media, namely, the need to mask the very act of mediation. By his own more recent admission, "populism marks … a challenge to mediation as such … by dreaming of a direct and immediate presencing of the substance of the people" (Mazzarella 2019, 49). And yet, in so far as the history of *vox populi* is virtually as long as that of the radio, the novelty of the challenges to mediation must not be overstated. Comparative work is required to identify variable responses to those challenges across time and place. The responses reveal historically specific imaginations not only of "the people" but also of how the very truth of *vox*

populi has been variably mediated. Such comparative work will be hampered if certain high-profile twenty-first-century expressions of populism in the Global North assume unduly iconic qualities. After all, as Samet (2019, 11) puts it, "no two populisms are exactly alike," which undermines the easy dismissal, so instinctive to professional intellectuals, of populism as either far-right or far-left lunacy. A focus on those whose professional vocation it is to mediate *vox populi* over the airwaves can bring ethnographic and historical nuance to a topic that too readily evokes categorical pronouncements.

The comparison between the Finnish and Zambian populisms revolves around the radio journalists' different attitudes to truth in their pursuit of *vox populi* – a difference between complicity and exposé. Here the bluntness of populism as a concept requires further work for it to be of comparative use. Frankfurt's (2005) famous thesis on "bullshit" as a particular attitude to truth (and lies) has its problems, starting with the concept's pejorative connotations, but it may convey something important about a form of persuasion that often attends populism. Propelled by his conviction that "indifference to truth is extremely dangerous" (Frankfurt 2002, 343), Frankfurt identifies as the bullshitters those whose relation to both truth and lies is incidental. In so far as they tell lies, they do so "incidentally or by accident" (341). This was Frankfurt's response to G.A. Cohen's charge that "he assigns no distinctive goal to the bullshitter that would distinguish him from the liar" (329). While the liar has the goal of inducing his/her listener to believe in something that the liar knows is false, Frankfurt's bullshitter appears to leave the question of the truth value open.

The tactic of deception may apply to both the bullshitter and the liar – although the former's indifference to the truth can also mean that he/she says something true just as accidentally as he/she may utter falsehoods. What is of comparative interest is that such indifference may arise from a variety of concerns and aspirations that require ethnographic work to be understood rather than being dismissed on philosophical or political grounds. How bullshit might contribute to experiences of authenticity – and be in some sense "true" – is a genuinely important question in its own right and one that cannot be addressed without empirical research. By the same token, how a commitment to the truth as exposé, even when it appears to contradict *vox populi*, may inform the people's radio is a question that opens up comparative prospects. It is a comparison that attempts a certain symmetry – neither instance should be seen as historically or paradigmatically more exemplary of the key notions, whether the people's radio and *vox populi* or indeed populism and bullshit. The wide dispersal of these notions is precisely what makes the comparison pertinent.[1]

1 For an extensive discussion of how such comparison might differ from the us–them comparisons in anthropology, see Candea (2018).

This chapter explores how the effects of bullshit are recognized and appropriated or rejected by people whose professional vocation it is to work for the people's radio. As such, one of the issues to be addressed is whether or not radio journalists become complicit in the bullshit of their interlocutors in order to achieve the goal of authentic expression. For while "the bullshitter may not deceive us, or even intend to do so," his/her deception is essentially about his/her enterprise. "His [*sic*] only indispensably distinctive characteristic is that in a certain way he misrepresents what he is up to" (Frankfurt 2005, 54). When journalists at the people's radio are aware that what they help to reach a wider audience is bullshit, but nevertheless proceed to transmit it, they become complicit in the bullshitter's enterprise. For all their commitment to the people's radio, they become bullshitters themselves. When, on the other hand, they see as their vocation to expose bullshit as a form of fraud, even when committed by the proverbial man in the street, the *vox populi* they serve to mediate assumes a different aspect.

The Sonic Affordances of *Vox Populi*

Whatever the notoriety gained by politically explicit talk radio in the United States, radio's affordances as a medium have long sustained a sense of intimacy with its audiences unparalleled by other electronic media, old or new. Those affordances include its technological propensities, from its portability and relatively inexpensive infrastructure to its versatility in changing media environments. They also include, crucially, the human voice in its multiple affective registers. As Arnheim (1936) noted during radio's early existence, it "talks to everyone individually, not to everyone together." In another passage from this early history, Benjamin ([1931) 2008, 392) also recognized a parallel between the human voice and the association of radio listening with intimate spaces: "The radio listener, unlike every other kind of audience, welcomes the human voice into his house like a visitor."[2]

In a broader discussion of the senses and mass media, radio's partiality to aurality pits it against vision in what Sterne (2005, 15) has criticized as the "audiovisual litany." Where vision removes us from the world, hearing immerses us in it, with the result that "vision is most frequently deemed to be the quintessentially modern sense, one that is alternately demonized by critics and

2 In so far as Benjamin ([1931] 2008) assumed domestic spaces as the main sites of radio listening, he did so without knowledge of where it often took place when the radio was introduced to Africa – chiefly courts and local governmental headquarters. The role of radio listening in fostering sociality beyond the domestic unit has continued in many African settings until the present (Spitulnik 2002; Larkin 2008).

celebrated by those who associate vision with reason and clear thinking" (Kunreuther 2014, 94; see also Weidman 2006). As far as bullshit goes, therefore, both vision and aurality have their ways of exposing it for what it is. Yet radio, through its sonic affordances, would seem to do so through a particularly compelling appeal to authentic experience. At the same time, the audiovisual litany stands to be modified precisely because technological and sonic affordances do not alone determine the extent to which radio is experienced as a "medium of directness" (Kunreuther 2014, 151). Important also is the claim a particular radio genre might make to such authenticity, and how it makes it under specific historical conditions of broadcasting and publicness.

The radio genre of *vox populi* has existed in Zambia and Finland under the variable conditions of political and economic populism. While in Zambia the rise and demise of Michael Sata's government in the 2010s has already led to reflections on "post-populism" (A. Fraser 2017), in Finland, as in many other Northern European countries, populism continues to be associated with the confrontational politics of the New Right, whether as elected opposition or as vigilantes (Wahlbeck 2016). The populism of *vox populi*, both as a political trope and a radio genre, goes beyond either of these instances in the two countries. Appeals to the people – or *povo*, drawing on the Portuguese term used by the Marxist-Leninist liberation movement in neighbouring Mozambique – had been issued by Zambia's "humanist" and "socialist" leaders in the early decades of its independence, while an agrarian imagery of the people was until recently a plausible political trope in Finland, a relative newcomer to large-scale urbanization. These broad patterns of populism do little, however, to nuance the specific ways in which radio journalists in the two countries have seen their own role in mediating the truth of *vox populi*. The comparison that follows reveals, among other things, the extent to which serving the people can either uphold or unmask the fictions of *vox populi*.

The People's Radio in Finland and Zambia

Since its inception in 1979, *Kansanradio* (The people's radio) in Finland has broadcast every week the voices of its listeners, currently as a thirty-minute, pre-recorded assemblage of phone calls as well as letters and emails read out by its hosts. While the early broadcasts could include interviews with civil servants and various experts, in addition to lengthy conversations between the hosts and their listeners, the current format involves a faster pace by which the different contributions are made to follow each other, usually with no attempt to solicit expert views. The hosts' conversational tone and colloquial language remain crucial, however. Some of the phone calls they broadcast are monologues spoken to the program's answering machine, while others are dialogues recorded during the hosts' weekly three-hour slot for taking calls. With some

400,000 listeners in a country of 5 million people, *Kansanradio* is one of the most popular programs on Radio Suomi, the national broadcaster's mainstream channel. Its reputation for being the program of choice among elderly Finns is borne out by the dominant role played by elderly voices talking about their concerns with, among other things, pensions, care provisions, unfamiliarity with computers and the internet, alongside comments on both current affairs and personal matters from ill health to relationship troubles. Although the hosts invite humorous and quirky contributions, complaints fuelled by disaffection, even anger, are more common (Englund 2018a).

Speaking in dialects, using vernacular expressions, and emanating from elderly men and women often calling from the remote parts of the vast country, the voices on *Kansanradio* are distinct from the more rehearsed talk heard elsewhere on the Finnish airwaves, however casual its tone may be. The difference is, in effect, between an apparently nostalgic sound of the people as rural folk and the ostensibly current urban lingo preferred by several other, often commercial radio stations. Precisely because *Kansanradio* has developed a unique soundscape of elderly voices, it attracts not only keen listeners but also caricatures and hoax calls.

A regular topic during my fieldwork with the hosts in 2015–16 was the extent to which callers could be trusted to be what they claimed to be. Jaana Selin, a woman who was approaching retirement age after having established herself as the program's stalwart, and Olli Haapakangas, a man in his thirties co-hosting the program on temporary contracts with the broadcaster, shared with me stories about both familiarity with regular callers and embarrassing incidents when an unsuspecting journalist had taken seriously what turned out to be a hoax. Apart from receiving opinions that they found reprehensible, the hosts also had to contend with calls coming from drunk or mentally unstable people. With her experience as a host, Selin elaborated on her methods of verifying the callers' authenticity. They included less an effort to seek independent confirmation of what she had been told than applying her own sensibilities to an evolving conversation. Critical, she said, was to keep the conversation going long enough, especially when the interlocutor appeared to put forward facts about personal lives. Selin would eventually hear if the interlocutor's grip was "waning" (*herpaantua*) when she carried on with the topic. Whether the call was put on air or not, she and Haapakangas avoided openly interrogating their callers, committed as they were to *Kansanradio*'s ambience of intimacy and conviviality.[3]

3 The co-hosts did have their differences in style, with Haapakangas preferring a more interventionist approach to the opinions expressed by listeners. It was, however, a matter of growth in his role as he gradually came to realize that being "more clever" (*fiksumpi*) than his listeners could put them off and contradicted the program's egalitarian ethos.

The case I discuss below shows that Selin's time-honoured method of listening had not prepared her for identifying a regular caller as a bullshitter until she met him in person. For all her skills at deploying the radio's sonic affordances, it was vision – the act of seeing this caller – that revealed to her the truth about him. Rather than rejecting his calls from then on, Selin became complicit in his bullshit by continuing to broadcast his contributions. To understand this approach to the effects of bullshit, it is useful to consider a very different approach adopted by Gogo Breeze, a Zambian radio grandfather broadcasting at the privately owned Breeze FM in the country's Eastern Province (see Englund 2018b). By using the term *gogo*, a Chinyanja word for grandparent, Grayson Peter Nyozani Mwale conveyed in his radio name an effort to address a public of kinsfolk. As his listeners' grandfather, he was, as befits the role, variously ludic and stern in his encounters with them and entirely unaffected by the kind of egalitarianism that made *Kansanradio*'s hosts tread carefully when they were confronted with dubious opinions and characters.

During my research with him between 2012 and 2018, people in Eastern Province turned to Gogo Breeze in search of the sort of practical advice and moral guidance that an elder could provide.[4] The element of *vox populi* nevertheless drove Gogo Breeze's work as it did *Kansanradio*, not confined to the format of one program but through the letters, phone calls, SMS messages, and chance encounters he broadcasted over a variety of programs. Whether it was the letters program (*Makalata*) or the interviews and chats he recorded for programs such as *Landirani alendo* (Welcome visitors) and *Chidwi pa anthu* (Interest in people), he addressed and investigated grievances put to him by listeners struggling with economic problems and all manner of personal issues. Unlike the hosts of *Kansanradio*, he spent more time in the streets, offices, shops, markets, and villages than in the broadcasting house to meet his listeners and their adversaries in person. The soundscape he produced for broadcast may have been richer than the one on *Kansanradio*, but common to both was the abundance of vernacular expression and dialogue between the radio hosts and their listeners.

For all his desire to listen to and assist his public of grandchildren, Gogo Breeze was no less plagued by concerns with hoaxes and fraud than were his Finnish counterparts. But where the general adherence to rules and transparency in Finland appeared to inspire trust even in interpersonal encounters, public controversies framed in terms of corruption and fraud were something of a national pastime in Zambia. Accordingly, Gogo Breeze could be relentless in his pursuit of fakes, fraud, and bullshit in Frankfurt's sense, not only among the

4 I discuss elsewhere (Englund 2018b) the apparent paradox that a media figure based on elderhood could have such a vast following in a popular culture otherwise saturated with youthful styles and aspirations.

employers and authorities who had inflicted harm on his radio grandchildren but also among the grandchildren themselves. When he could not trace people's complaints to genuine instances of exploitation or misfortune, he could be scathing about their attempts to use poverty as an excuse for self-pity, victimhood, or deception. His popularity on air appeared to withstand – or perhaps was even enhanced by – the stern tone with which he delivered his judgments on "laziness" (*ulesi*) and "lies" (*mabodza*).[5]

Vox populi on Gogo Breeze's programs had little sense of populism as deference to "the people." It is this propensity to publicize their activities as potentially fraudulent and to talk about them in the idiom of lies rather than bullshit that offers an opportunity to contrast Gogo Breeze's work with the approach taken by *Kansanradio*'s hosts. In both cases, the interesting question is what happens *after* it has been established that the interlocutor's intent has been to bullshit.

Mauno Voutilainen

Selin's surprise, if not shock, mentioned above was about the identity of a prolific contributor to *Kansanradio*. For a number of years, Mauno Voutilainen had called the program from Jyväskylä in Central Finland, always introducing himself as "Mauno Voutilainen from Jyväskylä," and always calling the program's answering machine rather than when its host was on the line. It enabled Voutilainen to speak without interruption and prevented the hosts from applying Selin's method to establish how genuine the caller was. So convincing was Voutilainen's performance as an elderly, somewhat parochial man that Selin found it hard to believe her eyes when he was introduced to her as one of their regular callers at a public meeting that *Kansanradio* had arranged in Jyväskylä.[6] Another man had brought to her a well-dressed middle-aged man, who turned out to be Voutilainen. His comportment and mode of speech were

5 Chinyanja-speakers are generally less taken with profanities than Finnish-speakers, and hence it would be difficult to provide a direct translation for "bullshit" as an idiom for deception in that language. Chinyanja does have a rich vocabulary for such idioms, of which *mabodza* as "lies" is perhaps the strongest in its assertion of truth values. A common verb for "deceiving" is *kunyenga*, which can also be used to describe seduction. *Kupusitsa* is the causative of *kupusa*, "to be stupid," and therefore conveys deception as a matter of making someone else stupid. The opposite is *kuchenjera*, "to be clever" or "cunning," whether for good purposes or bad, and it can also be used to mean "being alert." Noteworthy is also how *katangale*, now the most common Chinyanja word for "corruption," was originally used to describe deception by which traders would try to sell less than what was apparent to their customers. On Finnish-speakers' choice between the different types of bodily waste for "bullshit," see note 9 below.

6 Although the hosts did not venture out of their broadcasting house to gather material for the program, *Kansanradio* did arrange "market-square meetings" (*toritapaamisia*) during the summer time, where people could meet the hosts.

radically different from what he had used when calling the program. Selin realized that he was "pulling off a role" (*vetää roolia*) on *Kansanradio*, but it did not deter her from continuing to include his calls on the program.

Selin and her colleagues came to learn that Voutilainen had acquired considerable provincial fame, if not notoriety, independently of his appearances on *Kansanradio*. He had been convicted in his youth of burning down his school, which had led to a period in care and further disruption in his education. By his late forties, when he began to call *Kansanradio* regularly, he had adopted the role of a "lifestyle unemployed" (*elämäntapatyötön*) who lived off the benefits of the Finnish state. A part of his role was to complain about the lack of reasonable opportunities for an elderly man, whether on the job market or in romantic pursuits. A bachelor, Voutilainen made public his efforts to find a woman through notices in the provincial newspaper *Keskisuomalainen*. He also patronized this newspaper by offering frequent, daily commentary on its online fora for news and articles, with the number of his contributions running into tens of thousands by the early 2010s. Although the substance of his contributions to *Kansanradio* did not differ markedly from these online comments – revolving around Finland's employment policies and his personal difficulties – the voice he used on air made him sound at least twenty years older than the middle-aged provincial celebrity he was locally. As Haapakangas pointed out to me, when Voutilainen got excited about his topic, his voice could drop a little to make him sound more "normal." Yet as Selin's surprise indicated, so genuine was his voice on *Kansanradio* that few listeners without knowledge of his actual identity would have heard him as anyone else than the old man he projected. After Selin's revelation, his contributions continued to be aired as before, and no one suggested that he should be asked to speak in his normal voice or that his performances should be excluded.

From my conversations with Selin and Haapakangas, it became clear that they regarded Voutilainen as a useful bullshitter, one who approximated the authenticity that they wished the program to be known for. Not only did his personal past become known to them, they also came to learn that Voutilainen's sisters were leading perfectly comfortable middle-class lives as medical doctors. Although Voutilainen's reputation started to gain national recognition through his appearances on *Kansanradio*, many listeners remained unaware of it and attributed to him the old man's habitus. For example, when Voutilainen called to comment on a proposal to reintroduce public works as a measure against unemployment, he later received criticism for being out of touch with technological developments.[7] The proposal on *Kansanradio* had been to bring

7 Voutilainen's contribution was broadcast on 21 February 2016, and the responses to him a week later on 28 February 2016.

back *risusavotta*, a historical term for work parties clearing the forest. Voutilainen admonished the caller for harking back to the 1950s when such work parties may have been feasible, while at present they would do little else than provide free labour to landowners with forests. Two responses to him were broadcast the following week, the first of which argued that the wood obtained through such work would now be processed to produce pulp that could be sold. This caller affirmed that "nowadays *risusavotta* is not what Mauno knows from fifty years ago when the sticks were gathered and burnt."[8] The second response suggested that *risusavotta* may have been used metaphorically for various kinds of collective effort and asked "Mauno" to "read between the lines" (*lukea rivien välistä*). The responses alluded to familiarity with Voutilainen by using his first name, but they also supported his self-portrayal as an old man standing to be corrected about how the world was.

Bullshit, in any of its Finnish vernacular variants, was not how the hosts would describe *Kansanradio*'s content.[9] They were proud of its remit to put on air the voices of those who were otherwise absent from the broadcaster's airwaves. Voutilainen's voice fitted into this remit perfectly. He was not the only caller who had become a household name on the program, but the hosts were not aware of anyone else who was "pulling off a role" like he did. Nor was their acceptance of Voutilainen's role the only aspect of their work to which Frankfurt's notion of bullshit might apply. While many of *Kansanradio*'s occasional listeners seemed to believe it was a live program, the seamless flow of talk was a carefully crafted product that depended on the hosts' skills to generate experiences of authenticity. Those skills included their own uses of language and their capacity to sustain conversations with callers whose views and lives in the remote parts of Finland could differ from their own in the capital. On the other hand, what to include from the abundant calls, letters, and emails they received, and in what sequence to put them on air, were editorial matters that the immediacy of the contributors' voices served to hide. The truth value of what the hosts were told was certainly of interest to them, and Haapakangas would sometimes contrast, in his conversations with me, his use of Google search with Selin's apparently more casual attitude to the verification of facts. Yet if the effect of authenticity required a certain deception about the hosts' enterprise, they were prepared to let *Kansanradio* bullshit its public.

8 My translation. "Nykyään risusavotta ei ole sitä mitä Mauno tietää viiskymmentä vuotta sitten, että risut kasattiin ja poltettiin."

9 Although "bullshit" finds its literal equivalent in vernacular Finnish (*häränpaska*), the purposeful action it denotes often comes to be expressed through another form of bodily waste. *Kusettaminen* summons human urine as the substance by which others are deceived.

Joseph Lungu

In contrast to Selin and Haapakangas, Gogo Breeze had no inclination to efface his own presence on air. Authenticity was less a matter of letting listeners' voices speak for themselves and more about confronting or endorsing those voices with grandfatherly authority. Key to achieving this sense of authenticity, again in contrast to editing *Kansanradio*, was Gogo Breeze's frequent encounters out in the streets, offices, and villages. Many of the exchanges he recorded during these excursions went on air because of the entertaining interactions they involved, not because he had necessarily set out to expose injustices and abuse. So common, however, were various forms of fraud and deceit in everyday life that even the most innocuous and well-meaning inquiries into interlocutors' activities could turn into investigations of deception. Such interactions were at their most entertaining when they lasted for several minutes and included a number of twists and turns as the participants variously tried to answer and evade the radio elder's questions.

Among the contrasts that can be drawn between *Kansanradio* and Gogo Breeze's work, the place of bullshit in their respective editorial practices is of particular comparative interest. Instructive is the way Gogo Breeze often sought to define fraud and deception as lies instead of allowing them to exist as useful bullshit. The encounter to be discussed here took about eight minutes of broadcast time and began as a casual conversation between Gogo Breeze and a young man he had met outside the Breeze FM building.[10] It transpired that the young man, whose name was Joseph Lungu, was helping one of the presenters at the radio station to sell chickens in the street. In ways that are impossible to convey fully in writing, the interaction had humorous aspects beyond the emerging sense of Lungu's involvement in fraudulent activity. His mixing of Chinsenga, a language not taught at school and of few resources in print, with slang expressions in the lingua francas of English and Chinyanja, coupled with a voice that clearly emanated from a young man, gave the sonic impression of someone who genuinely belonged to the streets, cunning in some ways but also eventually reduced by the radio elder to an unthinking youngster on the brink of damaging his own prospects.

Gogo Breeze sounded at first favourable to Lungu's explanation for his presence in the street. "A very good thing" (*nkhani yabwino kwambiri*), he commented on Lungu's business, but it was the answer to his question of "how is the trade?" (*malonda akuyenderani bwanji?*) that instigated their exchange about the honesty of Lungu's business practice. In what he might have intended as an expression of mere modesty, Lungu used a Chinsenga/Chinyanja

10 Broadcast on *Landirani Alendo*, 19 January 2012.

slang version of the English word *short* to assert that he did not have as much money as he would have expected. Gogo Breeze's attempts to find out why this was the case were met with lengthy pauses, which prompted him to turn the Chinsenga/Chinyanja word *kushota* into the causative *kushotetsa*, suggesting that Lungu had deliberately made the money run short. Lungu's protestations of innocence resulted in a series of questions about both his own circumstances and the prices of the chickens he had sold. Throughout the exchange, listeners could follow how the young man struggled to answer Gogo Breeze's increasingly penetrating questions, and how he contradicted himself. The pauses and the filler expressions such as *ah*, *ee*, *mm*, and *awa* added to the sonic sense of cunning giving way to a somewhat vacuous disposition.

Gogo Breeze gave Lungu ample opportunity to admit that he had spent money on food, drink, and girlfriends, but to no avail. Particularly entertaining was the moment when Lungu sounded indecisive about the price he had asked for the chickens, making Gogo Breeze exclaim, "Now you are telling me many words!" (*Lomba mwandiuza mawu angapo!*). His threat of the police arresting Lungu soon gave way to amicable queries about Lungu's prospects for marriage. Gogo Breeze's use of the name Tibetche for his purported girlfriend made them both laugh, but Lungu denied that he had pocketed the missing money to prepare for marriage. Gogo Breeze's mood shifted between disapproval and geniality, but grandfatherly opprobrium became more dominant the longer they talked. "Why are you boys dishonest/untrustworthy on small things?" (*Chifukwa chinji inu anyamata musakhulupirika pa zinthu zazing'ono?*), he asked with some exasperation and repeatedly urged Lungu to be trustworthy. A grandfatherly understanding of what young men aspired to informed his question of whether Lungu would merely be cultivating sweet potatoes after failing at this first attempt to sell chickens on someone else's behalf. Instead of beginning to save money for marriage and perhaps more ambitious business ventures, Lungu came across as shortsighted in his handling of money. Although Gogo Breeze failed to establish the actual reason for the missing money, he elicited the promise from Lungu that he would return the money to the owner of the chickens.

Gogo Breeze refused to turn his interlocutor into a subject of charity. Nor did he begin with the assumption that the business had to be treated with suspicion. The discovery of fraud was an emergent property of the interaction, a consequence of interrogation that was driven by grandfatherly authority rather than by a charitable disposition. It was in his experience of the many forms of insincerity produced by poverty and socio-economic inequality that Gogo Breeze found reason to probe the young man's claims. Yet just as he was not a Good Samaritan finding a poor person in the street, nor was he an investigative journalist on a mission to expose fraud. It bears repeating that the burden he carried was that of a grandfather, an elder at once compassionate and stern,

forever mindful of his obligation to provide moral education. Laughing together, such as when he suggested that Tibetche was Lungu's girlfriend, was consistent with the amity and intimacy of the grandparent–grandchild relationship. It served to reject the other positions Gogo Breeze might have occupied in this exchange, whether as the Good Samaritan or the investigative journalist. Towards the end of their exchange, he suggested that Lungu wanted Gogo Breeze to assist him by paying the missing money, but Gogo Breeze refused the prospect by inviting him to plan how he would return the money. Rather than allowing Lungu to occupy the position of a subject awaiting charity, the radio grandfather allocated to him the responsibility to rectify the fraudulent activity. It is important to note that Lungu himself anticipated to meet this responsibility partly through his relationship to his mother. She would lend him some of the money that was missing. The radio grandfather's allocation of responsibility did not make Lungu an autonomous individual but mediated, as a grandparent might be expected to do, the social position within which the young man could exercise his responsibility.

Moral Authority and *Vox Populi*

Radio journalists and anthropologists might plausibly view both Mauno Voutilainen and Joseph Lungu as bullshitters rather than as liars. Where Voutilainen projected an elderly man commenting on issues close to him, Lungu came across as a young, inexperienced hustler genuinely puzzled as to why the money he had made was less than expected. It is unlikely that either of them had specifically embarked on telling lies, but both were engaged in deceiving the radio journalists and their audiences about the nature of their enterprises. The key comparative question has revolved here around whether, and why, bullshit has been compatible with the pursuit of *vox populi* over the airwaves. In other words, once an activity has been recognized as bullshit by those exposed to it, the anthropologist may move on to investigate how and why instances of bullshit attract different responses from people who may in principle share similar attitudes to it, such as radio journalists.

Certain contrasts between the Finnish and Zambian cases presented here are stark. Particularly stark is of course the contrast between the Finnish radio hosts' tolerance of bullshit and the Zambian radio host's attack on it – stereotypes about the attitudes towards transparency in public life in the two countries would further underline the contrast. Equally superficial would be to explain the contrast as a reversal that proves the stereotype. More interesting from an anthropological point of view is the place of advice and moral guidance in the respective radio journalists' pursuit of *vox populi*. *Kansanradio*'s hosts subscribed to the general ethos in Finnish public-service broadcasting not to give anyone advice, let alone interfere in the voices they broadcast with

moral views of their own. "The people" were expected to speak for themselves, and public broadcasting had to ensure that their voices could be heard by officials, business leaders, and politicians, whose responsibility it was to draw conclusions from what was being aired. Gogo Breeze, by contrast, devoted himself to the cause of moral guidance in no uncertain terms. Much as he also considered himself to be at the service of the people in order to bring authorities to task, so too was justice best achieved, in his ethos of public service, by his insisting on the morally upright behaviour of all those, however humble, he met in the street. The different styles between the radio hosts could thus result in real differences in editorial choices and in what that "the people's radio" sounded like in Finland and Zambia.

There was, at the same time, something eminently comparable about the way in which the radio hosts' interlocutors were understood to occupy social positions through which the truth of *vox populi* could be identified and evaluated. Voutilainen "pulled off" his role well enough to fool *Kansanradio*'s hosts about his social position and to provide the authentic-sounding voice they desired for the program. Lungu, on the other hand, with his self-reported financial incompetence, failed to convince Gogo Breeze of the social position he tried to project and became subject to a series of questions that emanated from the radio grandfather's understanding of what young street hustlers would normally try to do. Note the sonic sense in which the two bullshitters' social positions became apparent to the radio hosts and their audiences. Voutilainen sounded like a humble elder, while Lungu's slang expressions, pauses, and hesitation when caught in Gogo Breeze's crossfire made audible his social position as a cunning hustler.

Voutilainen conveyed rather more talent for bullshit than Lungu did – his project was not so much to deceive as to inhabit, over the airwaves, the social position of a parochial old man. It was only when *Kansanradio*'s host had seen him that Voutilainen was revealed as a bullshitter. Complicity arose from the host's decision to continue to broadcast his contributions with no overt editorial intervention. Gogo Breeze, on the other hand, made exposé his central modality of mediating the *vox populi*. His inquisitive approach to those he met contrasted with the approach taken on *Kansanradio* and had less need for vision as a revelatory sense. After all, Lungu looked every bit as much a struggling street vendor as a hapless hustler. Responsibilities associated with the radio hosts' own social positions drove their divergent approaches, from the Finnish hosts' self-effacing protocols to Gogo Breeze's relentless interventions.

The anthropologist must, however, resist the temptation to conclude by exposing these approaches to bullshit as themselves based on a certain deception about the mediated nature of whatever authenticity the radio hosts wished to transmit. The populism of *vox populi* draws too readily condescension from professional intellectuals. Resisting critical anthropology's own preferred

genre of exposé is to open up richer prospects for comparison, not merely of *vox populi* itself but of populism more broadly. High-profile political populisms in the twenty-first century, whether in the Global North or South, need not exhaust the variable aspirations and fears invested in the idea of "the people." In the mundane work of the people's radio, the anthropologist can find empirical instances for a careful study of populisms in their historical contexts. The modest comparison presented here shows the different directions a professional vocation may take as it seeks to put *vox populi* on the air. In the end, it is the attitude to bullshit that reveals whether populism masks unstated motives behind reverence for "the people" or advances moral education by a figure of authority.