The Development of Radio Drama as an Art Form in Great Britain : 1922 - 1954.

by

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PREFACE.

In this thesis I have endeavoured to trace the development of radio drama in Great Britain through a selection of plays by authors representative of the various phases through which the form has passed during its growth. I do not pretend to have given a fully documented account of all the important plays by all the important authors. That would require easy access to the British Broadcasting Corporation script library.

Therefore the length of the chapters should not be taken as any indication of the relative importance of the phases. Owing to the scarcity of bibliographies and the fact that not all those radio plays which have been published were obtainable, there are many gaps which I regret I have been unable to fill. I am also conscious of not having done justice to many authors, particularly Mr. V.G. Gielgud O.B.E., who, as Head of Drama for the BBC, has guided radio drama from its infancy in 1928 to the present day.

My thanks are due to Mr. Neil Hutchinson, Director of Drama and Features, Australian Broadcasting Commission, and Mr. R.G. Walford of the Copyright Department, British Broadcasting Corporation, for their assistance in supplying me with scripts or information. I am also grateful for the help and advice of Mr. F.D. Clewlow of Hobart.

The thesis is arranged in chapters and sub-sections. The notes are all contained in Chapter X.

CONTENTS.

I

THE CARRIER : PIGEL

i.

Talks, music and drama.

"Radio play" is a confusing term, because it implies "seeing" and all the stage conventions associated with traditional drama. Ever since its Greek origin in dance, music and speech, drama has been designed for both the eye and the ear. In certain periods and manifestations of its development, the visual appeal has been greater than the aural — in particular the scenic splendour of the latter half of the 19th Century and the lavishly produced musical plays in the early part of this century. Gesture, physical movement and imitation, costume and scenic background have all, with varying degrees of importance, played an integral part in the development of drama since earliest times; the eye has always received at least half the pleasure. Even the sense of smell has been employed in some Russian and occasional English productions in the experimental years between 1920 and 1930.

The justification for considering radio drama as an art form, separate and distinct from all other art forms, lies in the nature of its means of communication. Sound is its medium, and radio the mechanical means by which the dramatist contacts his audience. But sound is also the medium of the two other main dimensions of modern radio — the spoken word, and music. So before radio drama can be claimed as a new art

form, it must be distinguished from these other forms of radio expression and definitely shown to have come into existence entirely through the invention of radio.

In the category of the spoken word, we can place talks, news broadcasts and variations of the impromptu programme, the most popular of which is the quiz. The talk, the lecture, the verbal relation of all kinds of information and experience existed long before radio, and will continue to exist should modern developments in the field of mechanical communication relegate radio to an antique 20th Century invention. It is rightly argued that Dylan Thomas brought to the radio talk a considerable degree of artistic refinement, but rather than infer from his recordings of the scripts published in Quite Early One Morning,(1) that here are the qualities of a new art form, it would be truer to say that no one before Thomas brought such individuality to the way he performed his own work. A similar phenomenon in another field was Emlyn Williams' stage recitations from the writings of Charles Dickens. Both Thomas and Williams simply applied the old traditional art of the Anglo-Saxon scop to 20th Century communication media.

All other variations of the spoken word that constitute modern radio programmes, such as the discussion or the interview, are also modifications or expansions of ancient arts that existed long before radio came into being.

Musicians simply brought their art to radio along with their instruments. Some music is being composed specially for broadcasting, using certain tonalities and instruments

which are effective only through the microphone, but this again is only a slight modification of an old established art. The radio feature programme, and that type of "Variety Show" first established by Tommy Handley's "ITMA" during the Second World War, have serious claims for consideration as radio art forms, since they enjoy a quite separate existence and owe no allegiance to any other type of entertainment, visual or non-visual. But the feature and variety programmes both grew out of, then moved away from, precepts which had evolved from the development of radio drama.

Drama designed for appreciation by the ear without the assistance of sight only came into being soon after the discovery that radio could be used as a medium of public entertainment. Before the construction of the first broadcasting studio, there existed neither the facilities nor the demand for any other type of play except those designed for the conventional theatre. Radio drama is therefore a new form, barely thirty-five years old; a form without traditions, whose possibilities are even yet not completely understood.

Radio drama was once regarded as a poor relation of the stage-play, a severely limited means of providing large audiences with some idea of plays which had already proved popular on the stage. During the latter half of the nineteen-twenties a small group of authors began to experiment with radio as a medium of dramatic entertainment. They gave shape and purpose to their work by searching for expedients that would help overcome, even capitalise upon the inherent

limitations of the medium. It was not long before they discovered that radio drama was a new form which possessed a unique set of dramatic canons, and gave rise to a means of expression attainable through no other medium -- a means of expression which could not exist without broadcasting.

ii.
Construction.

The canons of any art form depend upon two factors: the physical limitations of the communication medium, and certain conventional limitations imposed by the audience which supports it, in conjunction with the institution which makes use of it. Since the two influences interact, it is not always easy to separate their effects, but for the sake of clarity they will be treated separately. Broadly speaking, the physical limitations determine structure and ingredients, while the conventional limitations are more likely to influence content. The term "ingredients" is taken to mean the "tools" the dramatist has at his disposal. The ingredients of a stage play would include dialogue, physical movement, scenery, costume and properties. "Content" means subject matter, presentation, and style.

How the physical conditions of radio determine the structure of radio drama, can be seen to better advantage by a brief preliminary examination of those factors which determined the structure of the two dramatic art forms which flourished in ancient Greece and Elizabethan England. The same examples will also serve as a comparison to illustrate how certain conventional limits have influenced the content of radio drama.

The form of Classical Greek drama was largely determined by the construction of the theatre in which it was performed. The absence of a proscenium and of representational scenery

restricted the number of sets a play could have to one.(2) Outdoor sets became less popular, and in the time of Sophocles, most plays took place before a conventional temple or palace which was most suited to the formality of the "skene". The dramatist was thus obliged to describe the location of the action, either through one of his characters or the chorus, during the first part of his play.

The Greek poets wrote for a large open air theatre, whose stagecraft resources were unspectacular, formalized and limited almost to the point of austerity. But these restrictions did not act as a barrier to the imagination, because the Greeks preferred to work inside well defined limits, and by diverse means they managed to turn apparent restrictions to their own particular advantage. The simplicity and lucid clearness of the tragedies were dictated as much by the poets' choice as external conditions. As intensity was considered preferable to variation, a play contained one scene and one dramatic action, from which all inessentials were stripped in order to concentrate the minds of an audience on a single, all absorbing issue. Everything which might cause confusion, or divert the audience from the central theme, was carefully eliminated to allow the story to be represented in a brief, straightforward fashion.

All Greek Theatres were designed to accommodate the Chorus, which danced and spoke from a circular area in front of the stage, enclosed on three "sides" by the audience. This put a great distance between the audience and actors, particularly as each theatre had to seat the best part of a

town's population. Therefore the dramatist was unable to use any of the sophistications in dialogue, gesture or stage mechanics customary in the modern theatre. Again the cumbersome, stylised costume of the actors made any attempt at realistic movement or gesture almost impossible.

These same factors led the poet to present his characters in broad and general outline, as any subtlety or minute detail would be wasted in the vast size of the auditorium. Their qualities are elementary and typical of humanity, not the minuter traits which reveal the individual. Therefore the situations in which they were involved had to be treated broadly, lucidly and dramatically.

The facilities of the theatre demanded that a story be unfolded not by visible and outward show, but through the speech and conversation of different characters. Speech dominated action, so the poets placed special emphasis on the human voice, and since the actors spoke through an orifice in a mask, the dialogue had to be immediately intelligible as well as providing good vocal histrionic material.

An audience that sat on hard stone seats for almost the entire day under a hot sun, and, apart from the dancing of the chorus, had nothing exciting or even unfamiliar to look at, demanded that the quality of a play's dialogue should be capable of holding the attention from first to last. The plots were traditional and well known to every member of the audience, so the whole interest of Greek tragedy derived from the poet's words and his moral and dramatic variations on the

old accepted themes. A blind member of a Greek audience would have experienced no difficulty in following the course of the play, and probably would not have missed much in the process. The limits imposed on the dramatist were therefore approximately the same as those within which the radio dramatist works. The latter deliberately designs his play for a blind audience and must achieve his effect almost entirely through the medium of words. Hence the ease with which Greek tragedies lend themselves to radio adaptation.

Like the Greeks, the Elizabethan playwright was quick to turn the physical limitations of the theatre to his own advantage. Less formalized, more intimate and unbounded by tradition or convention, the Elizabethan Theatre allowed the dramatist greater flexibility in his treatment of plot and characterization. With no proscenium and no representational scenery, a change of scene every few minutes worried nobody, for the stage took its locality from the actors who stepped on to it. When Macbeth came on, the scene was the Royal Castle, and a change to the woods was simply initiated by the entrance of soldiers. A few simple props, such as stools and table, and the scene became a tavern; a tree in a tub marked the Forest of Arden. The Elizabethan audience needed little more than a suggestion in costume or locality and their imagination plotted each character and painted each scene. But Shakespeare did not rely on visual suggestion alone as a scene could be lost by an incompetent or careless producer. His actors usually indicate the place of action by their opening speech.

The chorus in Romeo and Juliet begins with:

> Two Households both alike in dignity,
> In fair Verona, where we lay our scene -
> From ancient grudge break to new mutiny
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

So the audience knew what sort of people to expect, imagined what they looked like, and the kind of surroundings they would live in, before they appeared on stage. Neither the Elizabethan audiences nor the playhouse favoured the presentation of each scene as a separate and distinct picture, so the dramatist had only to drop a few hints to get their imagination working.

Without visible scenery Shakespeare was obliged to paint it in words, and some of these descriptive passages are amongst the most beautiful lyrics in his work -- for instance, Lorenzo's speech "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank" in The Merchant of Venice (V.i.). Surely are such speeches pure embellishment; most of them have a dramatic function integral to the play's action. Duncan smoothly describes the castle in which the audience knows he will meet his death at the hands of Macbeth. The violent meteorological imagery of Lear's challenge to the fury of the storm, both sets the scene and reflects his own mental turmoil.

Because his scene divisions were by no means as final as those required in the modern theatre, where each scene is represented as a pictorial tableau with a definite locality, Shakespeare was able to move his action through space with the utmost freedom. The most difficult of Shakespeare's

plays to stage realistically is Antony and Cleopatra, but all the Elizabethan audience required to take it backwards and forwards from Rome to Alexandria, were a group of actors, a few props, a slight change in costume and some indication from the playwright himself.

The architectural peculiarities of the Elizabethan theatre were likewise turned to the dramatists' advantage. At the back of the stage there was a small room which the actors entered by double doors or a curtain. It provided a convenient interior scene which could be previously set to any degree of realism, and revealed by opening the double doors at the appropriate time. This room could be the study of Dr. Faustus, the bedroom of Henry IV, or even a cave in The Tempest. The action of the scene could be either kept distinct by restricting it to the four "walls" of the room, or it could easily be extended to the outer platform. Similarly the upper gallery along the back of the stage, which according to De Witt's sketch of the Swan Theatre was sometimes used by the spectators, could be brought into the action for such episodes as the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet.(5) The large apron stage surrounded on three sides, sometimes on four, by spectators, brought the actor into a far more intimate relationship with his audience than was possible in the Greek Theatre. With no footlights, orchestra pit or proscenium, the actor's aside and soliloquy were natural and even inevitable. The Greek actor spoke to the chorus — he was never entirely alone; the Elizabethan actor could speak directly to

the audience and take them into his confidence. The construction of the Elizabethan playhouse allowed the dramatist maximum freedom of movement through time and space, and in conjunction with the less exacting tastes of his audience, placed fewer restrictions on his choice of theme, treatment and presentation, than in any other period of English drama.

The physical limitations of radio as a means of communication amount to the exclusion of everything else but sound, so the radio dramatist must do without all the conventional devices associated with the theatre. In the early days of broadcasting, it was generally believed that lack of sight would prevent radio drama from ever becoming an adequate form of artistic expression, but the first authors who devoted careful attention to the medium discovered that the whole power of radio drama was due to the limitations of its medium, rather than in spite of them.

In exactly the same way as the powerful, concentrated, grand and majestic effect of Greek tragedy ultimately stemmed from the mechanical deficiencies of the theatre in which it was presented, all the formal advantages of radio drama are due to its apparently severe restriction to nothing else but sound. The radio dramatist is not so much deprived of modern stagecraft devices, as completely free of every theatrical convention which limits the theme, the scenery, the characterisation, in fact the whole technique of the stage-play. Again, radio drama is not deprived of sight, but unhampered by it, so the form possesses a far greater potential mobility of method.

A radio play should pose a conflict, and present its development and resolution mainly in the form of traditional stage dialogue. This much has been borrowed from the theatre — scenery, costume, colour and visual effect are eliminated. Over the air, the listener hears only voices so there need be no distractions of any kind to draw his attention away from the dialogue. There is no proscenium arch and no surrounding walls to recall the presence of the theatre. There is no stage, no physical presence of actors or actresses; there is nothing but sound to carry forward the action, and to suggest its setting.

The logical unit of the stage play is the scene, which establishes one or more points in the progress of the action. A number of scenes are combined into the act which represents one complete phase in the dramatic conflict. In the modern theatre, the emotional reactions of the audience are temporarily disrupted whenever the curtain is lowered to change a scene, so the tendency is towards permanent-set plays which approach the three classical unities.

The medium of radio, on the other hand, is so flexible that the scene may be shifted with an economy of effort denied any other medium save the film. Since a radio play is dependent on the spoken word for the creation of its scenes it needs only the spoken word to change them. The dramatist is therefore granted the utmost freedom through time and space, a freedom more extensive than even Shakespeare was accorded by similar conditions, because he wrote for the eye as well as

the ear, and the constant spectacle of actors moving on and off stage would seriously jeopardise the unity of his play. But radio drama appeals to one sense only, so all that is needed to change the scene is some indication from the dramatist, and the ear will instinctively follow.

Most radio plays are composed of relatively short scenes or sequences, which may concentrate natural time, run parallel with previous sequences, project the action into the future, or take it back into the past by the retrospective "flashback". The constructional elements of radio drama resemble the fluidity of the cinematic technique rather than the scenic divisions of a stage-play.

There are aesthetic limitations on the number of sequences that may be employed. A film can use far more than a radio play of equal length, because to receive an impression through the eye requires less effort and is more immediately effective than to receive one through the ear. Again, too many sequences will make the action disjointed, while the frequent transitions will interrupt the dramatic flow, destroy the unity of the play and ruin its cumulative effect. Each sequence should establish at least one significant point in the logical progression of the action. This implies some method of bridging or punctuating the segments, on the one hand to separate them, on the other to maintain the dramatic flow. The most popular is music, which is able to capture and sustain the emotion generated by one sequence until the next begins. This brings us to the ingredients of the radio play.

If he is unable to use the devices of stage-craft, what tools has the dramatist at his disposal?

iii.
Ingredients.

Radio drama is more than words. It can use anything that makes an auditory impression, even the total absence of sound. But it must establish its effect through sound and sound alone. The ingredients of a radio play are the four categories of sound by which thought may be communicated or reaction provoked in both the real world and aural art.

1. Dialogue -- the conversation between two or more people.
2. Narration -- the single voice explaining, describing, commenting or telling a story.
3. Music -- stylised sound in its most abstract form.
4. Effects -- a term which is taken to include all inarticulate noises made by animate or inanimate objects. Emotional sounds, such as the sound of mourning which is more effective than the verbal description of a funeral, is included under the term "dialogue".

A story is told primarily by words, but a radio drama must be conceived in terms of sound rather than words alone. That is to say, the radio dramatist should write for the human voice and consider how his words will be received through a loudspeaker. Meaning is perceived by the ear alone, therefore radio dialogue, like that of the Greek dramatists, must create its impact immediately, clearly and unequivocally, or it will be lost. If the sense is not apparent at once, the dialogue has failed to do its job, because the listener has no second chance of hearing it. Radio writing requires

more care and clarity than any other medium. To miss or misunderstand one vital point is to lose track of the whole play.

In the theatre, the eyes of an audience are being entertained as well as their ears, so inexpressive or undistinguished dialogue will often pass due to the personal magnetism of a visible actor in a visible scene. But "The world of sound", Roger Manvell wrote, "is a world of constant change." (4) Everything exists for a moment then dissolves. It cannot be watched or contemplated like a theatrical scene. To be effective, the meaning of radio dialogue, however suggestive or subtle its overtones, must make its impact sharply and clearly.

All the subtleties of literary expression in rhythm, phrasing, imagery and thought are therefore excluded. Louis MacNeice advises the radio dramatist to forget about literature and concentrate on the human voice, because in a well produced play the words will regain all those literary virtues which literature itself lost when it was divorced from the human voice. "In radio, without sacrificing simplicity or lucidity, you can often leave the twisting to the voice. But while being thus indebted to the voice for special effects, you must never attempt effects which voices cannot procure. Your trade is in "words-as-they-are-spoken — and words-as-they-are-heard".(5)

In the early days of radio drama, the audience was not trained to listen with the mind's eye, as the modern conventions of radio were not established, and people who had been used to

seeing plays found it difficult to visualise action simply from the dialogue of characters taking part in it. In order to clarify the action and story, to identify the play and sometimes to describe the characters, the custom arose for an announcer periodically to interrupt the dialogue. Hence the evolution of the narrator, who acts as an intermediary between the illusion of the play and the familiar surroundings of the listener.

The narrator has come to be regarded as nothing but a voice; his corporeal existence is not included in the play unless specified by the dramatist. He is always available and like the Greek chorus he doesn't have to be accounted for — he is taken for granted. There are many variations of narrative technique: it can be used in the first, second or third persons — or not at all. The narrator can be made into a character, assuming vital importance to the story, he can be an impersonal voice separate from the characters and the action, or he can subdivide his functions between two or more voices to heighten the dramatic effect.

Edward Liveing compared the impersonal narrator with the captions of a silent film. "The carefully written announcements of the story teller, which enable the broadcaster and listener to bridge over gaps of time and space, fulfil the same objects as the subtitles of the cinema-screen, introducing the audience to the first scene and subsequently to other important scenes." (6) The personally involved narrator has the added advantage of being able to comment on

the action in the manner of the Greek chorus, or explain parts of it to the listener for clarity or dramatic effect. Alternately he can shake himself free of realism and speak, if necessary, in an unrealistic manner, for the purpose of heightening an emotion, pointing a moral, or filling out the canvas with passages of visual description. (7)

Before the first radio drama had been produced, the power of music for embellishment and emotional emphasis to a story had been shown in rather a crude form by the silent film. It was not long before the radio play, the sound film and much later the television play adopted it. Music was initially regarded as incidental to the drama and used simply to increase the effectiveness of the spoken word. From this tentative beginning, its use was extended by experimentation until it reached a high degree of artistic refinement in Edward Sackville-West's music-drama for radio, The Rescue.

Music, if correctly used, can do much towards supplying the solitary listener with something of the emotion generated from the group psychology of a mass audience; it can act as a powerful substitute for the omission of the visual element, and it provides the listener with a period of mental repose without losing hold of his emotional reactions. The various uses of music in radio plays have been exhaustively listed in several books on how to write broadcast plays,(8) and will to some extent emerge from the plays analysed in this study, so at this stage, only a few general observations are in order.

In the early days of broadcasting, many people asked

"Should music be made to perform a task in the service of another art?" It depends upon the type of music and whether or not it is correctly used. Music should be regarded not as an embellishment but as an integral part of a play's fabric, and directions for its use are as much a part of the writer's task as the choice of theme and character. It can fulfil some dramatic functions with a more powerful and economical emotional impact than words, such as the creation of mood or atmosphere, the symbolic suggestion of a period, a place or a character. It can suggest a change in scene more effectively than can be done by an interpolated narrator interrupting the action and losing the mood. In other words, music can be part of the action itself — and in this lies the justification for its use.

The greatest danger is that the wrong associations may be conjured up in the listener's mind, and for this reason many dramatists have had special music composed for their plays. Another peculiar effect produced by the incomplete amalgamation of music and drama, is described in relation to the last scene of the Australian playwright, Douglas Stewart's Fire on the Snow. "Musical perspective is all important...It is extraordinary how when there is an error in judgment over this perspective, the visual image of the musical combination becomes immediately present to the listener's attention. As a result you get such a ludicrous effect as that of a string quartet performing at the South Pole..." (9) Music must always be strictly functional and subordinated to the dramatic pattern

of the play.

The artistic use of inarticulate noise was born with radio drama. The first radio dramatists discovered that "sound effects" could function in much the same way as theatrical scenery. Instead of showing a crowded cafe scene with the principal actors in the foreground, they reproduced the noise that a person would hear in these surroundings -- the hum of conversation, laughter, the chink of glasses and dance music. Gradually the use of sound effects was extended to the creation of mood and atmosphere, which proved a more economical and effective method than dialogue alone. These odd noises soon began to fascinate the dramatist-producers, who injected into their plays every conceivable noise suggested by the words. Under the influence of Lance Sieveking, the exploitation of effects reached the height of extravagance before dramatists realised that their dialogue was becoming swamped by a load of extraneous noise. After that realistic noise lost favour and was largely superseded, in the most significant radio plays, by music. Whereas sound effects <u>state</u> things, music <u>suggests</u> things, and therefore makes a stronger appeal to the imagination.

Val Gielgud and David R. Mackay have listed as many as eleven quite separate methods of using effects to enhance, convey and evoke all manner of interests, emotions and scenes, which without them, would not register through the microphone. (10). Tastefully used they are as vital to a play as music or dialogue, but it is axiomatic that every sound effect must be

an intrinsic part of the plot and register instantaneously in the listener's mind. The dialogue surrounding an effect can entirely change its character, so it is imperative that for each one which does not unequivocally identify itself, there should be some reference made in the dialogue.

The radio dramatist's "stagecraft" consists, then, of the four categories of sound -- dialogue, narration, music and effects -- together with the freedom to range at will through space and time. The physical limitations of his medium are also responsible for certain advantages in the revelation of character, the form of speech, and the choice of theme and presentation.

iv.
Radio and stage.

Radio characterisation is not something new, but a return to the Greek and Elizabethan traditions of characterisation through the spoken word, where images and words are more important than actions or costume. The fact that the actors cannot be seen may be a gain as often as it is a loss. Greek tragedy, which excluded subtlety in the visual aspects of characterisation so familiar to modern audiences, favoured broad types of humanity, rather than individuals. It is a significant fact that the most successful characters in recent poetic radio drama have all followed in the same tradition. Columbus, Rowland, Magellan, Odysseus and Ahab are presented as semi-heroic figures, larger than life, and not displaying many individual or psychological traits. The duration of the average radio play is approximately the same as a Greek tragedy, so it is not surprising that there should be distinct similarities between the characters favoured by the two forms. However, radio by no means excludes individuality. The acute intimacy of the microphone has a definite advantage over the theatre in the revelation of the minutest traits. By and large, radio drama is capable of carrying more degrees of characterisation than any other dramatic art form.

The audience's preconceived notions of the appearance of historical characters, need not clash with the physical appearance of the actors portraying them. Again, symbolic figures

usually lose their reality on stage, but they are perfectly suited to radio drama where they do not have to be visualised. Disembodied voices, spirits, apparitions, angels — in fact all the characters associated with fantasy are more at home on the radio than in any other medium.

The radio dramatist is less fortunate than the stage dramatist in the number of characters he can use. No hard and fast rule applies — the important thing is to make clear who is speaking on the first appearance of a character and not to omit judicious reminders during the course of the dialogue. The listener's only means of identification is the human voice, far less substantial and capable of less variation than stage costume, so too many subsidiary characters will inevitably confuse him. Most radio plays concentrate on two or three characters who are developed as fully as the theme requires. All other parts are simply individual voices or agents to serve the furtherance of the plot.

Another artistic strength of radio drama which derives from the limitations of its medium is the intensified opportunity for verbal expressiveness, through the high relief given to words and their relationship with other forms of sound, particularly music. Here alone can speech exist in its purest form, separated from all visual support or interference, even the printed page. Radio drama is in a sense, a return to the ancient traditions of the Icelandic Sagas, the Anglo-Saxon scop and the Medieval story-teller. Few dramatists have realised the potentialities of the form in this direction.

Many have used choral speaking and impressionistic effects, others have composed their dialogue in a pronounced rhythmical poetry, but it was not until 1954 that Dylan Thomas brought to radio a type of poetry whose meaning depended as much upon the way it sounded as what the words said. Theoretically, then, it would seem that radio drama allows a greater potential choice of theme and treatment than any other dramatic medium. It can make an audience accept as emotionally true, suppositions they know to be impossible, it can erase gaps of space and time, disregard the natural succession of events and confront things geographically far apart. It can reconcile absurdities, and present conversations between the living and dead. The extreme flexibility of the medium favours more degrees of dramatization and characterization than either the stage or film. Very few plays are not adaptable to the medium of radio although they must all inevitably lose something, some more than others, in the process of transformation from the medium in which they were originally conceived.

In point of fact every dramatic art form is limited in theme and content. To some extent this results from the medium of communication, for each one is better suited to certain broad types of pl. y. For instance, fantasy is better in radio drama because of its great mobility of method and free imaginative appeal; the tightly constructed realistic drama is more forcibly presented in the three "real" dimensions of a stage; intimate dramas of character or situation are most successful on television; while the adventure story of

physical action or display is most suited to the visual flexibility of the film. The most restrictive influence on the dramatist's choice of theme and treatment is the audience to which his plays are directed and the institution which governs his art.

II

THE CANONS : CONTENT.

i.

The audience.

The canons of an art form as they affect choice of theme and presentation are determined by two vital factors -- the audience which supports it and the institution it serves. An "institution" is that organisation which either commissions the production of an art form, as the Church commissioned most pre-Renaissance art, or governs the process through which the artist contacts his audience, as the publishing industry provides the novelist with books. Greek tragedies were commissioned by leading citizens, for performance as part of a religious ceremony, so religion was the institution drama served. Both functions are combined in the British Broadcasting Corporation, which governs both the writing and transmission of radio drama in Great Britain. The limitations imposed on an art form by its audience derive from two sources -- popular taste and the psychological situation of the audience during the actual process of communication. Of course, these influences do not work on esoteric art forms, such as painting or sculpture, where the artist directly contacts his own particular audience, but they have played a major part in determining the canons of every popular art form, including Greek drama, Elizabethan drama and radio drama.

Classical Greek audiences were remarkable for their aesthetic

sensitivity and intelligence. They derived entertainment not from the visual glamour usually associated with the theatre, but from listening to the postulation of an ethical problem worked out and resolved by typical human beings engaged in dramatic dialogue. The audience to which Shakespeare addressed his plays did not possess such a uniformly high intellectual capacity, but it brought to the theatres an unparalleled willingness to imagine. Emotionally stimulated by the physical and intellectual discoveries of the age, people were supplied with many exciting new realms of thought and feeling on which to exercise their imagination. This faculty was responsible for, and in turn fed upon, the immense popularity of drama in 16th Century England.

Unlike the Greeks, the Elizabethan playgoers were essentially naive and unsophisticated. Action was part of their lives, so they wanted to see it in their plays. Armies were brought on stage and often the whole plot hinged on the presentation of some crucial act of violence, such as the initial duel in Romeo and Juliet which sets the story in motion -- a thing the Greeks would never have allowed. The Elizabethans enjoyed pomp and pageantry and display, they liked their corpses to look like corpses -- spattered with blood in a gory show of death.

Shakespeare was only too ready to satisfy these inclinations whenever the opportunity arose. But contemporary stagecraft did not allow spectacular production, so he inserted the spectacle and action into the texture of his plays, and gave

his audience the equivalent to what Cecil B. de Mille gives to the modern cinema patron. In correcting an academic misapprehension about Shakespeare, Hugh Hunt emphasises the powerful influence an audience may have on the content of a popular art form:

> We have been brought up to believe that Shakespeare wrote for all ages and for all men, but this is one of those grandiloquent statements that sound very impressive, but require a little qualification. Shakespeare wrote for the taste of his own times and for the conditions of his own theatre, and those times and that theatre are very different from our own. An audience, part of whom stood in an open yard, often drenched by rain or stamping its feet against the cold, demanded a far more violent form of drama than does an audience comfortably seated in a centrally heated and air conditioned theatre...
>
> The bloody head of Macbeth spiked on a pole, the piled up corpses at the end of Hamlet, the ghosts who constantly arrive at the most inconvenient moments, those tiresome witches and their apparitions, the unspeakable barbarities of Titus Andronicus, the callous behaviour of Claudio to Hero — all these and many more examples could be quoted of the change in theatrical taste between Shakespeare's audience and the audience of today. (1)

Since neither theatre nor audience limited Shakespeare to one scene, he was also released from the unities of action and time. Othello is worked up into a frenzy of mistrust and suspicion within a period of half an hour. The Merchant of Venice and Antony and Cleopatra alternate their scenes between different areas in two cities. The sub-plot of The Tempest has been completely eliminated without damage to the unity of the play in a successful radio version, while Twelfth Night is an intricate mixture of three plots, each dependent on the other two in cause and effect. The audience made few demands regarding costume. We know that all plays were lavishly

dressed and most of them were draped in extravagant and somewhat stylised Elizabethan costumes. Yet only a turban and a black face was required to indicate Othello, a breastplate for a Roman soldier and a crown for a king.

With a more adaptable theatre at his disposal, and a highly imaginative audience to write for, there were few limitations on Shakespeare's choice of theme and treatment. Although his plots were rarely original, he had a far wider selection of stories to drawn upon than the Greek dramatists. So long as he stimulated the groundlings with some show of spectacular action without overburdening their imagination, his plays could not fail to appeal. Shakespeare was limited in form and content by little more than his own poetical faculties.

Although the medium of sound is as flexible as the Elizabethan playhouse, the radio dramatist is less fortunate than Shakespeare in his choice of theme and treatment. The physical and psychological conditions of the listening situation are quite different to those in a theatre and therefore require a different approach to the audience, while popular taste in radio entertainment has grown infinitely more hidebound and restrictive since the free and easy days of Shakespeare.

Greek and Elizabethan drama, like the modern drama and film, have one thing in common not shared by either radio drama or television — they require a group of people to gather together at one place and one time for a single purpose, namely, to witness a piece of dramatic entertainment. Such an audience is subject to mass psychology, so the dramatist or film

director can rely upon the collective response of an assembled group of people, whose reactions will be very different when surrounded by a crowd than when alone.

A radio drama is played to an audience of individuals or small groups of individuals, unaffected by mass psychology because they are surrounded by the comforts and distractions of domesticity. Therefore they must be approached in a manner somewhat different from that of the stage dramatist or film director. Although radio is susceptible to many degrees of dramatisation, it does not favour the rhetorical delivery of highflown declamatory speeches, so much as a personal intimate approach to the listener who is recognised as an individual. Most successful radio dramatists have capitalised upon this technique. The American, Norman Corwin, achieves his effect from the quietness and simplicity of writing for the single listener at home, in much the same manner as President F.D.Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" which did so much to restore the confidence of the American people during the crisis of 1932. The heroic quality of Cecil McGivern's feature The Harbour Called Mulberry is strengthened and thrown into high relief by the lack of heroics in telling the story. In the opening narration to Under Milk Wood, Dylan Thomas uses a quiet directness that would be impossible in addressing a mass audience.

The intimacy of the microphone, together with the fact that the actor may speak directly and personally to the listener, removes all the awkwardness associated with the soliloquy.

In a modern "picture-frame" theatre, this device is cumbersome and stagey, but to the radio dramatist it presents a perfectly natural means of portraying intimate psychological conditions or the characteristics of a person described by himself. "... never since the turn of the sixteenth century", wrote Edward Sackville-West, "has a dramatic medium been discovered so ideally suited to the individual meditation."(2).

In the theatre and cinema there are restraints upon an audience which impose some degree of respectful attention. People go along prepared to be entertained, hoping for the best and ready to meet the performance more than half way. But in the familiar surroundings of his own home, where the radio is more often heard than listened to, the listener's attitude to a play is often too casual, too easygoing, and his attention only half directed to it. To the majority of people, radio is a convenience -- it is always there, it costs next to nothing and it can provide an agreeable background for routine daily tasks. Therefore a radio play must fight for attention with immmerable distractions. The moment it ceases to entertain, the listener may "walk out" simply by throwing a switch -- a far less selfconscious procedure than walking out of a theatre or cinema.

A radio play must be continually absorbing. It must grip the listener's attention at the beginning and hold it remorselessly to the end. To make him think and feel through the spoken word, requires an unremitting forceful mess and clarity in the dialogue, together with a simple, clearly developed

structure that never for a moment leaves the listener guessing. If he does lose interest in a play, either through an incompetent arrangement of the sequences or obscurity in the dialogue, he will quickly find something better to do. In commercial radio, where the sponsor is more interested in keeping the listener at his radio to hear the final advertisement, than in the artistic merit of his play, there has developed a preference for sensational themes treated with the flashy slickness of a cheap pocket-book crime story. The BBC has far more latitude in the methods by which it attracts the listener, and the establishment of the Third Programme designed for people willing to make a considerable effort in appreciation, allows the Drama Department to concern itself to an even greater extent with ideals.

Most people like to "go out" for their entertainment as they derive much of their enjoyment from glamorous surroundings and the likemindedness of other people doing the same thing. With radio drama there is nothing of this sense of occasion which everyone feels when he goes out to be entertained in a public theatre, and which does much to dispose him favourably towards that entertainment. Listening to a radio play should be an occasion, but to the majority of listeners it is not regarded as such, as there are so many broadcast each week. In the early days of radio, all plays were listened to with reverence and awe, simply because they were "on the air", but when the medium was stripped of its mystery, familiarity began to destroy whatever glamour the

radio play once possessed.

Only a small proportion of the listening public, who regard a particular radio play as an "occasion", are willing to shut out all distractions of the home during its performance. Reviewing Edward Sackville-West's The Rescue, V.S. Pritchett wrote "... surely, as in the theatre or cinema, the radio play should be heard in the dark, so that all external images are excluded and so that the lights may go up in the listener's brain, which is the true radio stage." (5) A good radio play demands far more co-operation from the listener than a stage play, so the dramatist must always write with a view to how this co-operation may be obtained without "writing down", or pandering to popular taste. That such a procedure is possible, has been proved by Louis MacNeice and the other contemporary poets who have turned their attention to radio drama.

Public entertainments have through custom introduced conventional time limits affecting the film, the stage play and the radio play. Their different audiences have been the main influence in determining these limits. A Greek audience could appreciate three long one-act tragedies and a short comedy at one sitting, an Elizabethan audience a play of up to four hours and a modern theatre audience rarely likes one to last less than two and more than three hours. The average length of a feature film is one and a half to two hours, but there are rare exceptions which have taken from three to four hours to screen. The length of a radio play depends upon the

amount of continuous listening the unassisted human voice can be expected to command. In America where time is sold to advertisers, most radio plays run for either half an hour or one hour, but with the BBC time is more flexible. The average length is about seventy minutes, and this is generally regarded as the ideal length both for aesthetic and psychological reasons.

The poetic dramas that have been written during and since the war, in most cases, extended this limit to approximately ninety minutes. Edward Sackville-West's The Rescue was broadcast in two halves of ninety minutes each, on successive nights. Plays presented on the Third Programme are still more elastic in length, as an audience theoretically trained to appreciate the significance of words should be capable of a more sustained listening effort.

With a duration about half that of an average stage-play, dramatic economy is absolutely vital to radio drama. Everything must directly contribute to the development of plot, theme or character, because the listener is in complete control of the listening process. In the theatre, this process is largely in the hands of intermediaries — the producer and actor — so the playwright can follow his own lines of development, thinking in terms of a controlled audience. But the novelist and radio dramatist cannot control their audience. The reader arbitrarily chooses his stopping places, the listener arbitrarily chooses whether to hear a play or switch it off. A radio play cannot afford the leisurely exposition

or the gradual development of a stage-play; compression is imperative, and this may easily result in certain distortions of emphasis, leading to a melodramatic approach. Over-compression places too great a strain on the listener's intelligence, and consequently loses his interest. If the dramatist avoids these dangers, his play can create a powerful concentrated impression on the listener, whose mind is free of all stage conventions to collect the sounds, to shape and expand them into pictures.

Radio is a medium of mass communication, therefore radio drama must be able to communicate to the masses. Moreover the BBC is owned by the British people who have every right to get the type of entertainment they desire. But there exists no direct method of determining the preferences of such a tremendous heterogeneous audience. In the theatre there is direct contact between performers and audience which gives the dramatist the opportunity to gauge what effect his work is having on the public. Again, theatre audiences are mature, sophisticated and discriminating; they have a wide choice of plays to attend because the theatrical managements are not required to please all the people all the time. Radio, on the other hand, is obliged to design its programmes for "all the people", consequently the dilemma of the serious radio dramatist has been that of reconciling the obscure demands of a popular form of entertainment, with art.

Prior to 1936 the BBC had no indication of what people thought about its programmes, so it adhered to a policy of

giving them only the best, which meant what the BBC considered they ought to hear. Listener Research was set up for the purpose of finding out what the public really liked. The BBC has never attached such great importance to this department as American Radio, where it is essential that a programme should be heard by as many people as possible, so that the sponsor should get the maximum return for his money. If the statistics proved a programme to be unpopular it would be withdrawn immediately, but, according to the Beveridge Report, the department's investigations would only be "... considered with the utmost care..." by the BBC.(4) In Britain it acts as a guide, not a controlling factor in the type of programme that is broadcast.

Listener Research has revealed a general idea of popular taste in radio drama. First and foremost, the British public wants to be entertained, not educated, and any plays which are too obviously "art", too literary or too intellectual in tone, are immediately rejected. The majority of listeners do not like to make much of an effort to appreciate a play, they like them humorous or exciting, and keeping a middle course between sensationalism and sentimentality. Above all they do not regard radio drama as an "unique and individual art form", but simply as an entertainment medium. There is no preference for original radio plays; if anything they would rather have adaptations of films, novels or stage plays with which they are already familiar.

The radio audience consists for the most part of the middle

and lower social, economic and educational group. Therefore the type of drama it can enjoy must employ simple methods of presentation, its theme must keep within certain limits dictated by social convention, it must not be too long and above all, it must not give offence to any section of the public. Many dramatists have adopted the attitude of regarding "the ordinary listener", a mythological figure who represents the great radio audience, as a lazy, unintelligent, insensitive escapist and therefore a fellow to be avoided at all costs. But during the war, one of the foremost British poets, Louis MacNeice, brushed aside this bugbear and proved that such a concept was far from the truth. In his own plays and two practical, down-to-earth essays on radio drama, he demonstrated that a popular art form could be just as expressive as the more esoteric art forms, provided the dramatist had something to offer by way of entertainment.(5) MacNeice's theory, together with the influence of war-time conditions on broadcasting, opened the way for the evolution of a poetic radio drama which the general public discovered was probably more entertaining than the uninspiring fare they thought they wanted, and in most radio plays got.

Popular art and popular drama cannot be dismissed. It is just as foolish to suggest that whatever lacks the beauty and dignity of fine art is valueless, as it is to say that the necessity of providing popular entertainment precludes art. Shakespeare wrote first and foremost in terms of entertainment value or showmanship, and this feature has become part of the

natural development of everything which concerns the spoken word. When an artist no longer entertains he ceases to attract an audience and without an audience his work becomes worthless. Entertainment must therefore be the first consideration of any art form.

ii.
The institution.

The contemporary professional author derives his income by selling literary material to an institution which controls the communication medium through which that material is disseminated to the general public. Since the majority of institutions specialise to some degree in the audience group they supply with entertainment or art, the author has a choice of markets according to which section of the public he desires to address. In Great Britain, for instance, the market for novels consists of many publishers catering for different groups of readers. Therefore the novel, as an art form, offers an author the widest freedom in choice of theme and treatment. Drama is in a similarly fortunate position, because the relationship between the various theatre managements is only slightly less flexible than that between the publishers and the novelist.

An institution possessing a monopoly in the dissemination of a particular entertainment form, is in a position to impose any limitations on the kind of work it purchases. These limitations may be quite arbitrary -- a matter of "policy", or they may result from a methodical or theoretical study of the tastes, preferences and prejudices of the audience the institution serves. Therefore an author who desires to sell his work to a monopolistic institution must either accept these limitations and produce a type of entertainment likely to appeal to its audience or choose another medium. Few

popular art forms are controlled by monopolies. For an example we must again look back to Greek tragedy; and then, by way of comparison, a glance at the organisation of American radio accentuates the restrictive influence of a modern monopoly, the BBC, on radio drama in Great Britain.

The institution served by Greek drama was religion, and throughout the entire history of drama in Ancient Greece, the two never separated. A surprisingly irrational traditionalism characterised the religion, irrespective of whether the tenets it upheld were believed by the people or not. Religious conservatism was therefore a major influence on the dramatist. It restricted the number of subjects he could treat, and the number of actors he could use. It was responsible for playwright and audience combining at an early stage to impose the three unities of time, place and action. The chorus was retained for a long time after it ceased to play an important part in the action, while the actors' formalised costume and certain religious principles, kept all violent action, particularly the infliction of pain, off stage, although the resulting mental anguish was considered emotionally stirring and therefore presentable.

The tone of Greek religion is brilliantly reflected in the tragic drama it produced -- grand and majestic, meditative and ethical, traditional and formal -- the art is pervaded by the institution it served. Elizabethan drama, on the other hand was secular in tone, so the dramatist owed allegiance to no-one but his audience. As the supply of plays in England

at that time was almost non-existent, the theatrical managers and actors were only too ready to buy any kind of material likely to please an audience. Hence the audience was the principal influence on the theme and treatment of Elizabethan drama.

In the United States of America, the influence of the radio industry on radio drama is determined by two vital factors absent in Great Britain. Radio is commercial and it is competitive. Drama is not an isolated segment of broadcasting as it is with the BBC. It consists of many dissimilar elements working at cross purposes with each other. Radio is a salesman as well as an entertainment; an advertising industry, and an art. In a clear exposition of the technique and aims of American radio drama, David R. Mackey writes "Most radio drama is designed to get the listener in the mood to buy the goods or services which are offered for sale by the sponsor. The sponsor has a right to expect that there will be a return on his investment in time and talent, either in actual sales or increased prestige... it is only natural that the sponsor be interested in reaching [illegible] as many people as he can." (6) The basic consideration in American radio drama is the appeal of the presentation to the audience, which comes before any aesthetic considerations. "... in the main", Mackey continues, "radio is one of the most commercial of the arts, and in approaching any commercial art form one must be pragmatic... on the majority of programmes the audience must be used as a measuring stick."(p.9)

Listener research is the most important activity of the radio advertising agencies. For the BBC it acts as a guide, in America it directs. Not only do the sponsors of programmes vie with each other for the greatest number of listeners, but the stations and station networks compete for the attraction of both listeners and sponsors as well. In attempting to please as many people as possible, all the time, radio drama has on the whole, degenerated into a pandering to popular taste, a standardisation of set patterns and a love of stunts and tricks which rarely fail to please the listener.

An epitome of the almost childish approach of some American radio programmes is found in Luther Weaver's Radio Writing, a text book designed for University students. He exhorts them to "... be sure your central character is likeable. Do you like to see or hear a play in which the central character is repellent? Of course not; you want to admire the hero or the heroine, but, naturally, you want to hate the villian."(7) Unless a dramatist writes plays like this no one will listen and the sponsor won't sell his products. Most American radio seems to be based on the assumption that the audience is willing to make no effort whatsoever in listening. Therefore, as Mackey explains, "Our radio is 'jazzed up', or 'hypped'. The American radio audience is accustomed to this, and the majority of listeners do not particularly care for programmes which try too assiduously to educate them." (pp.95-96)

This is not the whole story of American radio drama, for that country has produced many of the best authors who have

worked within the medium — such as Norman Corwin and Archibald MacLeish. But by and large, commercialism has had a devastating effect on the artistic integrity, on the content, style and presentation of American radio drama. In Great Britain, the position is very different. The BBC is a monopoly, there is no radio advertising, Listener Research did not arrive until 1937, and there are now three programmes each catering for a different type of audience.

In 1922 the British Broadcasting Company, representing the radio manufacturers of the day, was given the sole right to broadcast in Britain; thus setting the precedent for a monopoly that has continued to the present day. Before the Company was replaced by an independent State-owned Corporation four years later, it worked out the basic principles upon which the BBC rests today. It is now a public service run by a monopoly, involving single control of everything that goes on the air and the means of getting it there. Control of broadcasting is in the hands of a body independent of shareholders, unconcerned with profits and untroubled by competition.(6) The BBC is financed from the proceeds of taxation but under no direct Government control. The consolidation of this system was largely due to the Company's first General Manager, Mr. J.C.W. Reith, now Lord Reith, who was determined not to let broadcasting become a commercial industry, as it has done in the United States of America, nor a tool of the Government, as in Russia.

The BBC's influence on radio drama in Great Britain works

in two directions. On the one hand, the huge demand for radio plays has completely outstripped the amount of original work written in the medium, and necessitated a reliance on adaptations from other media to fill the regular "play-bills"; on the other, the BBC, as the sole institution governing radio drama, has required each play broadcast to conform to certain arbitrary standards of "good taste" and "public decency" laid down as policy. As a result, many writers have charged the BBC with breeding mediocrity and the standardisation of taste through lack of competition.

It is undoubtedly true that the BBC's monopoly has had good results. We have only to compare the chaos of American radio drama with the imposing list of fine work produced by the BBC. It has broadcast excellent plays and countenanced the writing of excellent plays, while people who would most probably never see them in theatres, have enjoyed the Greek dramatists, Shakespeare, Shaw and Ibsen. Against this is argued the case put up to the Beveridge Committee by the Radiowriters Association, whose members supply a large proportion of material used by the BBC. The Association emphasised the importance of alternative markets for any type of creative writing, and complained that "... the writer of a radio script has no other market. Radio material is rarely of use in any other medium, though talks and short stories can occasionally be collected and published. In fact the radio writer is working for a monopoly, selling in a permanent buyers' market, and if for any reason he displeases his sole employer, the BBC, not only is his work wasted, but he may find

it more difficult to dispose of further scripts. This, in the opinion of the Association, is a priori an unhealthy state of things, both for the employing body, in this case the BBC, and the writer."(9)

The BBC might have replied that for competition to be effective, it must be between equals, and that the introduction of commercial radio would degenerate into a race for the greatest number of listeners, as is the case in America. A monopoly is the only way to maintain standards, even though it may be hard on some authors.

The BBC in its refusal to take sides in a public dispute, its perseverance in always taking the middle course, and its desire to offend no-one, does place some restriction on the subject matter of dramatists. However, it is doubtful whether commercial radio would alleviate this position to any great extent, because a commercial station, no less than a State-owned body cannot afford to offend its listeners.

The most frequent charge made against the BBC, as a result of its monopoly and policy, is that its programmes have grown more hidebound with the years, that it has favoured mediocrity and tended to standardise public taste. Because it cannot risk adverse criticism in "responsible circles" it has been reluctant to admit new ideas. Roger Manvell sees the greatest weakness of the BBC, in its inability to "... produce the hard hitting programme which is the result of bias, or overwhelming excitement or the passionate regard for the unpopular truth. Broadcasting can in the main only reflect opinions

which have already become accepted by a reasonably large proportion of the community."(14) The BBC has certainly not broadcast original radio plays of this nature, nor has it risked many adaptations from stage plays or novels dealing with controversial subjects.

In the past, the public has had to create most of its entertainment, but this present age has seen the establishment of big commercial and State-owned organizations hand feeding the public to a degree never known before. Little or no effort is required to obtain entertainment -- cheap newspapers, cheap magazines and most consistently of all, cheap radio, are always accessible in the home. Because of its minute cost and sheer accessibility to almost the entire population, there is a greater demand in quantity for radio programmes of every kind, than in any other entertainment industry.

With a large heterogeneous audience constantly waiting for something new and exciting to offset their familiarity with the medium, radio has become the most voracious consumer of every type of aural entertainment. Radio drama, no less than the other forms of entertainment radio supports, has suffered under such a continuous strain. The tremendous number of plays required each year by the BBC has had three important effects -- the repetition of many standard patterns, a reliance on adaptations from other media and the exposure of the public to the worst as well as the best in drama.

The magnitude of programme turnover has forced the BBC to

commission most of its scripts from a group of writers who regard radio drama as a craft, to be learnt and used as a profession. Many of them are willing to produce any number of variations on the old well worn themes, made so blatantly obvious to the more sensitive cinema patron by the film industry, an institution in a similar position to radio. Even the best of their work is soon forgotten after one or two performances.

But the number of original radio plays is completely overshadowed by adaptations. Many writers have become so adept at the transformation of a work from one medium to another, that they are able to derive a comfortable income from this occupation alone; and through constant practise, together with a preference for working within other people's ideas and a good deal of dramatic craftsmanship, many writers have brought their adaptations to almost the level of interpretative works of art. Radio adaptations are by no means all second rate re-hashes of successful films or novels. The "World Theatre" series which began during the war and still retains its popularity, has offered listeners the best plays of all countries in shortened radio versions and created a wide audience for first class dramatic entertainment.

The relationship of the professional radio dramatist to his public is almost the same as that between producer and consumer -- but not quite because there does not exist the same demand for new art as new scientific inventions -- and in radio drama the consumer's demand must, to a large extent, be paramount. Some

degree of mediocrity and standardisation is therefore inevitable, but not to the total exclusion of art. "... you can get away with anything" Louis MacNeice rightly said, "so long as you entertain."(11) This is the one responsibility the BBC owes to the people who own it.

These remarks do not apply to scripts commissioned by, or submitted to, the BBC's Third Programme which commenced in 1946, but the existence of this programme does not invalidate them for two reasons. The Third Programme is a luxury designed to cater for the tastes of a very small minority of the population by no means typical of the audience which supports radio drama as a popular art form. Secondly, most radio plays are broadcast in the two series "World Theatre" and "Saturday Night Theatre" on the Home Service. It is also a significant fact that nearly all the major poetic dramas written since 1946 by authors with high reputations in other literary media, have been broadcast not on the Third Programme but the Home Service. The Third Programme works without regard to Listener Research and can afford to ignore its listeners, so long as it maintains a constantly high level of artistic entertainment.

One of the most outspoken criticisms of the BBC for fostering mediocrity in radio drama, appeared in The National Review (Vol.120, 1943), where a writer, signing himself "Listener" complained about the mass production of adaptations, all conforming to a formula, swamped with sound effects, and utilising "... all the old tricks long since laughed off the British stage." "There is in Broadcasting House," he says, "a mania

for 'dramatisation' which may well be compared to the efforts of the flautist to imitate the human voice."(12)

The truth of the matter is that "Listener" is criticising the BBC for not doing something that it is not there to do. That is to say, he seems to regard it as a purveyor of culture and enlightenment existing to foster various art forms and the appreciation of art. To some extent Reith regarded broadcasting in this light, but broadcasting has outgrown these golden ideas. The BBC is a medium for the dissemination of information and entertainment, and no public service can afford to supply goods for which there is no demand. The BBC is no exception -- it is owned by the people and must therefore supply their demands. There exists no popular demand for art; the film, radio drama and television are at their lowest level simply different aspects of people's preoccupation with the new inventions of modern civilization.

The true effect of the BBC on radio drama in Great Britain, can only be judged from the results -- that is the contributions made to dramatic art, over the last thirty years. But it must be remembered that for each one of these important contributions -- and there are not over many -- a huge number of plays have been broadcast for which no pretension of "creative art" is made. Amongst this "hack work", as it is called by many literary intellectuals, broadcast once or twice, then forgotten by author and audience, there must exist some hundreds of plays and adaptations which represent a high standard of artistry.

Only the "big names" in radio, or the well known literary figures who have attempted a radio play or two, have succeeded in getting their work published. Although most of these people have made significant contributions to the technique and achievement of the form, it was a small group of back writers and professional radio men who were responsible for the development and consolidation of radio drama as a popular art form.

To the majority of listeners, the radio play is just another type of entertainment laid on in the home; to others it is a second rate affair too severely handicapped by the absence of sight to ever present a complete dramatic illusion — but to a small minority of authors and listeners, it represents a unique self sufficient form of artistic expression, so it might well be asked what aesthetic justification exists for this claim.

iii.
The art.

Radio drama makes use of the aural only, without the almost invariable accompaniment of the visual, which we find in nature as well as art. The artist is therefore given the possibility of drawing together pure sounds from every sphere of the material world, whether they be realistic, symbolic, abstract, vocal, choral, musical or rhythmical. Orchestral music, naturalistic dialogue, the song, the chorus — all of which normally enjoy quite separate existences — may be used in conjunction with dialogue and narration to tell a story. In opera these same elements are employed for the same purpose, but here they are bound to a corporeal world and require a great deal of visual experience to complete the illusion. Opera, like stage drama, is conceived in terms of sight as well as sound; it entertains the eye as well as the ear, depending as much on scenery, gesture, costume and grouping, as music, dialogue and singing. Its ingredients are multiple and diffuse, so the mind has to grapple with simultaneous impressions of acting, singing, orchestral playing and pictorial scenic effects. The acceptance of these disparate elements is due more to convention than their artistic amalgamation.

With radio drama the reverse holds true. The absence of visuals places every kind of sound on an equal footing and provides a "stage" where they can be artistically blended into a composite creation that produces a single, harmonious effect.

Radio drama is often regarded as a poor relation of stage drama, because both share the same principal constructive element -- oral discussion between human beings. Writing in 1936 during the first flowering of the radio play in Germany, Rudolf Arnheim went to the opposite extreme and maintained that radio drama was far superior to stage drama. The latter, he believed was a verbal art, and because it had to be performed before the eyes of an audience, the eye had to be entertained as well as the ear. Therefore the producer must add scenery, costume, business and movement but, says Arnheim "Much of what is placed before the eye on stage or screen for the sake of naturalistic completeness is there only so that the lack of it should not disturb one; it is not used positively."(13) There is, he continues "... a fundamental, insoluble contradiction contained in all theatre pieces ... due to the fact that a verbal work of art is performed not only before the ear but before the eye..." (p.173) He maintains that a verbal work of art should give the whole situation in words and express nothing in it which cannot be expressed in words.

But stage drama is far from being wholly a verbal art. It grew out of religious ritual, dancing, singing and mime; speech came later and dialogue later still. The original ingredients of drama are basically what Arnheim refers to as the grotesque conditions of opera.

These ideas derived from Arnheim's conception of a "non-visual" radio drama which fundamentally rejected all resemblance

to reality and approached the abstract condition of music, foregoing everything in the world which could not be completely represented by sound. The proper stuff of radio was the presentation of inner action and thought processes which would be meaningless if the visual imagination worked on them. He believed the imaginative process of seeing what you hear should be discouraged, because it is a hindrance to the real appreciation of radio drama and the particular advantages it has to offer.

Arnheim's theory was too limited in every way. Not only did it severely restrict the dramatist's choice of theme, but it completely ignored any consideration of whether a demand for such plays could ever exist, and even if it did, where the dramatists would come from to write them. Arnheim's Radio is an excellent exposition of the techniques of radio dramatic presentation, and of the advantages the form has to offer the dramatist, but his aesthetic theory was almost foredoomed to failure. When the book was published in 1931, only a handful of significant radio plays had been written in Germany and Great Britain, so his theories, based on a selection of these plays which he admired, were soon outdated as new possibilities of radio drama were discovered by men who viewed the form in an entirely different light. There have been examples of "non-visual" radio plays in Great Britain -- Tyrone Guthrie's Squirrel's Cage is the finest -- but since 1936, radio drama has developed along entirely different lines, appealing to sight as much as hearing.

Because the radio dramatist is dealing in nothing else but sound, his world is not confined to things aural. The listener's mind may be persuaded to work in the same way as the mind of the novel reader, who through his imagination fills out from the author's description, visual images of the people and places in the book. Radio drama substitutes for the visual eye, the sight of the imagination, and therefore has a much freer appeal to the eye than the stage. The listener's mind requires more than the unsupplemented dis-embodied sounds Arnheim would have it supplied with. The radio dramatist must give a full mental picture of what is taking place, what the characters look like, and the surroundings in which they move; not necessarily by direct narration, but through indirect suggestion merged into the texture of the dialogue. In Louis MacNeice's The Dark Tower, we see scenes and imagine impressions beyond the limits of the aural world. Douglas Stewart's Fire on the Snow makes us visualise the frozen waste and austere grandeur of the Antarctic which could never be conveyed by stage decor.

The substitution for the visual element in an art form which wholly or partly excludes it, is not a new problem, but one common to the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare. MacNeice and Stewart were simply following the lead of Sophocles, Euripides and Shakespeare who were forced to use imaginative and descriptive suggestion to paint their scenes in words because their playhouses used no practical scenery.

Shakespeare was always conscious of the physical limits of

his theatre, but succeeded in turning them to his advantage. He bore in mind the symbolical and imaginative character of his wooden O, his unworthy scaffold and ragged foils, and directed his appeal not only to spectators but to an audience willing to meet him half way with their imagination:

> And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
> On your imaginary forces work.

Radio has given rise to a dramatic form which completely eliminates scenery and theatre, a form which has to rely for its scenic effects upon sound alone. Its audience must work their thoughts, not to piece out the imperfections of a visible scene, but to fill a vacuum. The chorus in the prologue to Henry V may well be speaking for the radio dramatist:

> Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
> Printing their proud hooves in the receiving earth;
> For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
> Carry them here and there, jumping o'er time,
> Turning the accomplishments of many years
> Into an hourglass.

The verbal substitution for visual scenery did not make Shakespeare's dialogue otiose, nor should it overburden a radio drama provided the description is carefully worked into the flow of the dialogue, or if it is given in separate passages, they do not sound extraneous, or detached from the action. By this very lack of scenery, the radio play gains in the width of its dimensions. Given a directing impulse, the listener's imagination will visualise scenes beyond the physical powers of stage designers to build or the camera to photograph. In his Introduction to The Squirrel's Cage and Other Radio Plays, Tyrone Guthrie states the imaginative freedom of radio drama in

somewhat extravagant, but nevertheless basically true terms:

> The microphone play lacks the glamour and physical magnetism of the stage, but lacks also the too solid flesh. Because its pictures are solely of the mind, they are less substantial but more real than the cardboard grottos, the calico rosebuds, the dusty grandeur of the stage; less substantial and vivid, because not apprehended visually, more real because the impression is partly created by the listener himself. From the author's clues the listener collects his materials, and embodies them in a picture of his own creation. It is therefore an expression of his own experience -- whether physical or psychological -- and therefore more real to him than the ready-made picture of the stage designer. For example, the author suggests 'moonlight night'. The stage picture would express the designer's idea of the author's idea of moonlight night; but the listener's picture, created from his own associations, derived from his own experience, expresses his own particular brand of moonshine. I do not deny that the stage picture will probably be more academically correct, but it remains, none the less, no more than a translation, an interpretation of someone else's experience. (14)

The danger in relying overmuch on the imagination of the audience is apparent. Given ambiguous or insufficient clues, the listener may easily evoke associations different from what the dramatist intended, and therefore create an anachronous scene. The listener must be carefully directed to create as much or as little of a scene as is necessary to the play. The advantage of this method really lies in the fact that a scene is not visualised photographically, nor does the eye wander from part to part and distract attention from the play. A scene may be imagined as an all embracing whole, its creation controlled by the dramatist and integrated with other aspects of the play. As Merrill Denison wrote"... the broadcast play once having won the imagination to flight, need place no

artificial barriers in the way of that flight."(15) Radio drama's freedom to compress or expand time, to move the action through space at will, derive from its appeal to the imagination above all else. If a radio play does not appeal to the imagination it fails; but unless it keeps the imagination under careful control the result is chaos or unintelligibility.

Guthrie's observations can be misleading, if they are not viewed in their proper perspective as a comparison of methods. To deride the technique of stage scenery as a general principle not related to either specific periods or productions, in favour of the "purer technique of radio drama," is a dangerous line of attack. Radio drama is neither a substitute for, nor an improvement upon the theatre; it is only through the convention of words that the two forms are confused. In the nineteen-twenties, the term "cinema play" was in vogue — not long afterwards it was replaced by "the film" and all that word implies, whether silent or talking. The relation of radio drama to stage drama is precisely that of painting to sculpture. It is quite pointless to argue about the superiority of one or the other of these two plastic arts; the whole point being that every medium of artistic expression possesses some advantages over others, and a number of limitations inherent in its own particular physical or mechanical structure. Just as painting and sculpture are two forms of manual art, so radio drama and stage drama are two forms of dramatic art, each having evolved quite separately under totally different sets of conditions.

III

THE FIVE PHASES.

The development of radio drama as an art form may be considered as a sequence of five main phases. This sequence is not strictly chronological, because while the majority of dramatists were writing in the popular and acceptable manner of the time, there were always a few whose work was ahead of their time and therefore belonged logically to the next phase.

During the first period of development, which begins with the establishment of broadcasting as a public service in 1922, radio producers made their first attempts to put some form of drama over the air before a specialised technique of presentation had been worked out. From these crude efforts there gradually evolved a technique of adaptation by which stage plays were clarified and novels dramatised for broadcast purposes. Finally Richard Hughes, a novelist, wrote the first play deliberately conceived in terms of pure sound.

Richard Hughes' example was followed by other writers who picked up a satisfactory method of presentation and prepared the way for the second phase in the development of radio drama -- a period of jubilant adolescence as the form grew in popularity with writers and audience; a period of wild, enthusiastic and uncontrolled experiment, going hand in hand with important advances in the technical machinery of radio. Two dramatists in particular, Lance Sieveking and L. du Garde

Peach displayed to the world nearly every technique of radio dramatic production, many of which soon became standard practice not only for drama but radio as a whole.

The third period is characterised by a number of dramatists who selected those techniques they considered essential, rejected all the extraneous tricks and settled down to achieve in their work a balanced, artistic radio dramatic form. Tyrone Guthrie, Patric Hamilton, D.G.Bridson and Val Gielgud wrote and produced radio plays which have since become classics, L. du Garde Peach grew out of his early extravagance and wrote several brilliant plays; while Louis MacNeice joined the BBC and made his first attempts at the dramatised feature.

The fourth period covers the years of the Second World War, with its forced austerity and restrictions. Production costs were drastically reduced and only half the technical machinery was available. But as the legitimate theatres closed and it became difficult to attend the cinema, the audience for radio drama increased greatly and the demand for radio plays almost doubled. However the imposition of further limitations on radio drama was responsible for a more extensive development of the form during the seven war years, than had taken place over the previous thirteen years. Radio playwrights discovered the value of a simple and direct approach, treatment and presentation, while the printing restrictions caused many important writers to turn to a more accessible market for their work -- radio. During the war Clemence Dane wrote one of the best series of radio dramas; Dorothy Sayers surprised the

literary world with The Man Born to be King; Eric Linklater turned from the novel to discover what was then a new method of radio dramatic treatment; Louis MacNeice established himself as a radio writer, and with Edward Sackville-West, laid the foundations of a poetic radio drama.

The fifth period in the development of radio drama chronologically begins with the establishment of the BBC Third Programme in 1946. Many serious contemporary authors have been attracted to the form since that time by the existence of a more than usually intelligent audience and have contributed plays which are both important works of dramatic art and significant contributions to modern literature. This period also covers the evolution of a poetic drama for radio, following the examples set by D.G.Bridson in 1936 together with Clemence Dane, Louis MacNeice and Edward Sackville-West during the war.

Over these five periods, radio drama has developed along three main lines:

1. The studio reproduction of plays originally intended for the stage. Some plays (and also films) have been produced simply because of their name value and box office appeal; many classical works have been excellently adapted and well produced, such as the plays of Wilde, Chekhov, Ibsen and Strindberg; while other plays have almost perfectly lent themselves to radio adaptation by judicious cutting and a few minor internal changes for the sake of clarity -- in particular the Greek tragedies, many plays of Shakespeare's and of Shaw's.

2. Adapted novels and short stories, either as complete radio plays or in serialised form. Cecil Lewis' adaptation of Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim and Eric Maschwitz's two and a quarter hour adaptation of Compton McKenzie's Carnival are the most notable examples.

3. Radio plays proper -- that is, plays written specifically for radio and inconceivable in any other medium. Comparatively few writers have specialised in, or even attempted, the more original and imaginative kinds of radio drama, with the result that radio has been forced to draw almost entirely for its dramatic repertoire on adaptations from novels, short stories, films and plays. This in turn has given rise to the highly skilled craft of adaptation which has proved immensely popular with writers who are content to work within the ideas of others.

In tracing the development of radio drama, small consideration can be given to the huge quantity of dramatic scripts and adaptations which fill the regular BBC playbills. In the main this process of development has been carried through by a small number of imaginative dramatists, most of whom have had their plays published. Some adaptations must be taken into account for their artistic merit, but emphasis will be placed on original radio plays, with a brief mention of the three forms which have branched off from radio drama -- the feature, the variety show and the serial.

Before proceeding to the analysis of individual radio plays, it is well to bear in mind a deficiency inherent in all

criticism of dramatic literature. A good radio play, like a stage play or scenario, can only be judged by its total effect -- how it sounds when it comes over the air. The script on paper is only half the battle, because the dramatist must depend upon the collaborative efforts of the actors, the producer and all that he may add in the way of music and effects, to realise the full potentials of his script. Mood is not created by words alone, sound must, to a great extent, set the scene, while character is born not so much from the dramatist's lines as the way in which they are interpreted by the live voice. Radio plays tend to lose more than stage plays when read rather than heard, because they are far more of a composite creation of author, performers and audience, who must bring their imagination into full play.

Although a simple medium in many ways, radio is strangely incalculable. The final impression made by a long and elaborate play can be seriously disturbed by the timbre of one voice, or of two voices which sound too much alike, or by a bad piece of production, such as inappropriate music, a slight falsity of tempo, an unnecessary sound effect, or a long gap which would be imperceptible on the stage or screen. The inordinate sensitivity of the microphone can be a liability as much as an advantage, and throws a tremendous responsibility upon the producer.

In the theatre the producer's job ends when the curtain rises on the first night. But the producer of a radio play, wrote Val Gielgud, who has occupied this position since the

earliest days of broadcasting, "... remains the central hinge on which the success of all his work must turn from the beginning of a transmission to its end." (1) Not only must he rehearse his actors, music and effects, but control the balance and rhythm of his play during performance. In the days of the Dramatic Control Panel, the various segments of a production were housed in different studios and therefore had no contact with each other, so their integretation and blending depended entirely on the producer. Even the Single Studio technique requires him to control the machinery of production and actively participate until the final announcement.

IV

THE FIRST PERIOD : 1922-1926.

i.

Outline of the period.

In the year 1900, when the silent film was already five years old, there was no such thing as radio broadcasting, simply because the materials for it did not exist. The mechanics of wireless were known but many years elapsed before it was conceived of as a public service. Broadcasting, in which the material transmitted is considered of more importance than the technical wonder of transmitting it, was pioneered by privately constructed amateur stations, but their activities were curtailed by the Post Office because it was thought that indiscriminate broadcasting might endanger vital messages. On February 14, 1922, P. P. Eckersley, the greatest name in radio technology, was authorised to make an experimental broadcast from Writtle, England, for the Marconi Company. He played gramophone records and read a portion of a play -- the balcony scene from Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac. Although Eckersley did not expect his transmission to be taken too seriously, this was the first radio programme and the first example of drama on the air.(1)

Radio drama was born in the mid nineteen-twenties -- a period of enthusiastic experiment in drama and theatrical production in Russia, Germany, France, England and the American University workshop theatres. Every form of staging was tried

To match the new techniques of the expressionistic drama. The period also gave rise to the avant garde in the French and German cinema, while Soviet theories of film montage were quickly spreading to the West.

In the early years of the British Broadcasting Company, technical facilities were artistically naive and programme hours were short, but the men who produced the programmes were inspired with the contemporary desire to break new boundaries in their novel and exciting medium. These pioneers, a diverse group of enthusiasts who fervently believed in the possibilities of radio, had energy and enthusiasm, and a determination to do things which had not yet been done, often well in advance of their audience's demands.

In January, 1923, the first broadcast was made from outside the Company's studios at Savoy Hill, London. This was Act I of The Magic Flute, performed by the British National Opera Company at Covent Garden. Not long after came the first attempts at broadcasting plays by carefully concealing microphones about the stages of West End theatres.(2) The tent scene in Julius Caesar was the first selected for this treatment, because only two contrasting characters are employed and the scene consists, for the most part, of dialogue with a minimum of physical action. The result of these efforts was hopeless. All the listener received was an experience similar to sitting through a theatrical performance with his eyes shut. It was impossible to follow the action; difficult to disentangle the actors, especially the female voices; the plays

became awkward when the listener could not see the stage business; and without the infection of mass audience reaction and the visual allure of colour and light in scenery and costume, very little of the play remained -- and what did remain was unintelligible.

R. T. Jeffrey, who was appointed the first BBC Productions Director, realised that some degree of adaptation was necessary if plays designed for both visual and aural appeal were to have the first of these dimensions eliminated. He inaugurated a series "From the London Theatres", for which scenes were selected, recorded from the stage production and put together in the studio. Alternately, scenes were re-arranged and re-read in the studio, linked by narration and fitted out with a few elementary sound effects. The series was designed as a show case for the West End theatres, but it did not receive the full co-operation of the managements, except when the plays broadcast were failures and thus benefited by radio advertisement.

The theatre managers did not welcome the radio play any more than the film producers of the last ten years have welcomed the television play, because the possibility of people sitting at home listening in comfort on a wet night, rather than making the effort to attend the theatre or cinema, constituted to their way of thinking a substantial threat to box office returns. Neither did radio plays receive the full co-operation of the stage actors who were tempted to appear in them -- and not without cause. Fees were small, productions were by trial

and error, there was no exhilaration of an audience, and no glamour of makeup. "The Actor found himself reading into an uninspiring square box and wearing his ordinary clothes. As soon as he 'acted' he would deafen people," wrote Val Gielgud. (5) No specialised technique or approach to radio acting had been evolved.

Radio producers, adaptors and actors were dealing with a form which had no tradition behind it, therefore they had to recruit ideas from another medium. But in trying to tell a story in aural terms by imitating the techniques of a medium partly based on visual perception, they were doomed to failure. The plays they used had been constructed for all the dimensions of the theatre — scenery, costume, lighting, gesture, movement, facial expression, mimetic reactions — and the lack of these dimensions affected every play that was produced on the radio.

It became apparent that this sort of thing was both artistically unsatisfactory and unfair to the listener. Soon there were indications of a breakaway from these naive methods as new experiments were made in the art of telling a story for the ear alone, which gave no thought to the limits and conventions of the stage. This breakaway took place in two forms — the adaptation of novels and short stories by practised authors who achieved some degree of artistry, and the arrival of the radio play proper.

In 1927, R.E. Jeffrey produced Cecil Lay Lewis'(4) adaptation of Conrad's novel, Lord Jim, and in May, 1928, Val Gielgud and

and Eric Maschwitz collaborated to produce a radio adaptation of Compton McKenzie's Carnival. These two productions proved conclusively that a drama, a genuine drama for the radio, was a real and exciting possibility. The first dramatist to realise this possibility, by turning the limitations of radio to his own special artistic account, was Richard Hughes, and with the production of his play Danger on January 15, 1924, radio drama as a separate and distinct art form was born.

ii.
Richard Hughes.

Danger by Richard Hughes was first produced by Nigel Playfair and broadcast from the London Studio of the BBC on January 15, 1924. In a preface to the published version of the play, Hughes explains that he was asked by the BBC "... to write a play for effect by sound alone in the same way that film plays are written for effect by sight alone." (5) He exhibits the prevalent uncertainty about radio as a dramatic medium in a further note that appears somewhat naive to the person familiar with radio drama today: "For direct presentation, it should be acted in darkness, and it is thus better suited for performance in a room, without a stage at all, than in even a small theatre."

Hughes sets his scene in the gallery of a Welsh coal mine which his three characters are visiting, and the plot is immediately set in motion, after the announcer has briefly indicated the location, by the extinction of the lights. Thus the action of this fifteen minute drama is restricted to three main voices speaking in a confined space in pitch darkness. When the lights fail, John, a young married man, tries to comfort his wife, Mary. Footsteps are heard, distant at first, then becoming louder as Mr. Bax, a typical old blustering Englishman, comes into the scene. Mary begins to enjoy the situation — it is the thrill she wanted, and she disconcerts her husband by ironically imagining they

are participating in a real tragedy. "A distant explosion followed by a long echo, swelling in volume", then a moment later "Another explosion nearer, followed by the hiss of water", steadily increase the atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty. Gradually the roar of water increases in volume and fades into a sound-backing to the dialogue. A few bars of a Welsh song are heard, but the listener is uncertain whether it comes from the rest of the visiting party, or from miners attempting a rescue.

Hughes adds a serious note to the play, a discussion of death itself, which arises naturally out of the situation as the characters feel the mine slowly filling with water and realise they must die. This discussion retains its dramatic force through an argument between Bax and John, in which Bax almost ferociously expresses his desire to live because he considers his life to be of more value than that of a young husband. This makes his self sacrifice in favour of John at the end of the play all the more moving.

Tension mounts as the rush of water becomes closer and the dialogue semi-hysterical. Into this, the sound of tapping is introduced as the characters hear the miners digging down to them. Bax is still fervent in his desire to live, as the level of the water rises to Mary's neck and the tapping of the rescuers becomes louder. Bax sees a light, there is the sound of strong blows and falling coal, followed by a loud cheer. The excited voices of the miners establish the fact that rescue is now certain. Mary, who has fainted, is hauled

to safety on a rope, then follows a short argument between Bax and John over who should follow — Bax insisting that it should be the younger man. John is hauled up against his will, but when the rope is lowered again Bax has disappeared in the swirling water.

Danger is an admirably constructed miniature drama; it has few characters, well differentiated in voice quality; short simple speeches eminently readable, a sustained atmosphere increasing in tension up to the rescue, and a semi surprise ending with a considerable dramatic impact. In effect the play is simply an exploitation of a situation, with serious overtones for dramatic purposes, but in it can be seen many features of later radio drama.

Danger is conceived wholly in terms of sound. As a short story it would lose the immediacy of dramatic impact; it would be impossible as a silent film and improbable as a sound film. The listener is never in doubt as to who is speaking; sound effects are as essential as the dialogue in building up the tension, and as a background to the speeches; the overall action is simple and clearly developed, while the main conflict takes place in the minds of the characters.

The device of setting the play in a coal mine after the lights have gone out seems rather superficial today, but it is almost certain that Hughes made use of it quite deliberately. He realised the nature of the audience situation in listening to a radio drama, and tried to create a similar situation in which to develop his play. The audience was "in the dark",

therefore the most effective way of communicating with it was to eliminate visuals altogether and enact the play too, "in the dark". Unconsciously, Hughes brought to light a problem that radio dramatists have all had to face and to which they have offered various solutions -- the substitution of visuals. Danger fits in well with Arnheim's theory of non-visual radio drama with its simple plot, internal conflict and purely aural representation, but the dramatists who followed Hughes placed considerable emphasis on ways and means of communicating to the listener those aspects of action and scene which are primarily visual. Hughes really evaded the problem altogether by setting his play in the dark. Quite apart from its historical value as a pioneer in the field of radio drama, Danger is still an excellent little radio play in its own right.

iii.
Gordon Lea.

In 1926, only two years after the production of the first play written for radio, the first book entirely devoted to radio drama appeared. This was Radio Drama and How to Write it (6) by Gordon Lea, intended as a textbook designed to attract authors to the new medium, and to give some exposition of its technique. Lea's book shows a remarkable insight into the lines that radio drama was to follow in the next few years.

Lea begins his book by setting forth the advantages and disadvantages of writing for the theatre, devoting much energy to pointing out all the limitations of this medium. He dislikes the commercial necessity of star actors and regards the physical appearance of the actor with a flexible voice as a serious limitation on casting availability. There are restrictions on the number of scenes which must carry the action, restrictions on the movement from place to place of the actors. He finds the reality of stage scenery difficult to accept and finds it impossible to introduce perspective into the acting and action. There are restrictions on lighting, the aside and soliloquey are unconvincing, and a change of time or scene is always marked by a cessation of the play which inevitably results in a weakening of the audience's attention. Most of these arguments are quite futile because they are nearly all conventions of the theatre which both playwrights and audiences either accept without question or question by

experimental techniques.

In Chapter III, Lea attempts to show the superiority of radio drama over the stage method in conveying the message of the dramatist to the world. The conditions of radio, he maintains "... offer a means of truer interpretation, a medium of finer artistry and a clear path to truth."(p.36) He then sets down the advantages of radio presentation which are not so much arguments for its supriority over stage drama, as an exposition of a different set of conventions resulting from the medium of radio drama itself -- and as such they are worth noting.

Briefly the advantages he outlines are: the absence of worry over an actor's appearance, and of the necessity for engaging star performers to "sell" a play; the naturalness with which the soliloquy and aside may be used; the freedom of radio drama to range at will through time and space and its ability to present an instantaneous change of scene; the opportunity to employ sound effects and music either as background to the dialogue or functionally within the play's action; and the use of the direct intimate method of presentation addressed to the individual listener whose emotions are unhampered by mass psychology and can therefore be encouraged to a full and natural reaction to the emotions of the play. Coupled with this insight into the possibilities of radio drama are rash statements like "anything that is conceivable in his (the dramatist's) imagination is capable of complete expression and interpretation to the imagination of

his world." (p.41.) If Lea had changed this to read "Anything that is totally conceivable in terms of sound alone..." the statement would be perfectly correct. He rounds off the chapter with an eloquent plea. "This then is a new medium for drama, richer in its possibilities than any other medium hitherto known, waiting for the dramatists who shall conceive plays worthy of it. Here is the demand; whence comes the supply?" (p.43.)

Chapters IV and V are devoted to the technique of radio playwriting. Lea realised that everything must be unequivocally translated into and conveyed by sound -- entrances and exits, the actor who is speaking, mood, action and scenery. Here he perceives the similarities between radio drama and the Elizabethan Theatre. The scenes Shakespeare indicated in dialogue added to the beauty of the text and gave the play a fuller significance than many elaborate sets could ever do. Lea sets forth two methods for the radio play -- Narrative, which employs a Narrator as an introduction and a bridge between scenes, and the Self Contained Method, where everything is included in the dialogue. Lea still regards the microphone as an eavesdropper even though he can see its possibilities. He also maintains that "Plays of action are probably more successful by radio than on the stage," (p.58.) a precept that du Garde Peach, Hamilton and many other radio dramatists observed.

Lea also saw the advantages, indeed the necessity, of condensation in radio drama. In the theatre interest is diffused between two senses, sight and sound, either of which may pre-

dominate, but in listening to a radio play everything is subordinated to the perception by sound alone of the theme and action, inducing a higher imaginative contribution by the listener and therefore a better appreciation of the play. Lea clearly distinguishes the listening situation of the audience to a stage play and a radio play: "The reactions of the listener to a radio play are more sincere and true than those of an individual member of a theatre audience ... The listener can abandon himself entirely to the atmosphere and emotions of a play unhampered by crowd psychology." (pp.69-70.) He draws no barrier between the listener willing to make an effort of appreciation and the listener whose sole desire is to be entertained with the least possible intellectual discomfort. Lea concludes the chapter by saying, probably as a bait to prospective writers, that the beneficial effects to be derived from listening to radio plays free of the mass psychology of the theatre will develop the character, deepen one's powers of imagination and concentration, widen one's intellectual and emotional sympathies, and encourage one to love one's mother tongue. One is tempted to ask whether, after a hard day's work, one is allowed to be entertained!

Lea is far in advance of his contemporaries when he writes of the uses and abuses of sound effects. The years immediately following the publication of Radio Drama are almost infamous for the manner in which radio writers and producers exploited sound effects. Scripts were loaded with many simultaneous layers of sound and so much publicity was given

to the means of producing these odd noises that the public soon looked upon them as a huge joke. Lee foresaw the possibility of extraneous noises, and maintained that all sound effects must be subordinated to the play itself. He realised they "should be used sparingly. An ounce of suggestion is worth a ton of imitation."(p.43.) Sound effects must be clearly established and entirely functional for their use to be justified, because they are not always as intelligible to the listener as to the person who produces them.

A further testimony to Lee's imaginative insight is seen in his forecast of the Multiple Studio and Dramatic Control Panel technique which influenced the form and presentation of radio drama during its second stage of development. He writes "We could have a military band transmitting through one microphone, a crowd acting as a holiday crowd through a second microphone, and through a third, players acting a scene on the seashore with suitable background effects. If all these microphones were artistically controlled, a wonderful picture could be given of the seaside." (p.74.)

No doubt Lee's book attracted many writers to attempt radio drama. He realised the potentialities of the form, set them out clearly and concisely together with an exposition of the basic techniques involved, thus providing a timely and intelligent guide to this new form of drama. His idea of multiple studio presentation became a reality but his advice on the use of sound effects remained unheeded for many

years, much to the detriment of radio drama. Lee's theories and ideas were so far ahead of his time that Radio Drama and How to Write it is still an authoritative exposition of the technique of the radio play.

iv.
Conclusion.

During the first period of broadcasting the microphone was regarded as an "eavesdropper" rather than a precise medium of artistic expression. Edward Liveing, Manchester Station Director for the BBC wrote: "... the wireless play is something that must give the impression to the listener that he is overhearing events taking place somewhere or other in the lives of individuals outside the four walls of his room."(7) Today, the microphone is quite legitimately an eavesdropper in actuality programmes such as race descriptions and the broadcasting of public orchestral concerts, but in employing the same technique in early radio plays the results were not at all satisfactory. Later dramatists realised that a new approach to the medium was required. The degree of their success can be gauged from Val Gielgud's claim that the principal service to broadcasting of radio drama "... has not been in the actual plays it has produced but in proving conclusively that the application of a specialised professional technique was not only necessary for a single activity of broadcasting, but was desirable for the broadcasting of programmes as a whole." (8)

In the minds of the listening public, and even men working in the medium, radio was for a long time a novelty, a toy -- and it was its "miracle" that made one listen. Everything was good because it was "on the air". After the first few years writers, producers and audience became more critical, as the

novelty interest of listening to the wireless gave way to a more intelligent attitude to what was being broadcast.

Within this psychological attitude there was another barrier to the development and appreciation of radio drama. During the first few years of broadcasting, programmes concentrated mainly on news, music and talks, as it was felt that radio drama was no more than a makeshift, something that needed sight and did not have it. The majority of dramatists, producers and listeners thought that radio drama could never come to much, because they had been brought up to think in terms of "seeing" rather than "hearing" a play. Thus there was an initial prejudice against "sound drama" -- it was listened to as a substitute and not something existing in its own right. This idea has remained widespread throughout the development of the form and is still prevalent today.

The first four years of public service broadcasting in Britain saw rapid developments both on the programme and technical sides. By 1926 over two million homes had wireless sets and transmission lasted from ten to twelve hours a day.-- a long period to keep an audience entertained. A general picture of the conditions amongst which radio dramatic producers and writers were working, can be seen in Maurice Gorham's summary of the position of British broadcasting at this time:

> The radio medium was new and unexplored; the people entrusted with it in Britain had every opportunity to try something new every day. Only one organisation was doing it, there was no standard of comparison, things were admired not so much because they were done well as because they were done at

> all. Listeners who sat clamped to headphones or operated nine controls to work a primitive loudspeaker were not likely to be particular about style and finish in production... But the very fact that there was no competition — that if the BBC did not do anything, British radio could not do it — makes it even more creditable to the pioneers that so much was done so soon. (9)

There were few pioneers in the early formative years of radio drama, partly because the equipment to produce it satisfactorily did not exist, and more important, because the huge demand for programmes of all kinds prevented men working in radio from spending much time in exploration. But gradually there began to appear "pure" radio plays — that is, plays which could not be performed in any other medium without completely losing their dimension. Also an audience was steadily increasing for radio drama largely due to the popular series "Saturday Night Theatre", for which R.E.Jeffrey may take much of the credit. His successor, Val Gielgud, who took charge of the BBC Drama Department in 1929 after a chequered career as a professional actor, an Oxford Undergraduate, a journalist and a novelist, has probably done more for radio drama as a producer and author than any other man. He has been responsible for the production of nearly every important contribution to the form as well as pioneering many new techniques and approaches in his own original radio plays.

V

THE SECOND PERIOD : 1926-1930.

i.

Outline of the period.

During the years immediately following 1926, a small group of British authors and radio producers became conscious of the fact that this new medium of communication had given rise to a new form of drama which had yet to be provided with plays. After a number of tentative experiments they realised that what had been considered radio's gravest limitation, its lack of vision, made it a powerful dramatic medium full of unexplored possibilities, and able to do things impossible to attempt in the theatre.(1)

The second period in the development of radio drama can be loosely enclosed between the years 1926 and 1930, although many plays which properly belong to it were produced aslate as 1934. This was a time of enthusiastic but uncontrolled experiment, for during these years, the technical machinery of radio drama was tested and its ingredients fixed. A new technical invention -- the Dramatic Control Panel, with its components, multiple studio production and remote control -- captured the imagination of producers, who began to take uninhibited delight in working out novel methods of using it. As a result the technique of the radio play was exploited at the expense of its subject matter, presentation was exalted

above inherent dramatic interest and producers regarded the interpretation of a play and the handling of actors as less important than the mechanical gadgets provided for them. The end of radio drama was almost forgotten in a wild excitement with the means.

For the origin of the Multiple Studio technique and the Dramatic Control Panel the most authorative source is Val Gielgud, whose enthusiasm for these elaborate methods faded as his attitude became more critical in later years:

> The origin of multiple studios arose, in the first instance from the fact that, in the earliest stages of broadcasting play production, it was recognised that a certain amount of musical background could play a very important part, and that, with the limited size of the studios available, it was impossible both from the point of view of general balance of sound, and from that of the comfort of actors concerned, to have both the orchestra and cast in the same studios. The actors could not hear themselves speak and the problem of engineering and balance was almost insoluble. Thereupon some ingenious person conceived a method by which two studios should be used, one for the orchestra and one for the cast; that the output of those two studios should be mixed at some central point and then transmitted as a whole.(2)

The central point was a room, usually several floors removed from the studios, which housed a machine for mixing and regulating the output of up to nine studios. This in turn implied a person to work it -- the producer, who, after rehearsing his play, sat at the panel deciding the proportion of each studio product to be transmitted. The producer could then control the relative balance of the ingredients of his play by placing his music in one studio, effects in another, and actors in any number of other studios, thus

preventing them from blurring and getting in each other's way. Studios with different acoustical properties could be employed, fading and tempo could be regulated, while the producer contacted each studio by a cue light.

There were many differing opinions as to how the panel should be used. Val Gielgud regarded it as a centralising and mixing unit, a machine to weld the output of several studios into a single whole, operated by the producer. On the other hand, Lance Sieveking one of the most enthusiastic experimenters with radio drama, regarded the panel as a delicate musical instrument: "... all the world of sound is at your beck and call when you sit down at the beautiful instrument -- the dramatic control panel, and if you play it with imagination, with skill, with mastery, you can create innumerable events, emotions and movements which would take thousands and thousands of words to describe."(3) Of all the radio writers and producers of this period, Sieveking is most easily accused of putting the means before the end.

The BBC producers were pioneers in this field. Other countries, such as Germany and U.S.A., followed suit, but soon abandoned the multiple, in favour of the single,studio technique, in which the producer follows and directs the play by gestures from a small sound-proof control room separated by a window from one large studio in which the whole cast is working. The greatest advantage of the multiple studio method is that during the last stages of rehearsal, the producer works from the "point of ear" of the listening public and not from a

control point prejudiced by physical sight. The play comes to him in exactly the same way as it is picked up by the listener in his home. Gielgud considers it hard for a producer to dissociate what he sees from what he hears and to be uninfluenced by the physically manifested personalities of the actors; therefore it is better to hear it all dispassionately from an "Olympian height of detachment."

Against these arguments, isolation robs the producer of close personal contact with his cast which can often make a vast difference to actors who are not playing to an audience. Many producers are dependent upon the lift they can give to an actor's performance by their reactions in the control booth. This method of production is now standard practice, except for plays which require an unusually large cast and a live orchestra. Nearly all sound effects and music are recorded, so the producer in the control booth can regulate the activities of the effects man and the studio technician, as well as personally direct the actors.

Many plays written between 1926 and 1939 were impossible to produce without several studios and the Control Panel, including nearly all the plays of L. du Garde Peach, and those of Lance Sieveking. In Years of the Locust, Val Gielgud describes how he produced Patrick Hamilton's radio play, To the Public Danger, by this method. It tells in a steadily increasing tempo of suspense and action, the story of three people drinking in a roadhouse, going off in a car and driving more and more wildly until what had begun as a drunken frolic

ends in disaster and tragedy. Dialogue, motor car sound effects and atmospheric music were of equal importance in the play, so Gielgud housed each of them in a separate studio, and was almost continuously blending the three studio outputs as the tempo increased from the beginning of the play to its terrible climax.

Second in importance to the producer during this second period of radio drama, was the sound effects man. As the subject matter of radio drama expanded, the need for more and more different types of noise also increased. Sound effects only came into existence with the birth of radio -- music and dialogue were already there before it began, so it was inevitable that this novelty should grip the imagination of all those associated with the radio play. It was not long before the importance of sound effects was magnified out of all proportion to their true value, and producers felt obliged to inject into their plays every opening or closing door, every footstep and lighted match, whether implicit in the script or not, at the expense of much ingenuity and hard work -- only too often to end with the utter confusion of the listener. Soon the artificial means by which these effects were produced began to attract the attention of the outside public, as magazines, BBC Annuals and books published fantastic stories about sound effect studios, and printed photographs of the peculiar things that went on inside them. Reminiscing about some of the intriguing characters in the early days of the BBC, Maurice Gorham mentions Bryan Michie, the first Effects man, who "...

built up effects from a sketchy roomful of odd props to the sumptuous studio that was one of the show places of Broadcasting House..." (4)

Sound effects were news long before the radio play was taken seriously, and the result of all this publicity was anything but beneficial. When the sound of horses came into a play, the listener's attention was not directed to horses, but coconut shells; an avalanche and the listener thought of a matchbox being crushed close to the microphone; a train and the listener conjured up the picture of a man pushing roller skates in a tin bath tub. If less publicity had been directed to the synthetic methods of production of sound effects their dramatic value would not have been weakened. It was not until the practice arose of recording them that they lost much of their glamour.

During this period many plays were written not because their authors had something genuine to say but because of the opportunities their themes gave the producer to display his virtuosity in playing the Dramatic Control Panel, the number of ingenious sound effects they required and the number of studios they kept in operation. Unfortunately those factors were often the criteria on which a play was judged. The best and worst examples of radio drama in its second period of development are to be found in the work of two dramatists, Lance Sieveking and L. du Garde Peach.

ii.
Lance Sieveking.

Lance Sieveking joined the BBC in 1924 as Assistant to the Director of Educational Broadcasts, after a varied career as a journalist, editor, actor and aviator. As the BBC's activities expanded over the next few years, Sieveking took part in pioneering many new types of programme, including the first running commentaries, and in 1925 he produced his first radio play. He had always been an enthusiastic and somewhat precocious experimenter since the age of six when he began writing. In 1924 a novel was published, with illustrations by G.K. Chesterton, which he had written when thirteen. Sieveking closely followed early developments in flying, he produced the first television play in the world, he adapted for radio the first serials, and later turned his attention to the film.

Sieveking's appearance was no less remarkable than his multifarious activities. Writing of him in Sound and Fury, Maurice Gorham says, "Lance Sieveking was there before me. He was then the tallest man in the BBC but for Reith himself, and a flamboyant figure he was, thundering on the telephone, gesticulating wildly with huge hands that knocked over everything within reach, always pioneering, starting endless experiments, some brilliant, some incredible; the irresistible amateur working in a field where there were, as yet, no experts." (p.25.) .In his book, The Stuff of Radio, Sieveking openly admits that it was the experiment, the love of doing something

that no-one else had done before, which attracted him to radio.

One of Sieveking's earliest radio compositions was The Seven Ages of Mechanical Music first broadcast in 1926. Although not strictly a radio drama, the programme is typical of the emphasis playwrights of this time gave to the means rather than the end. Sieveking explains "I wanted to play a number of music machines in a suitable and, if possible, amusing context, but not to do an illustrated talk of a kind to which the public were already accustomed in 1926." (5) This context, or method of presentation, is a dramatic situation in which two precocious Victorian children and their Papa wander into "the Cave of Mechanical Music" and meet the Junior Assistant to Father Time, who plays to them a number of old mechanical musical instruments, explaining the origin and history of each one. The framework of Victorian dialogue is humourously exaggerated, but never obtrudes upon the plain, precise, descriptive narration of the Assistant.

The Seven Ages of Mechanical Music is one of the earliest examples of the feature programme, which employs dramatic techniques of character and dialogue to illustrate a theme based largely upon actuality. Sieveking brought to light a semi-dramatic form which was later extended usefully and entertainingly, providing radio with some of its most successful programmes.

On November 29, 1928, Sieveking produced Love, the earliest example of the literary feature, a type that has since become very popular with Third Programme listeners. Sieveking's play

or feature -- it is not always easy to distinguish the two -- "... consisted of a series of dramatised examples of different kinds of love -- love of a person, a work or an idea and so on. My examples were David, Dante, Don Quixote, Charles the Second, Napoleon, Wordsworth, Florence Nightingale, Robert Browning and Walt Whitman."(6) Judging from part of the Browning episode reprinted in The Stuff of Radio, it would seem that the sequences are too short and sketchy to allow much depth of analysis, yet they do show clarity of idea and presentation, a minimum use of sound effects and simple but effective dialogue.

Sieveking attempted a less successful variation of the feature programme in The End of Savoy Hill, a Gargantuan effort which ran for over two and a half hours on May 14, 1932. It is, Sieveking tells us in the introductory narration, "... a panorama of the years 1922-1932 ... an historical pageant in sound. The complicated process of 10 years, full of experiments and shots in the dark..." Then follows a huge number of short sequences of music, dramatised actuality, and recorded broadcast extracts, all linked and explained by three narrating voices. The few sequences published in The Stuff of Radio are insufficient to gauge the dramatic effect of the whole programme, although it must certainly have overwhelmed, if not confused, listeners in 1932. The technique of going back to past years -- the flashback -- has become very popular with the film and radio where it is employed for musical, historical and literary purposes in the feature

and radio drama. The lesson to be learnt from The End of Savoy Hill is the value of clarity and simplicity, of not attempting too much at once. Two hours of Sieveking's short but profuse interludes would be a test of the listener's endurance, intelligence and concentration.

The Pursuit of Pleasure, which Sieveking wrote, and produced on February 14, 1931, is another semi-documentary programme after the style of The End of Savoy Hill. Two timeless characters are engaged in the pursuit of pleasure at different periods of British history, and by means of dramatised sequences, sound effects and music, Sieveking illustrates the elaborate pleasures of civilisation in order to prove that all these go for nought and there are only four basic types of pleasure — eating, drinking, singing and making love.

As an example of the wild profusion of short sequences, cluttered with effects, music, narration and dialogue, the following episode is typical of the whole:

> John: We could go for a night flight over London.
> (Effects: Aeroplane)
>
> or go ice skating.
> (Gramophone: Skaters' Waltz)
>
> or to a boxing match at Albert Hall.
> (4 Gramophones: a great cheer, etc.)

Arrest in Africa, "A Farcical Musical Fantasy with an idea, with book, music, lyrics and production by Lance Sieveking," was first broadcast on April 15, 1932. The production required six studios — a large one for the orchestra and singers, and occasionally some of the cast; two smaller ones for most of the action, an echo room, an effects studio, and a gramophone

studio. From a reading of the play it is difficult to imagine any one of them having been off the air for more than a minute at a time, as the play is such a glorious mixture of scenes, scene changes, sound effects, musical dialogue, singing and musical continuity, that the producer must surely have had the time of his life at the Dramatic Control Panel, switching his studios in and out, turning the volume up and down, combining, disentangling and selecting his ingredients. But for all the confusion Arrest in Africa would produce in the mind of the listener, the play is important as one of the earliest "serious" fantasies -- a form which has since become enormously popular in radio and reached its culmination of artistry in Louis MacNeice's The Dark Tower. Both plays employ the symbolic quest as their basic idea: in the latter it is the continuous quest of a man against the forces of evil, while in the former Sieveking ironically treats man's search to find his true self in a hostile and apathetic world. Unfortunately he did not realise the value of simplicity when treating a symbolic theme, and the musical comedy approach tends to obscure the main issue, rather than clarify it. "Arrest in Africa", an anonymous review stated in the B.B.C. Year Book 1933, "unfortunately lost its way in the equatorial jungle."(7)

In "Some Remarks" concerning the play, Sieveking set down his ideas on radio fantasy, revealing that neither he, nor any other radio dramatist at that time, knew very much about it. He calls fantasy "the vers libre of drama" and says that it "... has fewer rules than any other kind of drama." (8) This

may be true in respect of the relation between the story and reality, but in the presentation of the story itself, the rules of clarity, simple treatment, avoidance of everything which may obscure the theme and the exigencies of persuading the listener to accept the author's line of thought, are more difficult and exacting in radio drama than any other form.

Sieveking divides fantasy into four categories, no doubt intending the reader to place Arrest in Africa in the first.

1. "The product of an Artist choosing fantasy as the inevitable form in which to express an idea". This is true of The Dark Tower, a play with a strong central idea that could not be expressed more forcefully and effectively by any other means. With Arrest in Africa the strength of Sieveking's central idea is seriously weakened by his emphasis on its expression through an over generous mixture of words, music and effects.

2. "The Fantasy of a good mind taking the line of least resistance, but putting enough work in it to make the characters of a genuine significance to body forth a genuine idea." The idea of Arrest in Africa is genuine, its author doubtlessly possesses a good mind and its characters are of significance, but through inexperience and lack of precedents, Sieveking did not choose the most effective means of expression or presentation. The musical comedy treatment is largely extraneous — probably to Sieveking, a line of least resistance.

3. "The Fantasy of a fairly decent poet without anything particular to say at that moment, who lets his mind 'run on'

almost in the manner of a spirit medium..." Strangely enough this is a perfect description of MacNeice's March Hare Saga.

4. "And the fourth degree of fantasy is the commonest. It is the product of a silly mind which thinks that to be inconsequent is 'clever'. It couldn't explain or analyse the affair."

It was this type of fantasy which produced the wartime Variety Show "ITMA" and many similar programmes which have followed along the same lines. These are the most popular of radio's popular art forms.

Arrest in Africa, Sieveking explains, was partly an effort to introduce humour into radio programmes, something which had been lacking up to that time. But Sieveking's humour is unsuitable because it is essentially of the stage and also tends to be literary and clever. He tries to be intellectual, his dialogue does not sparkle. Radio demands a more intimate type of humour peculiar to itself and "ITMA" was the first to demonstrate it. Stage comedies, as distinct from farces, usually need a great deal of adaptation for radio to retain their humour. Sieveking could not be expected to know all this when he wrote Arrest in Africa, so his failure to achieve his aim cannot be too severely criticised.

Sieveking turned to fantasy again, with a far greater degree of success, in The Wings of the Morning, a ninety minute play first broadcast on May 24, 1934. He realised that the type of fantasy H.G.Wells had so popularised in his novels was ideally suited to radio, and that dramatic treatment in a medium with such freedom of movement through time and space

could present "science fiction" even more effectively than literature. This play tells of a young man's psychic experience of an unpleasant event in the future, of his efforts to prevent it actually happening in the normal sequence of time, and of the conspiracy of fate in ordering circumstances which, largely by chance, cause it to happen.

The treatment of time is extremely clever, and shows the degree to which Sieveking appreciated the potentialities of radio drama. He uses the simplest, yet the most effective means of enumeiating time — the impersonal narrator; he presents the rhythmic expression of the man's mental disorder by music and choral effects — a technique which was adopted with great success by Tyrone Guthrie and many other radio dramatists; and he achieves unusual effects by placing his characters in different acoustics. The dramatic sequences are longer and more substantial than those of his earlier plays, the dialogue is sharp, clear and straight to the point, and the plot, fantastic but so logically worked out that coincidence seems like inevitability. Of all Sieveking's plays, The Wings of the Morning could best stand repetition to modern radio audiences.

The ten minute radio play has never been popular in England although it has enjoyed much success in the U.S.A. Sieveking's The Sea in a Shell, first broadcast on May 31, 1934, is a good example of what can be done within a very confined time limit. He uses five characters whose voices are well differentiated and movements clear, while the idea is briefly

but firmly stated. Yet within this ten-minute drama, three studios were used, and at one stage there occurs a three deep montage of sound effects, music and dialogue.

Sieveking's two most important plays, both from the point of view of his own status as a dramatist, and for the wide influence they had on later dramatists, are Kaleidoscope I, which he produced on September 4, 1928 and followed by a sequel, Kaleidoscope II, the next year, and Intimate Snapshots, which he produced on November 22, 1929.

Sieveking refers to Kaleidoscope I as " a rhythm representing the life of man from cradle to grave."(p.21.) It is not a play in the strict sense of the word, so much as an aural composition designed for performance by a radio producer playing the Dramatic Control Panel, or what Roger Manvell aptly describes as "... a recital of words, music and sounds."(9)

In The Stuff of Radio, Sieveking drew attention to the difficulty of preparing radio scripts for the printed page and of conveying to the listener even a near approximation of a purely aural performance. Kaleidoscope I suffers in this respect more than any other play, so the reader can only imagine what its effect must have been on the listener. Referring to his own production script, he said "It was all in the air. Only about twenty per cent of what was heard was ever on paper." (p.29.)

After reading and hearing radio plays written when the value of economy and simplicity had been discovered, Kaleidoscope I appears to have been an extravagant and wildly exuberant

flurry and bustle of sound and music -- occasionally interrupted by dialogue. Sieveking carries forward his story of "Man" by illustrating each stage in his development by a different array of symbolic or representational episodes, according to whether the "Good" or "Bad" influence is being successful in directing his actions. By the use of many studios and the Dramatic Control Panel, Sieveking was able to employ music, poetry and other effects as protagonists in the symbolic treatment of his theme, and the general effect was, no doubt, similar to the expressionistic stage drama pioneered by Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller. In the Stuff of Radio Sieveking describes his thoughts and feelings during the production of Kaleidoscope I on the evening of September 4, 1928. He gives a vivid impression of the intricacy of the play as well as his own sense of occasion, and his enthusiasm for what he says was the most significant event in his life: "Without consciously reading the directions on my script I faded the tiny football matches out off the horizon, and wiped the narrator off the map with the singer, and then cut the music off sharply... Gently up the long crescendo of one orchestra in perspective behind another. Now flick Studio 2. Now Studio 4, Now Number 1. Cross fade! Ah! That's the way."(pp.21-22.) A small example suffices to show the incredible complexity of sound patterns Sieveking conceived:

Piano: Chopin 17th Prelude.

Quintet: "My Queen"

Dance Band: "Eccentric"

(Fade up Orchestra (4th.Movement of Beethoven's 5th. Symphony) — Fade down.)

(Fade up JAZZ - fade down.)

(Fade out effects, speakers, piano and quintet.)

(Fade up JAZZ to Maximum, etc., etc.)

The overpowering effect of this production on those who heard it is not difficult to imagine. People had never before heard anything like it — here was radio doing all sorts of remarkable things which could not be done through any other entertainment medium. But Sieveking went to an extraordinary amount of trouble to express something which would, no doubt, have been more effective had the means of its expression been simpler. But the importance of Kaleidoscope I cannot be over-estimated. In it Sieveking illustrated nearly every sound technique which could be employed in the presentation of a radio play, and even those parts which were confusing showed later producers what to avoid. This play was amongst the first genuine creations of radio, and stands out as a landmark in the development of expressionistic drama for the microphone.

The following year Sieveking wrote and produced Kaleidoscope II, this time a rhythm representing the life of "Woman" from the cradle to the grave. In it he employed exactly the same technique as its predecessor — a host of minute sound sequence made up from a minimum of naturalistic dialogue, a profusion of sound effects, juxtaposed symphonic music and jazz, to suggest or illustrate mental conflict, together with a complicated, impressionistic narration.

Sieveking's best play, Intimate Snapshots, first broadcast

in a one-hour version on November 22,1929, and the following year reduced by fifteen minutes, is neatly labelled by the author "Genre: Radio play composed as much of sound effects as of words; Tractarian sound-panorama."(p.280.) Although the second version was simplified, both productions used five or six studios, placed great emphasis on Dramatic Control Panel work and in using nearly all the aural techniques of the two Kaleidoscopes, did much to enlarge the scope of the radio play.

In conception, Intimate Snapshots owes something to Piandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author. Two men are engaged in an argument in a club, about whether people working in everyday jobs are completely subject to the routine of their lives, and as examples to serve their arguments, they use the characters of the play. One protagonist argues that life is nothing more than an empty, meaningless repetition, and that men and women should do everything they can to escape from its monotony. His opponent takes the opposite view, maintaining that there is no escape from the outward repetitions, but these are no more than a meaningless background to the real experiences of life, which,he says, take place in the mind. The examples quoted by the first man come to life as individual characters — a ticket-collector in a London underground, a charwoman in a girls' school and a newspaper reporter. After serving the second man's case, the characters then proceed to join in the argument themselves.

The play comprises a series of static naturalistic images,

interspersed with expressionistic devices which do not always blend together as finely as those in Guthrie's Squirrel's Cage, and consequently often sound incidental rather than structural. Sieveking tends to place undue emphasis on his message (that character is fundamental and environment superficial), and his determination to convey it to the listener makes him more a preacher than an artist. Instead of presenting his picture, inevitably coloured by his selection of character and incident, then allowing the listener to draw his own inferences and conclusion, Sieveking deliberately weights the balance to one side. He strikes a very false note when his ticket-collector intentionally, it appears, comes out of character and announces: "What matters is the development of my personality..."; and the charlady: "I expect the shouts and applause of the fashionable world and their hollow insincere adulations would begin to pall..." If these interior monologues, in which the characters artificially express their inmost thoughts and feelings, are examples of expressionistic technique, they do not ring true, any more than were they intended as naturalistic speech.

Intimate Snapshots displays the very marked influence on Sieveking of contemporary developments in the film. He adopted the techniques of slow motion, visual perspective, the close-up for physical or psychological emphasis and spacial relationships between camera and actor, and applied them with considerable success to a purely aural drama. But in all his plays, Sieveking's adoption of the cinematic technique of

telling a story in a host of brief dramatic sequences, is altogether too uncritical and shows no real appreciation of the fact that an aural impression takes longer to create its effect and requires more concentration from the audience, than does a visual impression. By introducing too many sequences and sequence transitions, Sieveking confuses the listener by asking too much of him, and destroys the continuity of his plays by making it almost impossible to develop theme or character very extensively. Later dramatists learnt from his errors, the value of creating sequences long enough to establish their effect unhurriedly and unequivocally, without placing too great a strain upon the listener.

It is not so difficult to forgive Sieveking's shortcomings in Intimate Snapshots, because the play was a deliberate technical experiment, and, as the author explains, "... I really became far more interested in the 'musical' shape of the whole play than in what it was setting out to say." He was carried away by "The close-up. The repetitive idea... The sudden appearance of actuality... And the weaving together of a dozen strands of sound which all came to my central point from different places..."(pp.305-306.)

The influence Sieveking had on subsequent radio dramatists was clearly foreseen by a contemporary critic in the Saturday Review, who, despite a suggestion of intellectual snobbishness, did appreciate exactly what Sieveking was trying to do: "Whoever wishes to keep abreast of developments in dramatic radio

technique must listen to the vivid experiments that Mr. Lance Sieveking flings over the unresisting ether. They have importance. Most people hate them. They are too bothersome for the ordinary listener, too childish for the intellectuals. But the informed expert knows their worth. I am almost certain that by listening to a Sieveking experiment you could forecast the trend of development in dramatic radio technique for the next six months."(10)

Sieveking, more than any other radio writer or producer of his time, realized the potentialities of radio for vivid, unusual and striking methods of presenting ideas. He appreciated its freedom over time and space, the possibilities of fantasy, the effectiveness of music and of pure sound for emphasis of what is said or for saying things without words. He was a ceaseless innovator in this field and was the first to experiment with the impressionistic devices of juxtaposed sound effects, different studio acoustics and the repetition of lines or even scenes. Above all, he demonstrated that the microphone was something far more vital than an eavesdropper; it was an instrument of artistic precision and capable of infinite variation.

No other dramatist did more in such a short period to advance the scope and technique of the radio play than Lance Sieveking. Between the two versions of Kaleidoscope most of his innovations in form and technique became standard equipment, not only for the presentation of radio drama, but for the medium as a whole. Other dramatists adopted his

methods with far more success, but he showed them the way.

Sieveking was a ceaseless experimenter with radio, film, and as soon as it appeared, television. He was the radio counterpart to Rene Clair and Fernand Leger in the French avant garde film, using images of aural imagery where they used visual imagery. "The value of Sieveking's plays," said Roger Manvell, who dismisses him a little peremptorily, "was that they emptied the box of tricks on the nursery floor and showed the children a little of what could be done with them."(11) He wrote few radio plays whose dramatic value have outlived their time, but as an innovator and explorer in a new unfamiliar medium, he opened up the way and set the course for nearly every radio play that has since been written. (12)

Sieveking's book The Stuff of Radio was written and published at the height of his enthusiasm for the radio play. In it, he set out to consider critically the various radio programmes of his day, and to discover what new forms this medium had added to the arts -- in other words, to discover what was the true "stuff of radio". Music, the talk, the impromptu conversation, the running commentary are, Sieveking claims, all transmitted by radio with only slight modifications on the way they were transmitted before radio. These are not the true "stuff of radio". There is only "one genre of arranged sounds that is peculiarly and integrally the 'stuff of radio'. The Radio Play and the 'Feature Programme' are of this genre."(p.26.)

After considering radio drama in more detail, Sieveking narrows down his definition of the true "stuff of radio" to Sound Effects — that is, all noises except speech and music. These two ingredients of the radio play existed before radio, but "... the Art of painting with pure sound is a new thing, peculiar to radio." Sound Effects, he believed, should be treated as of equal value with speech and music, and not simply used as background to the dialogue, or something added merely to provide greater realism. Sieveking was the first to appreciate the economy of effects for evoking mental and emotional associations of many kinds, but the trouble was that he tried to evoke too many too often, while many of his effects merely duplicated what was already stated in the dialogue. He did not realise that if an effect can be omitted without loss to the play it is far better to omit it, as the fewer effects there are, the greater significance they must possess. An effect must always express something definite, and register in the listener's mind instantaneously. For this reason most dramatists today indicate or amplify an effect in their dialogue leaving no shadow of a doubt in the listener's mind as to what it means. Sieveking's insistence on effects as the true "stuff of radio" resulted from the work he himself had done writing and producing radio plays. The true "stuff of radio" in so far as drama is concerned is the blending of dialogue, music and sound with the greatest economy to signify as much as possible in terms of pure sound.

The Stuff of Radio is not only a penetrating study of radio dramatic technique but a revelation of Sieveking himself. He was a man ahead of his time in every way, full of ideas that must have been incomprehensible to his contemporaries, and are now an integral part of modern radio. The book is in parts serious, humorous, flippant and critical, as he describes the production of his own plays, in relation to radio as a whole. In several passages, explaining why his initial enthusiasm for radio drama waned, Sieveking laid bare one of the most salient features of the radio play — its empherality. Reminiscing about his thoughts the day after producing Kaleidoscope I, he wrote "My great experience was over. There was nothing left of it. I realised at that moment the terrible fleeting nature of the medium in which I worked...

"How solid a structure I had seemed to build. Yet the whole of my complex lovely picture with its voices, its castles, its landscapes, its musics, its men and women had been painted on the underside of a cloud with a brushful of iridescent vapour."(p.24.) He explains that the plays reproduced in his book were the true stuff of radio —the only thing to do was to hear them because "... what's left is nothing more than the directions on the lid. The beautiful Roman candles and rockets went off years ago."(p.383.)

iii.
L. du Garde Peach.

L. du Garde Peach is a prolific dramatist who has written over four hundred plays for radio and almost as many for the stage. Unlike Lance Sieveking, he was not a member of the BBC staff and therefore did not produce his own work. This, in all probability, allowed him to take a more objective view of the relationship between content and technique in radio drama, consequently his work shows a definite maturing approach from an over-emphasis on the "How", to a serious consideration of the "What". Introducing his radio plays, Peach said "A stage play need not be about anything in particular so long as it tells a story, but a good radio play must have an idea behind it. Where there is nothing to look at, there must be something to feel... a story is not enough, there must be a theme."(15) Although this is too sweeping a statement to make of radio drama in general, it is a good description of Peach's own plays. He did not allow them to become discursive, nor did he exalt theme at the expense of dramatic interest, but they all contain a seriousness of thought which makes them not only important experiments in a new form, but first class radio plays.

One of Peach's earliest plays was Ingredient X — a garden of paradise for the sound effects man and the control panel operator. The author calls it a play of "The City, the Sea and the Jungle", and packed into one hour's duration are forty-

two short sequences, alternating between a Board Room where Company financiers talk of contracts they have made for manufacturing synthetic rubber from a mysterious Ingredient X; a jungle in Africa, where the men obtaining Ingredient X are fighting hostile natives; and a ship containing a vital load of the substance, struggling against a storm at sea. The story connecting the sequences is slight -- the financiers must have the vital shipload or lose a fortune, hence they must also have the co-operation of the natives where Ingredient X is gathered. But the ship is lost at sea while the natives desert and the white men seeking the ingredient meet hostile natives in the bush and are killed.

Peach avoids the danger of confusing the listener by never allowing him a second's doubt as to where he is. The story is carried forward with great dramatic economy and provides a vivid contrast between the three "sets" by means of sound effects. The quiet, unresonant acoustic of the Board Room is thrown into relief by the sound of the storm at sea, the gunshots, yells and confusion of the natives. The effects are used functionally not decoratively, as tempo and volume are gradually worked up to a climax packed with sound and fury:

THE SEA AND THE FOREST.

(The wild yells of the natives and the loud drummings of the tom toms swell up. After a moment the sound of the storm is heard. It mingles with the sound of wild triumph in the forest then both fade away.)

Ingredient X is an unpretentious piece of pure radio entertainment. With an almost negligible plot and sketchy characterisation, the play stands and falls on the merits of its

production.

Peach says of The Marie Celeste that it "afforded the ingenious producers at Savoy Hill opportunities of which they brilliantly availed themselves"(14), and the play shows a greater concern with how to tell a story, than with what the story really has to say. The theme of this play is very suitable for radio treatment: an imaginative and slightly fantastic reconstruction of the events which happened towards the end of the last century leading up to the discovery in the Atlantic Ocean of the Brigantine "Marie Celeste", fully rigged but without a single person aboard. The play was the first to show the effectiveness of the "journey" theme in radio drama. Taking full advantage of radio's flexibility by constantly moving in space as well as in time, it set a fashion which was later followed by MacNeice's Christopher Columbus and The Dark Tower, Laurie Lee's Magellan, Henry Reed's Moby Dick and, more subtly, Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood.

The Marie Celeste is constructed of twenty-two short sequences, a prologue and an epilogue. Instead of concentrating on and developing a few major sequences and telling by implication or description those less important parts of the story which have already taken place, Peach dramatises each and every incident without regard to their dramatic value or the overall shape of his play. For instance, several sequences contain only shouted orders on board the ship, apparently for no other reason than to achieve realism, while the prologue describes certain events which are dramatised immediately after-

wards. Repetition is the play's worst fault, though it should be remembered that people were not used to radio plays in the nineteen-twenties, especially long radio plays, so the dramatist was advised to repeat his most important points to make sure they were understood.

With a little judicious cutting, and a careful use of ocean sound effects, The Maria Celeste is still eminently "radiogenic". An atmosphere of mystery and horror is well maintained from the first sailor's disappearance, to the revelation of the giant octopus which provides a surprising climax. But Peach would have done better to concentrate on this atmosphere, rather than making unnecessary attempts at realism.

La Bastille is a feature rather than a play. Composed of twenty-five brief, confused sequences generously spread over several localities, it is little more than an incomplete, inconsequent and thoroughly inadequate impression of a most involved period of French history. Into a noisy panorama of singing, shouting and gunfire, intended to portray the Parisian mob gathering in strength and morale to storm the Bastille, Peach injects an over simplified and unsatisfactory exposition of the ideals and values of the French Revolution. La Bastille is a sketch few producers would dare to attempt, and even fewer would finish reading.

Peach's two best plays are undoubtedly Love One Another and The Path of Glory. Love One Another is a fantasy based on the radio "science fiction" pattern established by Sieveking's

Wings of the Morning. A physicist has invented a machine that neutralises "hate vibrations", and Peach tells of the world wide havoc caused by the spread of universal love, the elimination of all competition, enmity and bad feeling. The play shows a marked advance in radio technique. Running for a little over an hour, it is composed of fifteen sequences, some extremely short, but others of sufficient length to establish and develop atmosphere and character without the distraction of sudden transitions. Sound effects are kept to a minimum — only a few crowd noises, a dynamo, a bomb and the sea are required.

Peach's theme, the universal discord resulting from the application of modern theoretical anarchism, is clearly stated by a strong, ingenious plot, a clever selection of sequences and dialogue, with a wealth of political, economic, industrial and social implications. Added to this is a delightfully sustained atmosphere of fantasy with flashes of sharp, satirical humour. Love One Another is an excellent comedy of serious import.

In The Path of Glory Peach again demonstrates his ability to take a very broad, general theme and illuminate it by an involved yet well developed story with clarity, dramatic economy and a variety of character and incident. This play is a witty satire on militarism, professional soldiering, war and its consequences — a satire just as applicable to the present aftermath of World War II, with the winner losing most, as to the time when it was written. It is essentially a play of strong plot, consisting of dialogue that is straight to the point through-

out. That Peach had mastered the technique of radio dramatic writing is shown in his ability to set a scene or reveal a character with a few lines of sharp dialogue; to establish atmosphere or involved action with a single sound effect; and to hold together the strands of a complicated plot spread over a large canvas, with ease and assurance. The play takes full advantage of its medium, covering a wide range in space and time. Peach uses a great many characters but only four of them play a major part in the action, so they remain easily distinguishable.

Peach introduces The Path of Glory with a short, whimsical narration which takes us to the Smoke Room of a London Club, where two elderly inhabitants are discussing a "frontier incident" between two obscure Balkan countries, Thalia and Sardonia. After a few light jibes at the League of Nations, we are transferred to the frontier in question, and hear the incident itself. The official report is so grossly magnified and distorted by the time it reaches the Council meeting of the Republic of Thalia, that there is immediate talk of war. The President, a quick and intelligent young man, realises that to provoke a war and then lose it would be the best answer to the high taxes, extensive unemployment and devaluation of the Thalian franc, so he appoints as Commander-in-Chief, General Ferranzi, a man with no practical experience of war who has done all his soldiering in the War Office. Peach then takes us to the Sardonian capital where the king, an ex-wine merchant who became military dictator, then king, hears a report of the

frontier incident distorted to suit his own country's views, and decides upon exactly the same strategy for the same reasons as the President of Thalia -- so he appoints himself Commander-in-Chief of the Sardonian forces. The war is begun with a short scene in the Thalian capital where we hear the excited chatter and surge of patriotism in the crowd as the heroic soldiers march off to war.

A number of short sequences, mainly consisting of sound effects and brief snatches of dialogue, indicate the course of the war as the king of Sardonia orders his army to retreat. In these sequences, Peach's expert use of sound effects to suggest a scene is heard at its best. A sudden silence, broken at length by the distant groan of a dying soldier gives the listener a vivid and rapid picture of the battlefield after the battle is over. These six short scenes contain some delicious satire on army discipline and custom, as well as advancing the plot step by step. At the Thalian capital, the King draws up a request for an armistice -- "If Ferranzi can only keep the battle going long enough he is practically bound to lose it."

Meanwhile a young and ambitious Colonel Anton Maroni, together with a group of officers, arrests Ferranzi, takes over command of the Thalian forces and continues the offensive with vigour and efficiency. The Sardonian surrender is announced and Anton proclaims his favourite cliche "The indominitable spirit of the Thalian soldier has conquered."

We are then taken to the Thalian Council Chamber where the

President discusses with his secretary ways and means of paying off the war debt to Sardonia. The discussion is interrupted by Church bells and cheering, immediately leading into the following scene in the Piazza -- which works up into a climax of cheering, bells, trumpets and the chatter of a crowd. The President is furious with Anton, who expects a decoration, and his mood is indicated by a loud slam as he leaves the room.

The final scene takes place in a large Council Room where the King and the President meet to discuss the peace treaty. The King, understanding the President's annoyance at winning the war against his will, is quietly laughing to himself, but the tables are neatly turned when the President reads only two terms in the peace treaty, providing a neat, ironic and dramatic ending to the play. The dialogue here is worth quoting for its economy, naturalness and humour:

President: Clause (1) The Sardonian army.

King: Quite so. You will naturally insist that it be reduced to a mere skeleton. That of course is understood.

President: On the contrary. The first condition of peace is that the Sardonian army be doubled.

King: (aghast) Doubled!

President: ... Clause II. Financial obligations.

King: (faintly) You insist upon confiscating the entire gold reserve of my unhappy country.

President: I am sorry to disappoint your majesty. Clause II lays down as the second condition of peace, that

Sardonia shall accept, as a loan, without interest, the whole of the gold reserve in the Thalian treasury, in order that the Sardonian mark may remain at par.

King: (Protesting) Your Excellency!

We then hear the President leaving brusquely but politely.

King: Paul!

Paul: Yes Max?

King: Paul, he's done me after all!

Throughout this complicated plot there stands out a clear line of development. The narration and prologue set the action; we hear the frontier incident which precipitated the action, then discussion by both sides of the advantages in losing the war; a few brief scenes indicate the course of the war, and are followed by the young officer episode; finally the armistice and the semi surprise ending. Peach's technique is almost flawless. Never are we in doubt as to who is speaking, what is happening or where we are. We hear a horse galloping, stopping and a voice saying "Officer with dispatches for General Ferranzi" and we are at the Thalian army headquarters; a judicious use of the servant announcing the entry of principal characters is a convenient and natural device for indicating the speaker. Alternatively Peach begins a scene simply by one character naming the person to whom he is speaking. A servant announces the President of Thalia, who replies "That's all right Juan ... there's nobody here except my secretary." Again Peach opens another scene by:

President: Feraldi.

Feraldi: Yes Excellency.

and both characters are named. A murmur of voices and a servant announcing the King tells us immediately we are in a large Council Chamber.

Three short scenes of war quickly build an impression of the efficiency of the Sardonian army, by a few brusque commands and a background of machinegun fire, which throws into dramatic relief the command to fall back. Two other scenes follow in quick succession as the order is spread amongst the astounded officers. Not one of the twenty-one scenes fails to make its point immediately and clearly.

Throughout the play there runs a continuous stream of humour, mostly ironical or satirical, rarely frivolous. Peach jibes at the army: "My boy, one doesn't read dispatches. One mentions one's friends in them, but one doesn't read them." He satirises the economic situation of the 1930's:

> President: The money will be raised by means of a loan floated in — or —
>
> Feraldi: In where, Excellency?
>
> President: My dear Feraldi! — really! where does <u>everybody</u> float loans to pay war indemnities?
>
> Feraldi: In America, Excellency.

The President goes on to suggest the state railways as security because they are in such a bad state of repair. The Americans, he says, will take them over and make them pay in order to obtain interest on the loan. Newspaper distortion of news, mob hysteria and sentimental patriotism all come in for some humorous yet penetrating criticism.

The Path of Glory is essentially a play of action and satire, not of character. Within such a short duration as an hour and a quarter, it is impossible to develop more than two aspects of a radio play -- plot, theme or character. Peach wisely concentrates on plot and theme, developing his characters -- the President, his secretary and daughter, and the King -- only to the extent of making them credibly human and sufficiently differentiated in voice quality. Anton, the young ambitious colonel, reminiscent of Sergius in Arms and the Man, but displaying a little more ability, is developed to a fuller extent. General Ferranzi, the War Office soldier, the only one to lose the war against his wishes, is a caricature rather than a character. No dialogue is wasted to paint him as a typical Colonel Blimp and every speech increases our impression of him as a comic idiot.

The Path of Glory is undoubtedly the best of Peach's radio plays, and amongst the few plays of this period which could easily bear regular repetitions without losing its freshness and vitality. It marked the peak of L. du Garde Peach's career as a radio writer -- a career which began with plays of uncertain technique and muddled presentation. La Bastille and The Marie Celeste show a consciousness of their medium, which became brilliantly disguised in Love One Another and The Path of Glory, and the success of any art expression largely depends upon the extent to which the artist disguises his technique as inevitability. With radio drama, the danger of allowing technique to obtrude is greater than in other dramatic

forms, because the restrictions are more severe and therefore demand greater efforts in overcoming them by the use of certain compensating devices. In the plays of Dieveking and the early plays of Peach, these devices register as devices, and are not merged into their art, probably because they were consciously experimenting in an unfamiliar medium. Peach's technical assurance grew with familiarity, until he could handle such a complicated story as The Path of Glory without the slightest trace of effort or suggestion of facility, and behind all his work there is a quality of depth which marks him as the first successful radio dramatist whose plays have outlived the period in which they were witten.

iv.
Conclusion.

The second phase in the development of radio drama saw the first important radio plays, the growth of an intelligent and more critical audience and great advances on the technical side of radio. The regrettable publicity given to production and sound effects frightened many authors away from radio, but against this, Sieveking and Peach, in exploring the technique of radio drama, showed that it was a form which offered immense possibilities to the dramatist. It only remained for writers and producers to judiciously select those techniques of permanent value and reject all the purposeless extravagance of this "production for production's sake" period.

As early as 1928, Edward Liveing, Manchester Station Director for the BBC, understood the significance of the original plays stimulated by the BBC from men like Hughes, Sieveking and Peach. "The British (Broadcasting) organisation, and to some extent the German, have very definitely appreciated the fact that radio drama is a new art form and that, while at the outset, the adaptation of the traditions of the stage served useful purposes, the art is now essentially an art of its own ... In Great Britain it has been taken seriously both by listener and broadcaster." (15)

It is impossible for an art form to exist, far less to flourish, unless there is an audience to support it. The early radio audience was neither experienced nor educated to the art

of pure listening, and the early radio dramatists were therefore brave men facing a challenge. Their shortcomings as dramatists are easily forgiven in the contribution they made towards creating an audience for their art. They helped to persuade the British listener away from his initial approbation of whatever was broadcast, irrespective of its merit, towards a more critical attitude to radio.

However, plays written specifically for radio were few and far between. Adaptations of stage plays, novels and short stories provided the bulk of programmes for the BBC's dramatic series and have continued to provide it throughout the entire history of radio drama. The reasons for this will be pursued in Chapter IX, but they should be briefly noted here if the next period of development is to be viewed in its proper perspective. The conservatism of the British listening public has always reacted unfavourably on the progress of the radio play. Only a small minority of intelligent people look upon it as an art form — to the majority it remains a second best, to be listened to when you can't go to the pictures or the theatre. The only plays written specially for radio which have rivalled stage plays in listening popularity were those in Dorothy Sayers' series, The Man Born to be King.

The Listening Public does not like to be shocked and therefor prefers plays by familiar authors or with familiar names they have seen at the theatre or cinema. The BBC Saturday night plays for the most part are adaptations of successes in other forms — a state of affairs hardly encouraging to original

radio drama. At this stage in its development, the authors themselves were partly to blame, as many refused to make a proper approach to the form, and regarded it as a market in which to sell ideas that had failed as stage plays or novels. Again many others did not pay proper attention to the microphone and the medium, thinking rather in terms of the theatre with its physical limitations and restrictions, whereas their approach should have been one of release from theatre limitations.

Another contributing factor to the scarcity of good radio plays has been the attitude of the BBC itself. Dr. Johnson noted that "No-one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money", and it is questionable whether the BBC's financial rewards have been adequate to attract any other than writers who were either so engrossed in the medium that money was a secondary consideration, or alternatively, writers so much in need of money that they offered and sold half-digested work. In Britain the writer has never had an alternative market, so his work is useless if rejected by the BBC unless he rewrites it in another medium. Many inducements to creative work for the BBC have been absent since the early nineteen thirties up to the present day.

During the first five or six years of the broadcast play changes were continually taking place. Techniques were discovered and quickly became obsolete or standard, while radio drama remained something of a novelty. Experiments with the machinery of the medium, the dramatic control panel, multiple studios and assiduous realism in sound effects, occupied

nearly all the ingenuity of the producers. But this stage was just as valuable as the publicity given to production methods was unfortunate, because it was realised in time by writers such as Peach, Guthrie and Hamilton that the first essential in a radio play is simplicity, and that the technique of production must be the servant, never the master, of the material which is being presented.

From a small group of pioneers in this period, which included Lance Sieveking, L. du Garde Peach, Val Gielgud, Mary Hope Allan and E.A. Harding, came most of the techniques which are common practice today. Their imaginative daring established creative broadcasting in Britain on a firm basis, and later dramatists learnt as much from their mistakes as from their triumphs. As the impetus and attraction of mechanical invention was slowly exhausted and a new art technique stabilised from the trials and errors of this second period of radio drama, conditions were made more favourable for the creation of masterpieces. L. du Garde Peach was the first to do this. In the next few years his example was followed by many others and the increased popularity of the form gave rise to the hope that a "school" of radio dramatists might be established.

VI

THE THIRD PERIOD : 1930-1939.

i.

Outline of the period.

The beginning of the third period in the development of radio drama cannot be tied down to any particular year, but its history can be traced through the work of Peach, Guthrie, Hamilton, Bridson and other dramatists who learnt the lesson of simplicity from Sieveking's extravagance; and the period ends with the outbreak of the Second World War. This phase is marked by the achievement of a balanced technique, the shortlived emergence of several "radio dramatists", the exploration of impressionistic and choral effects, and the continued predominance of radio adaptations over radio plays in the BBC's regular programmes.

After the formation of a radio drama Repertory Company in 1930, the prestige of broadcast plays and acting rose in leaps and bounds during the first years of this decade. The B.B.C. Year Book, 1931 estimated the number of listeners at twelve million, and fifty radio plays were produced during the year. In 1932 a regular series of two-hour plays was broadcast on Sunday afternoons. Full length productions of many of Shakespeare's plays and Fleckers Hassan, adaptations of Moliere, Chekhov, Wilde, Synge, Shaw, Ibsen and Sherriff, not only attracted the best actors to radio, but further

consolidated a large section of the public's interest in the appreciation of radio drama.

During 1930, the BBC produced nine original plays of a high literary and dramatic standard. These included Squirrel's Cage and The Flowers are not for You to Pick by Tyrone Guthrie, Exiles and Red Tabs by Val Gielgud, and the outstanding German play, Brigade Exchange, by E. Johanssen, of which the B.B.C. Year Book, 1931 spoke very highly: "Brigade Exchange, a German war play, derived by its author Ernst Johanssen from his own novel Four Infantrymen on the Western Front, marks the peak of dramatic accomplishment so far. To analyse its success — the theme of the play is tremendous; the construction of a scene in which characters speak to each other from locations as far apart as the German front line, divisional headquarters and base hospitals, demands sound as its medium; the acting was natural and the entire production very dignified." (1)

Production technique was still uncertain, for the same article roundly condemns Val Gielgud's production of his own play, Exiles, for being "... so far elaborated in production by the use of effects and mass voices as to disguise the emotional simplicity of the author's dialogue and story." (p.191.) The year also heard Val Gielgud's production of Carnival, adapted from Compton McKenzie's novel by Eric Maschwitz. From Gielgud's enthusiastic description of the play in Years of the Locust, it would seem that he lapsed into extravagance and confusion through an over-insistence on technique; but this production nevertheless remains

an important land mark in the history of radio drama.

From 1923 to 1931, as the BBC outgrew its offices and studios at Savoy Hill, working conditions became steadily worse. Maurice Gorham wrote. "A musical comedy programme might come from a studio packed to suffocation, and the first dramatic control panel was housed in an office with a ground floor window opening on to a street..." But, he adds, "these conditions were not inappropriate to a medium that still depended so largely on the gusto and camaraderie of its performers and staff."(2) In 1932 the BBC moved to its present headquarters at Broadcasting House, one of the show places of London. It was designed as a drama producer's paradise, with a magnificent control panel and numerous elaborate studios -- irrespective of the fact that a controversy had arisen concerning the relative merits of multiple and single studio production. The latter was the standard American technique, and became more and more popular in Great Britain until the war almost eliminated the control panel for good. The panel is now only used for plays with exceptionally large casts or demanding special effects impossible to produce within the one studio.

During the last three months of 1933, the BBC held a drama festival of twelve representative broadcast plays to mark the tenth anniversary of radio drama. They included Danger, Kaleidoscope I, The Path of Glory, The Flowers are not for You to Pick, Red Tabs, several unpublished plays, the adaptation of Carnival, adaptations of two other novels and a stage-play.

The years 1933 to 1935 marked the definite crystalisation

of methods of production technique. The over-emphasised and over-publicised dramatic control panel was recognised in its true capacity as a means to an end, unfortunately elaborate but nonetheless essential to some plays; there was a trend away from sound effects to ideas; and once the fundamentals of radio production were grasped, it remained for the BBC to concentrate its attention on finding plays. Experiment did not cease, but there was less importance attached to it, because writers and producers both realised that a radio play must have a central idea, a strong plot or fine poetry to hold the attention, and unless an experiment produced these requirements, its value was slight. Previously their imagination had been more engrossed with atmosphere and sound effects than the ideas these were intended to illuminate, but now it was understood that "Plays for the microphone must... possess that solid basis of intrinsic interest without which virtuosity in noises is of no permanent avail."(3)

1934 to 1939 saw nothing revolutionary in radio drama -- it was a period of consolidation rather than experiment. The hopes that had been raised of an increase in both the quality and quantity of original radio plays were not fulfilled, nor was a permanent school of radio dramatic writing established, but there were important developments in the fields of documentary and variety. According to the B.B.C. Annual, 1935, the year 1934 "... has been a rather disappointing one in point of original drama for the microphone."(p.56.)

1935 was uneventful except for the introduction of a new

programme -- "From the London Theatre". This series was based on the radio presentation of current stage shows, and apart from bringing the best stage actors to the microphone, its main value was to give radio dramatic work a topicality and to improve the liaison between radio and stage. There were few significant works written specially for the microphone. The most notable were Horton Giddy's I'm the Shadow and Congo Landing, Norman Edwards' Mystery of the Temple and Philip Wade's Wedding Group.

The B.B.C. Annual, 1936 mentions two interesting developments in the previous year's work. The first is a definite and valuable tendency towards simplified production -- complicated studio groupings and panel work for their own sake were abandoned, and producers concentrated more on their actors than sound montage. The second point, rather tentatively raised, is current criticism of the BBC for insufficient encouragment of original plays. Adaptations still outnumbered radio plays.

In 1935, C. Whitaker Wilson, a successful radio dramatist, published Writing for Broadcasting (4), a book which need not detain us long. It is an extremely pedantic, cut and dried exposition of what kind of radio plays to write and how to write them. With an alert eye on the "box office" and popular taste, Wilson adopts the pose of a teacher exhorting his pupils not to be sordid, not to be gloomy, not to write heavy tragedy, not to write about nasty people and above all, not to be rude! All these points are illustrated by copious examples from his own plays, for which he has a very high regard -- perhaps not without reason for they received some very good notices in the

B.B.C. Year Books for 1932 and 1933.

During the years 1936 and 1937, there were three important developments in radio drama. The introduction of an "Experimental Hour", modelled on the "Workshop" of the Columbia Broadcasting System in America, provided an opportunity for BBC producers and writers to try out new techniques and to experiment with unusual and adventurous forms of writing. It was broadcast late at night, so that those who wanted to listen would make the effort, while those who did not, switched off their sets and went to bed. Significantly the first production was the American dramatist, Archibald Macleish's Fall of the City, and experimental play which had an immense effect on his own country. W.B.Yeats' Words on the Windowpane was produced soon after. The programme was eventually dislocated by the war.

The second development was the inauguration of the series "World Theatre", which achieved very high listening figures during the war years, and still retains its popularity both in Great Britain and throughout the Commonwealth on transcriptions. It was designed to present works by world famous dramatists, and began with productions of Shaw, O'Casey and Euripides.

The third development was not in radio drama proper, but a closely allied form -- the dramatic feature, which received most of its impetus from the startling advances made in Television broadcasting between 1929 and 1936. The first experimental service had been set up on September 30, 1929, and by 1932 the number of televiewers was estimated at ten thousand. Four years later, the world's first regular, high-definition tele-

vision service began transmission from Alexandra Palace, London. Following Lance Sieveking's production of a television play in 1929, the B.B.C. Year Book, 1931 ominously stated "It is possible that all the lessons learnt since the first (radio) play was broadcast, will only need to be forgotten."(p.193.) Due to the increasing importance and popularity of the new medium, the emphasis in dramatic radio programmes swung away from drama to the feature, an entirely new form which had developed inside radio and was not therefore handicapped, to anyone's mind, by the absence of vision.

ii.
Tyrone Guthrie.

Prior to 1931 dramatists had put forward various solutions to the essential paradox of radio drama, which is that it represents appearances by sound alone, just as painting represents depth on a surface. Richard Hughes had simply glossed over the paradox by eliminating everything that could be seen on his side of the microphone, in accordance with the situation on the listener's side. Lance Sieveking, L. du Garde Peach and Val Gielgud had substituted for everything visual, verbal description, sound effects and music, separately or together, in order to convey a complete impression to the listener. In opposition to their view, Rudolf Arnheim decided that radio dramatists should not worry about this paradox at all, but exploit it for new effects. Because radio drama is blind, he thought it should ignore vision altogether and concentrate entirely on patterns of pure sound. It should explore the symphonic possibilities of the medium, and make a more deliberate use of rhythm in dialogue or choral speaking, of contrasting vocal colour, changing tempo and varying pitch. Such a concentration, Arnheim considered, would banish all suggestion of unnecessary theatrical conventions from the listener's mind, as well as the idea that radio drama was something secondhand, a substitute, and not a new and exciting art form to be developed along its own individual lines.

Tyrone Guthrie's view of radio drama was basically the same as Arnheim's. As early as 1930, he saw the danger to radio

drama of the fast approaching television, then not beyond the experimental stage. Writing in the B.B.C. Year Book, 1931, he said "...in the inevitable and fast approaching fusion with the talking films, the contribution of broadcasting to the new art form will be a symphonic one, and ... therefore it would be wise to approach the problem symphonically at the outset."(p.189.) This was the basic idea behind his own plays, but for the most part radio drama has always concentrated on "mind pictures", while "symphonic" plays have been rare occurrences.

Tyrone Guthrie began his stage career as an actor with the Oxford Repertory Company in 1924. He soon relinquished acting for production and from 1929 to 1930 directed the plays given by Amner Hall at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge. While still a young man, with a reputation as a creative and experimental artist never afraid to approach his material from a new angle, Guthrie turned to radio in 1930 for a brief period as a producer, and amongst others, wrote two plays which have become radio classics -- Squirrel's Cage and The Flowers are not for You to Pick.(5)

Squirrel's Cage is constructed of six scenes of normal dramatic dialogue, and five impressionistic interludes consisting of sound effects and choral speaking, which add another dimension to the play and make a universal comment on the progress of the main action. In his introduction to the play, Guthrie says that the scenes should be played very intimately, in rather a low key, in contrast to the interludes, which are to be bold and reverberating, each one working up to a

thunderous climax.

The action is simple and straightforward. John, hidebound and reactionary, and Rose, his wife, without force of character, are tied body and soul to the repetitive and uninspiring routine of their daily middle class existence. They have a son Henry, who, when the time comes, cannot strike out and create a new life of his own, but unresistingly falls into the routine existence with which his parents had oppressed him as a child. The story, in effect, covers two generations. It begins on the night of Henry's birth, when we hear enough about his parents to establish their character and way of life, and ends with the birth of Henry's child, who, we are given to understand, will inevitably follow in the dull footsteps of his parents and grandparents.

The construction of the play is admirable. The action is carried forward in the scenes, which are broken up, emphasised and explained by the 'symphonic' interludes, rather in the manner of a Greek chorus. Guthrie avoids the danger of breaking his play into isolated segments by allowing each interlude to arise naturally out of the preceding scene and connecting the two not only by context, but sound and imagery. Henry's Aunt urges him "Oh, Henry ... you may never have the chance again. It'll be six years before you're 21. <u>Six years</u> -- up in the train, down in the train, office routine, routine, routine - for six years ..." After a few more lines of dialogue the interlude is introduced. We hear the rhythmic puffing of a train behind snatches of dialogue from the station, urbane

remarks, voices chanting in unison "Up and down, up and down", building in volume and momentum until they fall into time with the puffing of the train. The train fades into Interlude IV and the sound of many typewriters is heard in the distance. A short piece of typical "office" dialogue, a few lines of dictation, the typewriter again, then the inhuman sound of the typewriter and Henry's voice which merge into an inarticulate hum.

Using a similar technique to the film close-up, Guthrie achieves emphasis by microphone distortion and change in tempo. The author intends "... a rapid monotonous utterance for this scene -- the repetition is emphatically pointless." All this is difficult to describe in words, but within the span of two minutes, Guthrie creates an unequivocal symphonic impression of the daily routine of Henry's life in far more economic and dramatic terms than ten minutes dialogue could ever convey. The interludes suggesting Henry's childhood and schooldays, his monotonous 8.10a.m. journeys to London, the endless belt of dictation to his typist, and Henry's childhood repeated in that of his son, are phantasmagorias of sound underlining and commenting on the action. The Scenes and Interludes of the play are inextricably woven together by recurring dialogue, images, symbols and effects.

The normal dramatic scenes employ an allusive technique, although written superficially in a realist style. Soon after the play begins, John's sister discovers a pet squirrel, which is immediately established as the main symbol of the

play. Mary objects to it being kept in a cage:

John: It's all right — it's quite nice. When it's asleep it lives in the little box place and when it's awake it runs round and round in the wire wheel.

Mary: Round and round.

John: Yes. Round and round.

Mary: It likes it. It thinks it's getting somewhere. And all the while it's just sending the cage spinning round and round -- (pause). It runs fast and works furiously and thinks it's doing splendidly and all that happens -- Oh John set it free! Let it out of the cage and set it free in the garden.

John: No! No!

Mary: Why not.

John: You can never set them free after they've been tamed.

Mary: Why can't you.

John: They get so used to captivity that freedom makes them afraid.

Thus in the opening scene, the play's theme is firmly stated. John is the squirrel, and its cage his way of life, from which neither he, nor his son Henry, can escape. The phrase, "round and round", recurring throughout the play, constantly draws the listener's attention back to the squirrel in the cage.

The dialogue becomes more allusive, serving both action and theme, as the symbolic imagery falls into a coherent, unmistakable pattern. In the second scene, Rose questions her son about his toy train:

Rose: Did you play with the new lines Aunt Mary bought you?

Henry: No, I like Daddy's lines best.

John: Do you, old man?

Henry: Mmm.

John: Why?

Henry: Aunt Mary's lines is all straight bits, but Daddy's lines go round in a circle.

John: Is that nice?

Henry: Mmm ... you can make them into a circle and then the trains can go round and round.

John: Round and round.

Rose: Round and round.

Henry: Round and round.

This suggestion of stylisation in realistic dialogue serves to increase the listener's awareness of its full significance.

When Henry is happily married, he complains to his wife:

Henry: ... It's the monotony that gets irksome -- the same old routine day after day -- round and round -- like a squirrel in a cage.

Ivy: ... Round and round. Cheer up Henry, good times are coming.

and Henry's proud reply is typical of the strong vein of dramatic irony that runs through the play:

Henry: That's it. That's just what makes it worthwhile -- the feeling that we're <u>progressing</u>, <u>not</u> just running round and round -- and the feeling that all the time one's building up something solid, something solid.

He goes on to describe the wonderful start they will give their son -- capital, social prestige, in fact "something solid". But one morning, Henry's son hides his father's hat which makes him late for work. Ivy scolds the child -- "How many times have I got to tell you that you're not to, not to, not to ..." and her words are taken up by the chorus which ends the play in exactly the same way as Henry's childhood began. The squirrel's wheel has turned full circle; neither Henry, nor his son, nor his grandson are able to break loose from its monotony.

Throughout the play, Guthrie uses a number of symbolic sound effects, and in the interludes, sound montages, as compression devices to quickly advance or change, the exposition, action, mood, time or scene. Although their meaning is implicit rather than explicit, they are stated firmly and unequivocally, avoiding any suggestion of uncertainty which would immediately nullify their effect. For instance, a rush through time and space is suggested by one stroke of a bell, then the scream of a siren. When Henry is offered the chance to escape from following his father's footsteps, and strike off on his own initiative, his fatal choice is introduced by a gong, intended to symbolise the gong of doom. In case it should fail to register, Guthrie cunningly brings in Henry's mother immediately after, to announce that the dinner gong just sounded.

The treatment of Henry's marriage shows Guthrie's masterly command of radio dramatic craftsmanship and economy. While they are dancing -- "round and round" -- Henry asserts himself,

proposes to his girl-friend, there is a little talk of money, the dance music fades, and a few seconds of the "Wedding March" is sufficient comment to end the sequence. Every conversation, every effect and every interlude in the play contributes directly or indirectly to the central theme, established in the first scene and gradually elaborated as the action proceeds.

Guthrie followed the example of L. du Garde Peach in The Path of Glory, by developing his characters only to the extent of serving his theme; John, unimaginative, hidebound and conventional; Rose, his wife, with few positive traits apart from her unquestioning acceptance of John's way of life and her fear of "What the neighbours will say". In contrast to these two is John's sister, Mary — imaginative, self reliant and able to see the dangers of her brother's humdrum existence. Henry is almost a replica of his father, Ivy even more conventional and suburban than her mother-in-law.

Although the theme of Squirrel's Cage is the futility of routine existence, Guthrie never becomes harsh or bitter, but carefully arouses the listener's sympathy for each one of his unfortunate characters. He dislikes not the people themselves, but the dreary, monotonous, suburban way of life which causes them to be what they are. And the worst feature of it is that heredity prevents all but the most unusually talented from realising their individuality, getting out of the rut and making a new life of their own. Roger Manvell commented "The value of this play lay in the imaginative treatment given by

Guthrie to a quite simple and obvious theme on which he had something genuine to say because of the affection he clearly felt for his characters in the cage." (6)

The Flowers are not for You to Pick is a different genre of radio play from Squirrel's Cage, but it uses a similar technique. Both plays are pure radio, covering a wide range through space and time, employing sound effects and music to advance the plot, accentuate the theme, and as transitional links between the sequences. But in contrast to Squirrel's Cage, which is developed around a strong idea to which plot and character are subordinated, The Flowers are not for You to Pick is a study in characterisation -- the story of a dreamy boy with a stutter, who grows up feeling acutely the contempt of his family and associates, but who stubbornly refuses to admit failure. Edward, the central character, is revealed as fully as is possible within the duration of one hour; the others are sketches whose main function is to expose various aspects of Edward himself.

The play begins with Edward, who has fallen overboard from a ship in mid-ocean, recalling his past life in a series of flashbacks as he slowly drowns. "... the many short scenes," Guthrie says in an introduction to the play, "rise out of and sink into a rhythmic sound of splashing, moving seas. This sound should be complex yet symphonic ... by its rhythm and tone it may be possible to suggest not merely the waters in which Edward is engulfed, but the beating of a heart, the tumult of fear, the immutable laws and irresistible strength of nature compared with our puny and inconstant selves."

Out of the waves come scenes from Edward's childhood, his schooldays, his unsuccessful love affair, his ineffectual career as a clergyman, and his final decision to leave England and become a missionary. Gradually his character is unfolded with the same sympathy and tenderness that Guthrie displayed in Squirrel's Cage. But right from the beginning Edward has the strength, denied Henry, to assert his right against the wishes and opinions of other people. As a child he insists upon picking forbidden flowers, and the sequence which gives the play its name is symbolic of Edward's refusal to give in:

Mother: Edward... you know quite well the flowers are not for you to pick. Give it up at once.

Edward: No.

Mother: Give it up at once I say.

Edward: No.

The symbolic and emotive associations of this scene become clearer as the play develops. In it we hear his stubborness, his refusal to admit defeat, his defiance of all the powers that are set up over and against him. He endures the taunts of his spiteful sister and is not understood by his parents. After an unsuccessful love affair with the beautiful and sophisticated Vanessa, we know Edward as a young man who earnestly wishes to make a success of life, but is too stubborn to realise that his very nature and physical limitations prevent it. Not until he has failed as a parish minister, and the fact is gently broken to him by the kindly but embarrassed Rector, does he give up his curacy and admit defeat for the

first time in his life.

He decides to go to China as a missionary and calls on Vanessa, the real reason for his surrender, to say goodbye. Ironically she remarks "You know Edward, it would be just like you to go and get drowned on the way." They both laugh and the door is heard to shut firmly and finally. On the boat he falls overboard and snatches of present and past sequences -- drowning, death, his curacy, sinking -- flash into his mind. "There go my spectacles ... sinking ... I knew I'd shed them off at last." And he adds with an ironical touch of courageous good humour -- "I'm glad I went down in my dog-collar."

Many scenes in the play are singularly moving, in particular, those concerning Edward's hopeless love for Vanessa. The pair are rowing on a lake at sunset when Edward declares his love, admitting, at the same time, his inadequacies -- "I know I'm not at all clever or amusing ... but I can hold on to an idea once I've got it." Vanessa, slightly embarrassed tries to dissuade him.

Vanessa: Give it up Edward. Oh Edward give it up.

Edward: (His challenge to the Universe) No!

With sympathetic good humour, Guthrie shows us Edward's failure as a minister. We hear him in an echoing church, stuttering out a vague, uninteresting and meaningless sermon, through which the coughs, snuffles and yawns of the congregation are periodically heard. Later the Rector tells him not to preach at the next service because his sermons are far too long. Edward explains that he did not have his glasses and could not see the church

clock — "I stopped because Dunwoody came up into the pulpit and whispered that it was a quarter to two." The scene in the church, revealing Edward's incapacity in professional life, is contrasted with the following one, in which he gently informs one of the women in his parish of her husband's death, and shows himself to be more than adequate in human situations requiring kindliness, sympathy and understanding.

The minor characters are neatly drawn and sharply distinguished in voice and temperament. Edward's father -- aristocratic, pompous, yet kindly, with a genuine affection for his son, even if he cannot make him out; his mother, slightly nebulous, never completely understanding her son; Fanny his contemptuous and spiteful sister; Mrs. McAleen, the earthy and garrulous Irish woman to whom Edward breaks the news of her husband's death; and there are several other minor sketches who briefly come into contact with the central character.

As in the earlier play, Guthrie uses a number of symbolic and symphonic sound montages, either to advance the plot or to comment on it. After Vanessa has refused Edward's love there is a brief episode in which Fanny calls out — "Come and look at Edward, everybody ... he's wearing his dog-collar!" -- and screams of cruel derisive laughter fade into the sound of the waves. After Edward has learnt of Vanessa's marriage, he faints, and in a distorted dream sequence, tangled thoughts and emotions rush into his mind:

Mrs. Dolan: The poor boy -- its something he must have eaten.

Fanny: Loosen his collar, quickly.

And a chorus of voices rhythmically repeats:

Mrs. Dolan: Some he must Vanessa.

Fanny: Loosen his Birmingham quick.

Mrs. Dolan: Birmingham married Vanessa -- (repeat)

Mrs. Dolan: Edward can't marry Vanessa -- (repeat)

A similar choral effect is used when the train leaves on the first stage of Edward's journey to China. After shouted "good-byes" the train gathers speed, and unemotionally, Edward repeats to its rhythm:

Edward: Edward, Vanessa, Edward, Vanessa, Edward to China, Edward to China.

Mother: ... Goodbye....

Edward: Edward -- Vanessa -- Birmingham (repeated)

Voice: Any more for the shore.

And the siren of the steamer ends the sequence. The final scene of the play consists entirely of snatches from all the previous scenes -- a series of impressions without continuity, into which the waves fade -- then silence.

The Flowers are not for You to Pick is a model of radio craftsmanship. The sequences are an ideal length, there is not an extraneous sentence, while every character and scene contributes to a single, overall effect. The opening of the play is a fine example of getting straight into the heart of the matter. If the listener's attention is to be gripped at the outset, time, place, plot and character must be firmly established in the first few lines. In Squirrel's Cage, Guthrie did away with narration altogether, by allowing scene and interlude

to follow each other without a break. He nevertheless realised that narration, properly used, can be a valuable short cut, and in the opening paragraph of The Flowers are not for You to Pick, the narrator saves much time that would otherwise have been spent in conveying verbal decor and introductory information within the texture of the dialogue. He tells us everything about the play necessary to rouse out interest -- theme, scene, name and occupation of the principal character:

> Announcer: It is said that their past lives float before the eyes of drowning men. From a ship bound for China, a young clergyman has fallen overboard ... even now he is struggling for live in the water ... (Sound of waves fades in)
>
> His name is Edward. And before his eyes float pictures ... voices sound in his ears ... voices ... voices ... his past life. (The waves fade as the first scene begins.)

The Flowers are not for You to Pick convincingly demonstrated that radio drama was just as effective for the exploration of character, as for telling a story or developing an idea. Edward, tender, sensitive and sincere, a woefully inadequate young man who refuses to admit defeat, even when every power in the universe is arrayed against him, is a character as roundly and convincingly drawn within the space of one hour, as a stage-play could present within the space of two or three hours.

When he became interested in radio drama, Tyrone Guthrie was already a serious writer with a fully matured observation of

life to express. Instead of exploiting the technical devices of radio for novel and unusual effects -- a temptation to which many of his contemporaries succumbed -- Guthrie made use of radio for the one reason that it presented the only means of expressing his vision of life at this stage. He had something of genuine importance to say in a medium he thoroughly understood. Squirrel's Cage and The Flowers are not for You to Pick are amongst the first serious plays of permanent value in this popular art form, and their effectiveness derives from a disarming simplicity of method and Guthrie's unmistakable sincerity; while on the technical side he opened up an exciting new field by the use of choral, symphonic and impressionistic effects.

In his introduction to Squirrel's Cage and two other Microphone Plays,(7) Guthrie justified his attempts at radio drama. He believed the live theatre would go down under the combined pressure of the "canned" products of the film industry and broadcasting. It may seem strange that a man who has contributed so much to contemporary drama for the stage, should have written of it so pessimistically. But the nineteen-thirties was a period of depression in the theatre and Guthrie did not realise that on the many occasions it had gone down before, it had always come up again. The film, as he points out, is certainly canned because it is preserved and unalterable, but the radio play is the most fugitive of the arts, as he himself knew. Guthrie's attitude to the various theatrical arts in which he has worked has always been curiously inconsistent, and

this Introduction is all rather ironical, for he remained with the BBC only a few years, before deserting it in favour of his "cardboard grottoes" in the theatre, where he soon established himself as one of the boldest, the most experimental and imaginative of contemporary producers.

iii.
Patrick Hamilton.

Patrick Hamilton is both a playwright and novelist of distinction, but his work in radio drama shows how easy it is for a receptive and creative mind to adapt itself to, and use to its advantages, an art form completely different from the novel or stage play. His plays -- particularly Gaslight, Rope and The Duke in Darkness -- show a flawless dramatic technique, imaginative characterisation, and plots of ingenuity and tension. Hamilton is a master of suspense, and it is this ability which makes To the Public Danger one of the most exciting radio plays written during the period under discussion.(8)

To the Public Danger is a moral thriller. Hamilton had something vital to say on the simple yet increasingly important theme of dangerous driving, and he delivers his lesson with startling clarity. But the play is by no means a propaganda piece, as the author makes brilliant use of all the technical devices of radio to create and hold an atmosphere of unusual tension and excitement, which grips the listener in the first sequence and holds him breathless until the denouement in the Coroner's court room. The play's entertainment value was Hamilton's first consideration -- his message naturally, yet unmistakably, arises from the drama. Characterisation and plot are both simple and straightforward; the whole emphasis of the play is centred around the creation of a tense and exciting atmosphere, as a car and its drunken passengers race inevitably

to their doom. Music and sound effects are used to full advantage, while the dialogue is always vivid and straight to the point.

Hamilton uses four leading characters, sharply differentiated in voice and temperament, therefore easily distinguishable -- Bruce Cole, an ex-army play boy, sophisticated, smooth, precise and arrogant; his friend Reggie, a cynical and obnoxious, drunken lout; Fred Lance, a cockney country boy hopelessly in love with Nan, a worthless yet seductive country girl who is dissatisfied with her boy friend and all out for a good time. There are only five other bit parts who appear in one or two sequences each.

The play opens in a country hotel where Bruce and Reggie have been steadily drinking. They meet up with Nan, who has been having a dull evening with her unromantic boy friend, and the four of them decide to go on a joy ride. The first scene has as a background a mosaic of sound effects -- the subdued chatter of the drinkers, music from a wireless, the clink of glasses and the clicking of a slot machine. We hear the steps of the party, the noise of the car door, the sound of an engine starting, accelerating, then the tooting of a horn. Hamilton warns the producer that the sound of the car engine should never rise above the level of the dialogue, except in the climax, and for the sake of clarity of diction, the characters' drunkenness should not be over-emphasised.

Cole's driving becomes more reckless, as he swigs from a flask of whiskey, while Nan's excitement encourages him to

greater speeds. From then on the speech of the characters and the noise of the speeding car form a gradual crescendo of sound, building in tension up to the first climax in Nan's frantic cry "Look out for that bike." — followed by the awful thud of metal striking metal, the scream of brakes, the shattering of glass and two long piercing screams from Nan. The car slows down, but immediately accelerates much to Fred's consternation, as Cole callously refuses to turn back. The tension in the car begins to increase once more when Fred attacks the driver. Eventually the car stops, we hear the scuffling, heavy breathing and muttered curses as Fred and Cole fight. Fred distracts his attention, makes a run for it and by increasing the sound of Fred's breathing and fading the other voices, the listener is taken with him for a little way, is flashed back to the car starting up again, then returned to Fred and the sound of his desperate knocking on a door. Almost at breaking point, he requests to use the 'phone; then his voice fades out and the sound of the car travelling at full speed fades in.

By now the three characters in the car are quite tipsy — Cole proclaims "That last whiskey's done the trick, my girl. I'm tight at last", and he speeds up in a frantic effort to outpace what they imagine to be a police car following them. Nan and Reggie implore him to stop, the dialogue becomes hysterical, reaching a terrible climax in a piercing scream, a screech of brakes and the complete crashing and wrecking of the car -- " ... a noise," Hamilton says "which will have to

be left to the resources and ingenuity of the producer."

There is silence, save for the engine which is still running, and the car wireless still pounding away at the 3rd. Movement of the "Moonlight Sonata". The engine coughs, runs again for a little, then expires. The "Moonlight Sonata" still goes on playing. As it fades we are aware of a voice speaking as though at a distance, which gradually becomes audible until the whole play is dominated by the long, calm and judicial speech of the coroner. He goes on to discuss the case not only in his official capacity, but "... as a human being who uses a car." He discloses that the first accident did not kill a man, as everybody thought, but the car had hit two bikes supporting a sack of potatoes by the side of the road. Nor was it a police car that incited Cole to speed to his death. After passing judgment on the characters, he sums up the whole action:

> If publicity can serve to call still more and more attention to the danger, the tragedy, the misery to human beings, which is being caused today by people entering that instrument of death, the motor car, in incomplete possession of their senses, under any influence of drink or alchohol, however small — if that can be done, then some little good may yet come of this, and other lives be saved where these three have been wasted.

In this speech Hamilton is pointing to an undisguised moral, but at the same time it is logically and artistically in keeping with the play. This speech would be the natural termination to such a series of events in real life, so it does not sound at all fabricated or superimposed. "The quiet voice in the foreground," Roger Manvell says, "restores the balance of justice needed after the selfish clamour of evil which had preceded it." (9)

To the Public Danger is a beautifully constructed thriller in which dialogue, sound effects and music function in exactly the same way to create an atmosphere of mounting tension and excitement. Its dramatic economy, simple plot and sharp characterisation produce a dramatic impact so powerful, that the listener is momentarily stunned until the events are set in their true perspective with the restoration of tranquility at the end.

Money with Menaces is by no means a great play and hardly bears comparison with To the Public Danger.(10) Hamilton has nothing to say of much importance and his characters are of no unusual significance, but the play does hold the air because it tells an exciting story as effectively as possible in terms of pure radio. The play is admirably written and clearly the work of a sure craftsman, who certainly knew what radio could do and what it could not do. It is an above average product of a popular art form, a type of play that is immensely effective on the radio and never fails to receive a good hearing, for the one reason that it makes exceptionally good entertainment.

Money with Menaces concerns a rich, powerful and unscrupulous newspaper magnate, Andrew Carruthers, who receives a mysterious telephone call informing him that his daughter has been kidnapped and will not be released until he pays the caller one thousand pounds in cash. The action is constructed around the precautions taken by the kidnapper in procuring the money from Carruthers, who is made to follow an intricate set of directions

through the city, explained to him by a series of telephone calls. The entire action takes place in one afternoon, as the listener follows Carruthers from the time he leaves his office till he returns home, only to discover that his child has not been kidnapped -- he did not bother to check after the first telephone call -- and that the "kidnapper" was a man Carruthers once bullied at school, who is now taking his revenge.

The value of the play lies in its technique -- partly in the method by which Hamilton contracts the continuous events of one afternoon into one hour, and partly for his skill in evoking background scenery. In To the Public Danger scenery is unimportant, as the listener is concerned more with the immediate surroundings of the characters, namely the car and what goes on inside it. It was enough for the hotel bar to be suggested by a few remarks and sound effects. Both The Flowers are not for You to Pick and Money with Menaces are built around one central character, but the first is concerned more with what he is, the second with what he does. Unlike Guthrie, Hamilton makes no attempt to give us a detailed study of Carruther's mind. Edward's history is played out against a number of backgrounds separated and defined to varying degrees, but for the most part their location is unimportant. In To the Public Danger and Money with Menaces, the action consists of a journey through space and time played out against one continually changing scene; but in the latter play, the scene provides an important background to the action -- it is dynamic and vital not only to the setting and atmosphere but also to the plot.

The play opens "... with a burst of music of an exciting and dramatic character." This is succeeded by something slow and peaceful, suggesting the haze and heat of a summer afternoon, which gradually fades into the noise of city traffic, roaring and honking at full blast at 2.30 in the afternoon. But the scene is evidently high up in a high building, as the sound is blurred and tempered by the height. After Carruthers is vaguely established as a character, he receives the first telephone call, and sets out on his tour of the city which takes him to a shop, a bank, an amusement park, an underground railway, his club and lastly his home. The listener follows his journey by an almost continuous background of sound effects, fading or increasing in volume as demanded by the dialogue, and broken by patches of music to enhance mood and atmosphere, or to indicate a lapse in time.

Although his method seems complex, Hamilton's sustained use of effects to suggest action is remarkable for its clarity and simplicity — provided they are carefully handled by the producer. As an example; Carruthers leaves his office and we hear the door close behind him. Music fades in to suggest his anxiety and a lapse of several minutes. This is followed by a clock chiming all the quarters, then striking three to indicate the precise time. The music ceases, then we hear the sound of a lift rising and stopping, its gates are thrown open and shut, the lift descends, the gates open and shut again. The sound of voices, busy on the ground floor is heard, a Commissionaire speaks and the sound of the traffic fades in,

growing louder than before, so we gather Carruthers is now actually walking along the street. Floating voices of passers-by subside, and the sound of a shop bell indicates he has entered a shop. Finally, the sound of feet on the bare boards of the shop, and the dialogue begins. Thus Hamilton represents an involved series of physical movements by leading the listener to identify himself with Carruthers and follow in his footsteps, with only one brief snatch of dialogue. The sound effects are positive and functional, realistic but unobtrusive. Hamilton's method is the method of Sieveking brought under control, without his complexity or extravagant "three deep sound montages.".

The principal weakness of the play is the slickness with which Hamilton tends to gloss over the uncertainty which increases in Carruther's mind as the play moves on; but it is difficult to see how this psychological aspect could be treated more fully without destroying the play's atmosphere.

Money with Menaces is an unpretentious entertainment piece for radio. Its chief virtue is the precision and integrity with which Hamilton approaches the microphone, conclusively proving that it should not be regarded as an eavesdropper, but as an extremely flexible and sensitive instrument. Later dramatists have learnt much from his masterly technique and his ability to create from a slight story, with the simplest means, a play that will grip the listener by the intensity of a well sustained atmosphere.

iv.
Conclusion.

In 1936 D.G.Bridson opened up a new field in radio drama with his production of The March of the '45, a play which combined dialogue, verse, narration, choral speaking and singing in what was the first radio opera. The importance of this work can only be fully appreciated if it is considered as the forerunner of a series of poetic musical plays which contemporary poets have written specially for radio since 1941. Bridson paved the way in the functional use of music, just as Hamilton had done with sound effects, but not until Edward Sackville-West's The Rescue was produced seven years later did another author realise the immense possibilities that lay in this kind of radio play.

The high hopes that had been held during the first five years of the nineteen-thirties for the creation of a "school" of radio dramatists were disappointed when Peach, Guthrie and Hamilton ceased writing radio plays. But the period did produce several of the best plays yet written for radio, and radio drama was consolidated as a popular art form when the novelty wore off, and the mania for experiment declined. Gradually the listener became more interested in what a play had to say than in the manner in which it was said. As early as 1931, Merrill Denison enthusiastically wrote of the support this new form was receiving from its audience:

> An audience has been developed (in Great Britain) for the broadcast play and what is more remarkable

> is keenly interested in its experimental aspects. Such an audience could only have been developed in one way: through the belief that the time devoted to listening to a play from the air would be well spent. How this belief was implanted I do not know. (11)

By 1939, the year that conveniently marks the end of the third phase in the development of radio drama, the radio play had become an institution accepted by both writer and listener. Many plays, and some of a high dramatic and literary value, were being written by men who had conscientiously learnt the unfamiliar technique of writing for a new medium. Radio drama had achieved the status of a separate and distinct art form. Although adaptations still provided the vast majority of plays for the BBC's dramatic series, it was clearly recognised that even adaptation itself was an art which required a specialised knowledge of its own.

VII

THE FOURTH PERIOD : 1939-1946.

i.

Outline of the period.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler attacked Poland and a whole era of broadcasting in Britain ended. The BBC Regional Stations closed down, the Television Service closed down, alternative programmes vanished and the conditions of radio drama changed almost overnight. Hundreds of producers, musicians, engineers, secretaries and administrators left Broadcasting House in London, for provincial centres where there was thought to be less danger from bombing. The Drama Department evacuated to Evesham, where producers were forced to direct plays from makeshift studios in a large house and in a stable at Wood Norton. Not only did the conditions of production change, but writers, actors and listeners found themselves in an entirely new situation.

Producers were deprived of the elaborate machinery at Broadcasting House which compelled a radical simplification of all production techniques. With Multiple Studios and the Dramatic Control Panel no longer available, they were forced to adopt the American method of using a single large studio housing all the actors, music and effects, and an adjoining control room from which the producer directed his play. All

this required a complete re-education for producers, and to make things worse, they discovered that the demand for radio plays was almost fifty per cent greater than it had been prior to the war.

People found they had to stay at home due to the blackout and blitz, which meant they were rarely able to visit the theatre or cinema. As a result those who previously sought their entertainment outside the home, were forced to find it inside, and the natural answer was the radio. At first light programmes were preferred, particularly variety -- it was during the early war years that Tommy Handley built up the tremendous popularity and prestige of ITMA, at the same time setting a pattern in this form. However, in the B.B.C. Year Book, 1945, Val Gielgud was able to report "The most striking thing about broadcasting play production in 1944 is the fact that -- if Listener Research figures are to be believed -- radio drama has now begun to challenge variety programmes, always excepting the inimitable ITMA for sheer quantitative popularity." In the same article he summed up the situation in 1939. "I doubt if it is always realised how shattering the effect of the war's outbreak was upon the BBC's play producing department. It was deprived, almost at a stroke, of two thirds of its rehearsal time and of a great proportion of its technical facilities." (p.53.)

As the productions department was out of London, it could not draw upon the wide range of actors and actresses available in the city. During the confusion of evacuation a Drama

Repertory Company, disbanded several years before, was reformed, to bear the strain of more plays and less rehearsal time. Radio plays were being produced under the most extreme difficulties from 1939 to 1945, yet radio drama benefited more than it suffered from war-time conditions, and made greater artistic progress than in any other period.

Shortage of paper meant restrictions on publishing and many writers were almost forced to turn their attention to radio, while those already familiar with the medium were compelled to radically simplify their approach. Amongst those who had already earned a reputation as novelists or dramatists, Clemence Dane, Dorothy Sayers, Eric Linklater and Louis MacNeice, all made distinguished contributions to broadcast drama.

Between September and December, 1939, circumstances confined drama to one programme per week, but by Christmas normal programme times had been restored, longer periods were allowed, star performers became available again due to the closing of many theatres, and radio drama was almost back to where it had been before September.

1940 heard several excellent broadcasts of scenes from Shakespeare in restricted listening times, produced by Val Gielgud; dramatisations of Maugham's short stories and of Kipling's "Just - so" stories; and an adaptation of Andre Obey's Noah. The most important event of the year was the production of a series of propaganda plays Shadow of the Swastika.

Some of the most significant contributions to broadcast drama were made between the years 1941 and 1945. In 1941, The Saviours,

a series of seven plays on a single theme, by Clemence Dane, and the production of the first play in Dorothy Sayers' memorable series, The Man Born to be King; in 1942, Christopher Columbus, Louis MacNeice's radio verse pageant, and the first of Eric Linklater's many imaginative and unusual "drama-features", or discussion plays. Dorothy Sayers' plays on the life of Christ continued to stir up an unprecedented interest in radio drama, and although drawing down fierce criticism on all concerned with them, they greatly enhanced the prestige of both the BBC and its Drama Department.

In 1943, Edward Sackville-West's radio opera, The Rescue, was produced, and regular weekly listening times were established for radio drama's two most popular series -- "Saturday Night Theatre", and the rather sensational "Appointment with Fear". A successful experiment begun two years earlier became a regular feature - the allocation of almost an entire evening's programme to a single play, which resulted in full length productions of Shakespeare and Shaw. In October of this year, Thomas Hardy's gigantic play The Dynasts, was unsuccessfully broadcast, and in conjunction with Granville Barker's previous attempt to stage it, proved conclusively that this monumental work properly belongs to the study.

During the war years, there were three important developments in radio programmes, closely related to drama. Serial plays grew in popularity after the impetus received from Peter Cheyney's stories of crime and detection broadcast in 1943, an adaptation of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby, and several thrillers written

specially for radio. Secondly, a new form which had its origin in the radio play, achieved such immense popularity that in listening figures it outstripped every other radio programme. This form was brought close to perfection in Tommy Handley's "ITMA", a fast moving variety show perfectly attuned to the requirements of its medium, which began in July, 1939. The third development was the equally great impetus received by the feature programme from the wealth of documentary material provided by the war. At first a subtle, yet entertaining means of broadcasting propaganda, the feature was brought to a high degree of artistry by the many reputable contemporary authors who were attracted to it during the war.

ii.
Eric Linklater.

The imaginary conversation is usually regarded as the most artificial of literary forms because it has to make shift with an existence in print instead of being spoken aloud. For instance, Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" read as the unnatural, stilted and over eloquent utterances of characters who require a tremendous mental effort to bring to life. If read aloud, there is little doubt that their eloquence would be attractive, their stiltedness would disappear and, despite a classically moderate style and lack of action, a suggestion of dramatic conflict could be introduced by opposing voice qualities, to make them sound bright, instructive and entertaining. Eric Linklater was the first to realise that radio presented an opportunity for this literary form to take on a wide popularity and appeal, and that the imaginary conversation could easily become an exciting vehicle for entertainment and instruction. In his five dialogues, Linklater provided an excellent model for the discussion and dissemination of ideas by preparing them in a dramatic form specifically intended for radio presentation.(1)

Linklater's imaginary conversations derive from three distinct sources: the example of Landor, the popular BBC "Brains Trust" type of programme, and "the drama of ideas", such as Shaw's dramatic debates in Getting Married and the Hell Scene in Man and Superman, both of which have made successful broadcasts in recent years on the Third Programme. But Linklater's individual form

has advantages over all three. Unlike Landor, he was writing to be spoken, not read, therefore he could not afford to use dull characters nor otiose dialogue. His dramatised discussions were thought out and prepared beforehand, having an advantage over the impromptu discussion in which the most promising ideas are seldom developed in the course of the debate. Linklater was able to follow through his main argument, to reiterate and drive home his important points and to lighten the intellectual tension when necessary, by humour and other devices.

In order to obtain its maximum theatrical effect and to compensate for lack of action and overwordiness, the "drama of ideas", in most cases, centres on a single, massive and over solemn theme, betraying an author with a very sharp axe to grind, and a substantial moral to exemplify. Linklater realised all this would be a positive drawback in the radio dialogue. He had no need to pontificate and showed that a fresh approach to an old form could teach and entertain through quick, nimble and pleasant argument, often humorous and always graceful.

The static discussion may become legitimate radio drama, though it is rarely exploited through fear that the listener will find it dull or stiff. The drama is conferred by Linklater attracting the listener's focus on the unseen personality of the speakers, and by the shape of the discussion itself, which is designed to hold the attention from first to last. For the emotional rise and fall of a drama, its minor climaxes, anti-climaxes and dramatic reversals, Linklater substitutes the changing or developing attitude of his speakers to a clearly defined line of argument. -- a proposition, its discussion, a

conclusion and its resolution. Emotional colour is added by the speakers' reactions to one another, and by eliminating the narrator, a convincing realism in characterisation and speech.

Linklater allows his conversations to range across ages and between worlds. He brings together men of widely different types and callings, both the dead and the living, from many different countries. Despite this freedom his argument is always well disciplined to its main subject. It is conducted philosophically and without heat, and the voices, whether dead or alive, are rendered in the idiom they almost certainly used when alive. His speakers are characterised to a degree necessary to make them acceptable, interesting and credible people.

The Cornerstones is set in the Elysian fields, and presents as speakers, the observant spirits of Confucius, Lenin and Lincoln in conversation with three men of the allied forces killed in the war. Linklater's characters, who possess a television apparatus which enables them to see the world they have left, discuss the nature, purpose and art of government, and look ahead to the leadership of a better world by the nations they represent. They debate whether a sufficient community of interest exists within the United Nations to warrant the establishment by them of a rule of world wide law. The conclusion drawn is that given the vision, given the courage, it could be done.

This is followed in The Raft by a more specific examination of the state of Britain in wartime. Linklater, through his

speakers, poses the question "Are the people of Britain capable of serving the new world, of writing with honour, a new chapter of history?" This is debated not by characters drawn from history, but six men on a raft, in mid-Atlantic, whose ship has been sunk. Each of the five servicemen represents a different walk of life, while the other, a passenger and civilian, represents a different generation; but, as Linklater tells us, they are all united in the borderland between life and death. They ask why the people of Britain are fighting during the worst period of the war and continue to fight in the face of such great odds. The conclusion drawn is their sense of duty and pride in what they are; "... and that," says the Lieutenant, "is what takes your sailors back to sea, and soldiers into battle and greengrocers and charwomen back to their work, when their work is dangerous."

Since Britain is capable of winning the war, the characters then ask if she possesses the courage and ability to win and sustain the peace. This is agreed in the light of Britain's colonial history. Not only did Hitler underrate the British people, but even before the war the British people themselves underrated their own courage, determination and ability, both at home and in the colonies. The conversation ends with the characters' individual affirmations of a collective faith in the British people — a firm, realistic, genuine love and respect for their countrymen, not a sentimental, undirected expression of conventional patriotism.

In the third dialogue Socrates is engaged in conversation with Lincoln, Voltaire, Dr. Johnson, Beethoven and three service-

men killed in the war; one of whom, Flying Officer Arden, also appears in The Cornerstones and Rabelais Replies. The dialogue begins by emphasising the immensity of the Second World War, and after Lincoln has drawn a disturbing picture of the number of men who have lost their lives in it, Socrates asks "Why?" -- and from his question the conversation takes its name. He is not satisfied that the Allies are sufficiently conscious of their purpose and proceeds to interrogate the others in his own disturbing and relentless manner; subjecting their beliefs to the hard light of rational examination, defining their terms and rejecting those arguments which he proves redundant, in an effort to obtain a satisfactory answer to his question. This is a brilliant, lively and convincing exposition by Linklater of the Socratic method.

Socrates eventually concludes that the true cause of the Allies fighting must lie in the peace that will follow the war, although a four power rule by Britain, China, the U.S.A. and Russia is not sufficient reason in itself for wasting so many millions of lives. The Allies must continually bear in mind that they are fighting for a peace that is creative and dynamic, not idle nor static, and Socrates illustrates his point with a beautiful description of Athens when he lived there. The other characters agree, and the peace they envisage is symbolised by Beethoven's speech describing his 7th. Symphony against a background of the music -- "... that is the peace I made ... Do not think peace to be a shallow or a placid thing. It is deep and rich. It is full of movement and joy, of work and laughter and the reaching out of your hands to God ... that is the creative

trinity: desire and vision and determination."

The fourth conversation, Rabelais Replies, is a natural extension of Socrates Asks Why, in which the conclusion was drawn that the Allies were fighting to ensure that peace, a vital and progressive peace, should be established and maintained. Now Linklater poses the question "What is the best way of ensuring that such a peace is established and sufficient interest created to maintain it?"

Once again the scene is in Elysium, but this time the characters are Dean Swift, Bishop Grundtvig, Dr. Rabelais, the Archpoet, Flying Officer Arden and his brother, an army sergeant, who is given an honourable welcome to Elysium during the course of the play. The conversation opens with an argument between Arden and Dean Swift as to whether the mass of people are capable of being educated, with Swift, of course, taking the negative. Bishop Grundtvig, the founder of the Danish Folk High Schools -- "... who may be called," Linklater says, "without much exaggeration, the founder of Modern Denmark," -- joins the conversation and leads it into a discussion of the best methods to educate children and adults for peace. Swift argues that a comprehensive education for the masses must inevitably repress genius and result in a dull mediocrity, but Grundtvig firmly denies this, maintaining that it is the aim of education to foster a love and desire for learning in each individual according to his capacity, not the transference of facts from teacher to pupil followed by an examination. "To examine a pupil in what is truly dear to his heart is repellent," he adds.

The problem of the war is introduced through Arden's brother,

Peter, who had been dismissed from a school for his unconventional teaching methods. On arriving at Elysium, he is furious with himself for having virtually committed suicide in an attempt to rescue the most worthless soldier in his company, and thus leaving behind a wife and two young children. When questioned by Swift on his scale of values for placing responsibility to his country above responsibility to his family, Peter replies that one of the reasons why the allies fought was to ensure the making of a world where all children would be given shelter from tyranny and the blight of filthy doctrine, where they could live in freedom, peace and happiness.

The speakers agree that education is the key to a dynamic peace, but the means by which it can be put into effect will be the greatest problem confronting the Allies at the conclusion of the war. They go on to discuss in broad outline, the general principles of what sort of education must be given. Grundtvig, who while alive had been faced with the same problem of rebuilding and revitalising his own country after it had been torn by wars, maintains that young men and women must be prepared for a life of feeling and experience. Education must primarily concern itself with this, and not merely provide technical training on a purely utilitarian level. Children, and men and women as well, should be taught to live complete and sensible lives in whatever sphere they find themselves. They must be educated not only as individuals but as members of a community. As individuals they ought to enjoy life, as members of a community they must serve it. Therefore they should be taught to appreciate their present

situation in the perspective of what has gone before, so history must be the basis of all education.

The next essential, Rabelais adds, is language, because "They cannot make account of their feeling and experience unless they know enough words ... We ought to teach language as an instrument of pleasure." The speakers agree that above all, everything must be taught to give pleasure. This pleasure Linklater symbolises by the Archpoet, who refuses to join the conversation and hurries off singing a Medieval Drinking song, to greet the new arrivals at Elysium. "I am common flesh" he cries, "I love the warmth of a crowd." The Archpoet is the essential artist, amoral, irresponsible, respecting no values other than those of his own erratic fancy, yet vital to a community's life because he knows and can teach more of pleasure than any other person. Rabelais does not think that the Archpoet would be a good example to schools, but he nevertheless does have a vital place in society, because in flashes of inspiration he can reveal unsuspected beauty, elucidate thought and feeling and, most important, teach others to enjoy life. Even Dean Swift hesitantly admits his conversion in the face of these superior arguments -- there is some virtue in men after all, but most of them hide it.

The conversation ends with a plea by Sergeant Arden for the building of schools as a memorial to those killed in the war, instead of the customary useless statues and crosses. The other characters express their faith in the education of children as the main hope for a lasting and creative peace; and as a

means of ensuring this they agree that children should be given a Charter of Rights, assuring them shelter and food, health, joy, growth and education.

In contrast to the four conversations, The Great Ship is quite an elaborate one-hour radio play, displaying a firm construction, a quite substantial plot and the same qualities of directness and simplicity in dialogue that Linklater used to such advantage in the earlier conversations. The plot consists of two dramatic situations, the first established in the prologue, then temporarily abandoned for the second, which begins at an earlier point in time, and contains the real body of the play in a conversation between two characters, broken up and clarified at intervals by narration. This episode is developed in a straightforward manner to its natural conclusion, which ingeniously ties up with the conclusion of the prologue. Characterisation and plot are subordinated to the central dialogue which occupies most of the play. The Great Ship is a drama of ideas, but the author is no mere propagandist. Linklater has something important to say, and says it in the most direct, dramatic and entertaining manner possible.

Two narrators are used throughout the play in order to describe the scenery, carry forward the action and to comment on it. Their opening speeches give a brief, but vivid impression of the Western Desert, where the action is set and then indicate the historical background. A small group of soldiers are hiding in a trench under the blazing desert sun,

awaiting nightfall to rescue their Lieutenant and another soldier who have been injured in an engagement with some German tanks about a mile away. The two parties are in wireless communication with each other, and the plot is set in motion when the Lieutenant advises the Sergeant that three enemy tanks are advancing towards his trench.

We then hear the voices of the men in the trench as they plan to disable the advancing tanks. They succeed in disabling two, but the third halts out of range. Re-establishing contact with the Lieutenant, the Sergeant hears a strange voice on the line, hoarse but clear, and wildly fanatical, making a strong affirmation of faith and purpose:

> "...Keep safe your great ship, look to your cordage and the guns, and hold your course. We are the voyagers, and the war is the war of peace. Now in that faith, and in God's name -- fight!"

On this note of suspense and mystery, the shrill whine and explosion of shells divides the air, and the narrators take us away from the trench, back three days in time to an English Lieutenant and a Scotch Corporal who have survived the dive bombing of their armoured car while on a patrol, and now, injured but determined, they are just beginning a long, agonising trek back to their unit. It is in their dialogue during this march that the main ideas propounded in the play are discussed. Linklater avoids the danger of monotony or overwordiness by relieving the conversation with brief passages of narration, which unobtrusively impress upon the listener the physical suffering of these two people exposed to a blazing sun,

and surrounded on all sides by miles of bare, flat, desolate sand, without shelter and without water.

The jaunty optimism of Lieutenant Grenfell and Corporal Scott provides a vivid contrast with the apparent hopelessness of their situation. Their talk jumps quickly from point to point, but never loses its coherency or central thread. At times, Grenfell becomes fanciful and semi-delirious, but the phlegmatic and down to earth Scott jerks him back to reality.

Just before the war, Scott, a bootmaker, inherited a well stocked library in which he made his first excursions into literature, and he is still rather amazed at the treasures he found there. He is devoted to the Lieutenant and impervious to Grenfell's lighthearted, ironical jibes at his incompletely digested knowledge. The title of the play and its main symbol derive from Scott telling how he read and enjoyed the eight volumes of Hakluyt's Voyages and Discoveries. The Elizabethan adventurers, the Arthurian Legends, David Hume the Scottish philosopher, and the War, which Grenfell calls "The War of Peace", stand as symbols for the English spirit of determination to voyage into the unknown, to find truth and having found it, to enrich their country.

This theme is taken up by Grenfell who mentions the survival of the Arthurian legend, the best known and most persistent of all the stories of British origin. It has always been a living tale, he tells Scott, it is always growing -- "And why did it live? Because it became a story of men looking for something. The knights who never were, rose from

a table never built, to go in search of what all men desire, but none has ever seen." Scott wonders what tempted the Elizabethan men of Devon to leave "... the comfort of these green valleys and the wee towns by the rivers, and go to sea in the little tumbling ships, in the sour and stinking ships of their time." He knows it was more than greed and rapacity, for such desperate actions must have been vigorously motivated -- but unable to fully express himself, Grenfell comes to his rescue:

> Raleigh went to look for Manoa. But Manoa was more than gold, Manoa was a dream, and he knew it. Dream or vision, fantasy or faith or idea. As a people, Scott, as a nation, we're bogged down in Saxon clay and Norman greed and Celtic sloth, but there are always some of us who breed ideas, Scott, and when we climb out of the mud and follow them, we make history, Scott, we grow better than we thought, we find our strength.

Scott sees this same spirit of exploration in the face of danger as the reason driving on David Hume to pursue his own heretical views at a time in Scottish history when they could not have been more unwelcome.

Linklater never directly connects these topics to his main theme. They remain symbolic, elusive and equivocal, but take on a fuller meaning and significance as the conversation develops. Scott mentions a pibroch a friend of his used to play called "The War of Peace". "The War of Peace..." Grenfell replies, "You have no imagination whatsoever. We have lived in this infernal desert for more than a year, and you have never told me about the War of Peace."

The two men discover a Spitfire shot down in the desert and take shelter from the sun under its wing. While resting,

Grenfell's mind begins to wander and he sees a number of King Arthur's knights, their armour shining, their plumes blazing in the sun. Suddenly the vision changes to a fleet of ships, which he imagines to be those of the Elizabethan Adventurers setting out to discover unknown worlds. Again the vision changes to one Great Ship, its sails set and churning through the sea with waves breaking from its bow. Scott humours his Lieutenant, hoping the delirium will pass, but in a frenzy of excitement Grenfell stumbles into the desert from the protective wing of the aeroplane, wildly declaring his intention to go aboard. We then hear the muffled roar of gunfire, and the narrators tell us that Scott and Grenfell have come across the forward section of the patrol awaiting rescue by the small company we met earlier in the play.

Grenfell, still delirious and excited by his vision, contacts the sergeant on the wireless telephone. The roar of tanks transfers the scene to the soldiers in the trench, a few lines of the prologue are repeated, and the sergeant hears a strange voice on the 'phone. It is the voice of Grenfell delivering the message of faith and purpose we heard at the beginning of the play:

> Nothing shall prevent us. We do not yield, nor take out rest. We must find what we seek and make what is our purpose to make. This is the war of peace, which we do not fight for glory or dominion, but fair weather to continue our voyage, and our victory shall be the harbour to a land where men will seek the happiness of truth as though it were the gold of Manoa. Keep safe your great ship, look to your cordage and your guns and hold your course.

The voyage, the discovery, Manoa and the War of Peace are

now understood by the listener, who unmistakably links the fight of the Elizabethan Mariners, staking all they loved and possessed in a battle to open new horizons for the good of their country, with the Allies engaged in a struggle against the forces of tyranny to win a peace which will ensure the happiness and wellbeing of future generations.

Linklater's four dialogues and radio play were written to be produced under wartime conditions, and, apart from their intrinsic literary value, they showed the importance of simplicity in approach and treatment. Linklater does not employ a large vocabulary, but he possesses a naturally rhythmic ear and a genuine mastery of words. Although analytical in their approach to each theme, the conversations are carried on in language that is primarily descriptive, so the author's intentions are never in danger of being misunderstood. Linklater prefers compound to complex constructions, and this frequently imbues the sentences with an almost childish simplicity and semi-stylised unnaturalness. For example, this passage in The Raft:

> Passenger: Was your friend a sailor?
>
> Gunner: No, he was in the Cameron Highlanders. He was my cousin as well as being my friend and he joined the Camerons nearly six years ago, because that was the regiment his father, my uncle, used to be in. My cousin was killed on the mountains that rise in front of Keren. It was a long battle there, and Andrew, my cousin, was afraid nearly all the time.

The dialogue is remarkably flexible, capable of wide variation in rhythm, tempo and tone. At times it becomes a kind of prose poetry, as in the Lieutenant's speech from The Raft:

> Lieutenant: Have you seen the fathom high soldiers of Australia, leather skinned, swaggering, talking as though they had never breathed anything less than a gale snatched out of the sky, their boots striking the ground as if earth were a ball for their play?

One of the loveliest sustained passages in all five conversations is Socrates' description of the Athens he knew, loved and fought for in the 5th. Century, B.C. Quiet, dignified and restrained, its emotional sincerity has a majestic ring that holds the other characters, and most certainly the listener, completely under Socrates' spell. Linklater is also capable of the rhetorical, yet unpompous and unsentimental, patriotism of Grenfell's speech which concludes The Great Ship; while at the other extreme is the down to earth aggressiveness of the tough American sergeant telling Socrates and Voltaire exactly what he thinks of their ideas:

> Sergeant: If you don't believe that Britain and the United States are in this Goddamned war for a good reason, then nothing I can say will make any difference. Either you know or you don't know and that's all there is to it.

None of the speakers is subjected to deep, psychological analysis, yet they all reveal themselves as quite credible

human beings through Linklater's complete understanding of their individual ways of thought and feeling, in relation to those of the times in which each lived. Socrates is perhaps his most engaging creation, although his character is only suggested through an aggressive and relentless questioning, a nimble mind quick to pin-point a weakness in another's argument and a deeply emotional patriotism revealed in the long speech about the city he loved. Frequently the speakers refer to their own particular situation when alive, but Linklater brings them closer to the experience of a modern audience by allowing them to adapt their view-points to fit in with modern conditions, and to willingly concede in face of a superior argument. In this way he succeeds in lifting a man out of history, placing him in a deliberately fabricated situation, and convincing the listener that he is still the same person unchanged in either his mental or emotional outlook.

Linklater is content to leave much of the characters' individuality to the producer and actors, but their task is made easier because in each conversation there are men who differ widely in voice quality, manner and idiom of speech. Dr. Johnson's speeches show a keen appreciation of Boswell and a remarkable control of language:

> Dr. Johnson: You are wrong, Sir. The perpetual conflict between Passion and Reason, extending over the whole terrestial surface of the globe, engages all mankind.

Linklater instructs his producer and actor that Dr. Johnson's speech "... is still explosive with puffing and grunting" and leaves the rest to them. It is not difficult to imagine a voice

suited to the description of Voltaire as "... a pair of eyes, a long thin nose and a grin below a powdered wig." The other characters in Socrates Asks Why are equally well differentiated. Lincoln would require a slight Southern American drawl to contrast him with the more pronounced, aggressive accent of the Sergeant. For Beethoven, one would imagine a deep, gruff, but musical voice with a German accent -- which leaves a variety of choices for Socrates. "A shortish, thickset man, bearded, with a big mouth, and eyes like a bull, a snub nose with great nostrils" -- rather suggests a rich, vibrant quality, forceful and quick, but a little careless in pronunciation. Thus the two extras, Arden, a refined Englishman and the Scotch Piper, are also quite unique. This lively contrast in character through voice quality not only helps balance the sustained effort necessary to follow the argument, but allows the immediate recognition of each speaker. The same contrast is present in the other dialogues, except The Raft where six Englishmen are brought together, not differing overmuch in age or background. The producer must be on his mettle here, to surmount an obvious weakness in the play.

Characterisation in The Great Ship goes a little deeper, but is still subordinate to the content of the dialogue. In the opening scene, Linklater briefly shows us the differing reactions of a group of men assigned to a dangerous task by their sergeant, and a little later we hear how their behaviour changes when immediately confronted by danger. Grenfell and Scott are revealed by their attitude to what they believe is

a hopeless situation, but for the purposes of the play, what they are is of less importance than what they say.

The major difference between The Great Ship and the other conversations is that it possesses a plot; there is not a continuous story line but the characters are shown in real, intelligible, dramatic situations. In the conversations, Linklater retains his dramatic integrity by substituting intellectual argument for plot, and suggesting a quality of action by the earthy reality of some characters who react emotionally rather than philosophically to the arguments they meet. Arden's brother, Peter, is furious with himself when he joins the speakers in Rabelais Replies and takes a good while to calm down. The American Sergeant is mistrustful of Socrates' sophisticated questions and bursts out indignantly:

> Sergeant: Now listen! I'm an American citizen, and as such I'm entitled to say exactly what I please about any Senator or Congressman that ever went to Washington. But when my country gets in a jam, I don't lie down and squeal, I start shooting. And why? Because I'm a man and not a rat, that's why!

The intellectual tension is generously relieved by Linklater's lighthearted but good natured sense of humour. Socrates and Voltaire relentlessly question the Sergeant, and somewhat perturbed, he loses his temper and turns on them both:

> Sergeant: If you two guys went around some American city asking questions like that just for the hell of it, you'd wake up some morning cold and stiff and wonder

what had hit you.

Socrates: That is almost exactly what did happen to me a long time ago.

In the same conversation Dr. Johnson soberly exclaims:

Dr. Johnson: I used to hate an American almost as deeply as I hated a Whig. But that, sir, may have been due to ignorance. Since my arrival here, I have changed my mind in several particulars. I have even lost some of my animosity to the Whig dogs, because one doesn't meet them here...

Eric Linklater, like many other writers of his time, found inspiration for his radio work in the moral and political problems facing the allies in the midst of war, but few writers were able to analyse and present them in such a direct, simple, intelligent and immediately comprehensible way. His radio plays must occupy a high place amongst all the literature of the war. The conversations are written with wisdom, a quiet wit and humanity. The principal speakers find no need to become heated in their opinions. Because they have an eternity in which to argue, they approach each subject as reasonable, goodnatured human beings. They are generous in their reception of differing opinions and united in their goodwill to mankind. As one reviewer said of The Cornerstones "An uncommonly civilized book." (2) — a comment which not only defines their precise quality, but one which Linklater himself would thoroughly appreciate, for another of the Conversations is dedicated to James Bridie — "a civilized man."(3)

iii.
Dorothy Sayers.

In February, 1940, Dr. J.W. Welch, Director of Religious Broadcasting for the BBC, wrote to Dorothy Sayers asking her to write a series of plays on the Life of our Lord, in the light of her success with a nativity play for radio, He That Should Come, in 1938. In reply Miss Sayers listed three conditions. Firstly, she wished to introduce the character of Jesus, prohibited from the visual stage by the Lord Chamberlain. Secondly, she wanted to use the same realism as in her previous radio play; and thirdly, the plays had to be in modern speech. Dr. Welch replied that "... these conditions were not only acceptable but exactly what we wanted and had hoped for."(4)

Miss Sayers wrote the plays during 1940 and 1941, taking immense pains, Dr. Welch says, "over the study and handling of her sources."(p.9.) Five were completed by December, 1941, and the first was scheduled for broadcast on the Sunday before Christmas, 1941. Following a press conference at which she advanced some details of the methods used in writing the plays, a storm of criticism broke on both Miss Sayers and the BBC. Newspapers headlined the sensational features of the project, some inaccurately, one even falsely, with the result that many people, ignorant of the facts concerning the plays, accused Miss Sayers and the Religious Broadcasting Department of irreverence, blasphemy and vulgarity. The Corporation could

not ignore this criticism, despite the fact that all denominations were represented in the Department concerned, and all had approved of the five scripts then completed. Copies of them were then sent to the BBC Central Religious Advisory Committee before the first broadcast was due, but, with the exception of one "doubtful", their opinion only confirmed that of the BBC itself. "In face of such approval, from recognised leaders of the main Christian confessions in this country, the Corporation felt justified in broadcasting the first play."(p.10.)

The remaining plays were read by the Archbishop of York, then Chairman of the Religious Advisory Committee, who could request any alterations he wished to be made. Following the first broadcast -- and the controversy had stirred up a tremendous public interest in it -- a great volume of approval was forthcoming from listeners, and the success of the remaining plays was assured.

The Man Born to be King is a cycle of twelve dramas about the life and teaching of Christ, each one of approximately forty-five minutes duration. They were produced by Val Gielgud and broadcast at monthly intervals from December, 1941 to October, 1942, later repeated at shorter intervals during Lent and Holy Week, 1943.

In an introduction to the published edition of the plays, Miss Sayers discusses some of the problems she met with in adapting for a modern radio audience what is often called the greatest story in the world. She was presented with a set of conditions, literally unique and of great technical complexity, because

there were no modern precedents to guide her approach, or to prepare the minds and attitude of critics or audience. Her story, like the Greek tragic stories, was well known, but she did not have such scope for the treatment of character as the Greek dramatists, who were not rivetted to a sacred Book, nor restricted by a religion so dogmatic as Christianity.

Miss Sayers set out to readjust for the radio public the false and often misleading perspective which surrounds the social, political and human aspects of the life and time of Jesus. First and foremost, her intention was to tell a story, not to point a moral; to show forth real people taking part in actual events which really happened within a definite span of time. Her aim was not to give a glorified divinity lesson, but a good piece of theatre, and if successful, the theology would emerge undistorted from the dramatic presentation of the story and not constitute an end which the drama was deliberately intended to exemplify.

Miss Sayers wisely chose to use a modern idiom throughout, both in speech and manners, as an aid to breaking through the easy complacency with which many people today regard the events of Jesus' life, and to show them in their terrible and startling reality. She wanted to destroy "the stained-glass-window" aura surrounding the characters, and reveal them as human beings. She wrote "Technically, the swiftest way to produce the desirable sense of shock, is the use in drama of modern speech and a determined historical realism about the characters."(5) Her approach is always that of a craftsman setting out to show forth

truth from the dramatic, not the theological, point of view. "As drama, these plays stand or fall." (p.20.)

The author goes on to explain "In presenting this material dramatically, it was necessary always to bear in mind the conditions imposed by the medium."(p.20.) She was required to present the story of Jesus, as a complete sequence of dramatic events, in a number of separate episodes to be broadcast at monthly intervals. Each episode had to fit into the logical development of the whole scheme. Character and plot structure had to be consistent throughout, otherwise both audience and actors would be disconcerted. Yet each episode had to be a separate, artistic unit or there would be no "plays" at all, only a glorified serial. Miss Sayers achieved all these aims with remarkable success. She possessed the necessary prerequisites for such an undertaking -- her faith is firm and undogmatic, she is evidently a classical scholar of great erudition, using her own translations from the original Greek of the Gospels, and there is an intelligent theological understanding in her approach to the whole series.

With many radio plays, the printed version can give only a sketchy idea of the quality of the broadcast production, but The Man Born to be King in book form is a positive help because the plays can be read and judged as a whole, which the monthly intervals of the original performances made difficult. The two most outstanding characteristics of the series are Miss Sayers' craftsmanship and power of characterisation.

In her craftsmanship are to be found both the strength and

weakness of the plays; the strength in the methods by which Miss Sayers transforms four sketchy, often unchronological and even contradictory, Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus into a coherent, dramatic pattern worked out by human characters in believable and sometimes familiar situations; the weakness in Miss Sayers attempt to recreate the character of Judas and to augment by her own invention, the motivation for his betrayal of Jesus, about which little information is given in the New Testament.

Each play is built around some central incident, sometimes an expansion of its Gospel version. This is related to the subsidiary incidents in the life of Christ by a continuous background of contemporary events and contemporary reactions to the main story, by taking liberties with the Gospel texts, by the omission and occasional transposition of certain episodes, and the provision of bridges to link the incidents into a continuous pattern. This pattern is strengthened by the introduction of an ideological conflict, implicit in the first play and becoming more explicit through the series. The Christian theological argument which emerges quite naturally from the Gospel stories, is contrasted with contemporary political ideas, both Jewish and Roman, injected into the story by Miss Sayers herself. Thus the Jewish search for a revolutionary national Saviour is set against the claims made by Jesus and his disciples that He is the Messiah; questions of national independence and world government, of decentralised and centralised power, arise from the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Hebrew Kingdom;

power politics and the derivation of authority is argued between representatives of God and Caesar. Miss Sayers' enlargement of the Roman element throws the story of Jesus into a well-balanced historical perspective. The enormous might and power of the Roman Imperium could rarely be ignored by the people who live in Judaea at that time in the conduct of their every-day lives. Apart from Pilate and the two Herods, who played a decisive part in the Gospel stories, the Roman element is centred in the character of Proclus, the Centurion. He is introduced in the first play as a man of twenty-eight, and by identifying him with the Gospel centurion whose servant was healed by Jesus and with the believing Centurion at the Crucifixion, Miss Sayers has a natural mouthpiece for the ordinary Roman attitude to both the theme and the plot.

The dramatic structure of the series is tightened by several other identifications of characters and incidents. For instance, Mary Magdalen becomes Mary of Bethany and the woman who was a sinner in Luke VII -- a technique which eliminates many of the unimportant minor characters who appear in the Gospel stories. The Last Supper is identified with the Feast of the Passover, cementing the plot into a more dramatic form. By using the same minor characters in many situations, by changing the context of many of Jesus' parables and sayings, the four Gospel stories are broken down into a clear, logical and vivid dramatic line, consisting of an introduction (The Nativity Play and John the Baptist); development (The Period of the Ministry); climax (The Betrayal and the Trial); and resolution (The Resurrection).

Miss Sayers gives two reasons for the choice of modern language. There is no rational justification for preferring the language and style of James VI's reign -- its unfamiliarity and distant quality have contributed largely to the removal of the story of Jesus and his life further away from reality; and to use obsolete forms of speech would make the characters in the story appear ancient to themselves. The dialogue ranges from the current colloquialism of the more illiterate disciples ("My word this is exciting," says James on the Mount of Olives), to the brief, dignified, narration of the Evangelist, the inspired utterances of Jesus' teaching, the lyrical quality of the women's sorrow at the Crucifixion, and the angels' restrained, stylised pronouncements at the end of the last play. Throughout the series, the dialogue never lapses into sentimentality or banality, despite the fact that the intimate and often highly emotional relationship between Jesus and his disciples frequently lays the trap wide open.

Miss Sayers' versatility in characterisation is perhaps the most remarkable feature of The Man Born to be King. Each play has a "speaking" cast of over twenty (and most of them have from thirty and thirty-seven), yet each character we hear, from the most highly developed portraits of Judas and John to the countless "bit-parts" such as the wedding guests, is equally well defined and imbued with a separate and distinct life of his own. Miss Sayers avoids confusion by characterising in full only a small number of the main persons in the Gospel story. Of the

disciples, Judas, John and Peter are the only dynamic characters who appear in every play after their introduction; Mathew and James are not developed so extensively; Philip, a brief but vivid study, figures largely in one play only; Doubting Thomas establishes himself in a very few lines; while the remaining disciples, Andrew, Simon, Nathanael, James the Less and Jude have very little to say and rarely appear in company with the others. The number of principal characters in each play is kept at a minimum; Jesus, a few disciples and when necessary one or two of the more fully developed antagonists-- Caiaphas, Herod or Pilate. The listener is rarely at a loss to know who is speaking, because the characters nearly always appear as groups in different contexts -- the Disciples, the Sanhedrim and the Romans. The number of persons speaking within a group is kept as small as possible, and whenever a new character appears the listener is always forewarned by the dialogue.

The countless subsidiary persons are no more than short, sharp sketches or brightly caricatured voices, but they have one quality in common -- they all come to life as real human beings, because they are familiar types we still meet today -- the woman at the feast who asks with a nervous giggle "Do tell me Lazarus -- I hope I'm not being impertinent -- but what does it feel like to be dead?"; the Sadducee with the manners of a smart undergraduate who attempts to make Jesus look foolish and ends up looking foolish himself; the various types of Temple Elders, reactionary, respectable, impervious to new ideas, still to be found on many Parish Church Councils today; and a host of others

who briefly establish themselves in a few lines and then are heard no more.

Of the disciples not so important in the drama, Philip is the most engaging. Unaffected and humble, he is an extremely nice young man. In his "big scene" we hear him amazed at his own incredible power, but physically exhausted by the immense effort of performing miracles. Andrew is little more than a sketch — kind, dependable but unimaginative, and inclined to be cautious and sceptical in everything he does. Thomas is quickly revealed as a very selfconscious man, afraid of being made to look foolish, faithful in the face of physical danger, but of an extremely pessimistic disposition. In the final play he has one of the most dramatic moments in the whole series. Thomas insists that he will not be convinced of Jesus' resurrection until he has seen Him with his own eyes. Jesus confronts him and says quietly "Come here Thomas. Put out your finger and feel my hands. Reach out your hand and thrust it into my side. And doubt no longer but believe." And the man who has questioned everything, the man who has demanded unequivocal proof of all that he believes, replies with absolute sincerity "You are my Lord and my God." — the one unqualified statement of Jesus' divinity in the whole Gospel.

Mathew, the common little publican, is Miss Sayers' most lovable creation. "He is as vulgar a little commercial Jew as ever walked White Chapel," she says, "and I should play him with a frank Cockney accent."(p.113.) After a sordid existence

fleecing his countrymen in deference to Rome and lining his own pockets in the process, Mathew is in an ecstacy of joy when accepted into the friendship, love and respect of the disciples. Sincere, unselfconscious and simple, he has an implicit, unquestioning faith in Jesus. When the disciples need a treasurer, he implores Jesus not to appoint him. "I was brought up bad, you see -- and I've repented; but if I was to feel the silver in my fingers again, I wouldn't answer for myself. Don't try me too hard, Lord. Don't now. I'm only a beginner." He has a bright, cheery, unconquerable optimism of a brand new Salvation Army convert. "We're going up to Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Heaven's coming to earth, and everything is going to be fine!"

John is Jesus' favourite disciple and confidant. Intelligent, eager and sympathetic, he is blindly devoted to his Master through an intuitive apprehension of some supernatural quality in Him. Obscure to begin with, his faith becomes clearer to himself as the series progresses. At first he is quite young -- impulsive, excitable and sensitive -- but as he grows older his behaviour matures, though his impulsiveness remains. John is warmly attached to his older brother James, in whom he finds comfort when things go wrong and to whom he acts as guide and adviser when theological problems crop up. John and Peter are the most sensitively drawn and fully developed of the disciples. Peter, like John, is intelligent and warm and somewhat impulsive, but he possesses more self confidence and strength. We hear him suddenly blundering into error, realising his mistake, then

just as quickly becoming humble and repentant. Loudly and positively he asserts that he would never disown Jesus, but when the time comes and circumstances are against him, he does, three times. But his sincerity and the genuineness of his repentance save him from despair. Judas Iscariot, the remaining disciple, is best discussed separately because the whole plot structure of The Man Born to be King is centred around him and his associate, Baruch.

The character of Jesus presented a major difficulty to Miss Sayers, and if she did not succeed in making him the dynamic, intellectually and physically vigorous hero demanded by the stormy plot of the Gospel story, it was not altogether her fault. In her Introduction, she sternly banishes the insipid Christ of vulgar tradition, the "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild". She recognised that the key to this Hero's character is perfect goodness and once you try to portray that in a play, it not only allows next to no development, but it does not engage the sympathy of an audience. Therefore she had to make some compensation. The solution, as she saw it, was to make Jesus' goodness dynamic not static. "He was a lively person. He excited people. Wherever He went He brought not peace but a sword, and fire in the earth; that is why they killed Him. He said surprising things, in language ranging from the loftiest poetry to the most lucid narrative and the raciest repartee." (p.26.) In this respect the actor playing Jesus is offered some histrionic scope in His spirited sermons, His verbal duels with hecklers, His hounding out the business men from the temple,

but for the most part the role is in a very minor key and depends mainly upon subtle changes of mood and tone. If well chosen, the leading actor can create a part for himself within a limited range. Jesus is the central character not so much from what he says and does, but in consequence of the listeners' preconceived attitude to Him as Christ.

This Hero's fate is brought about not by traits in his own character, but results from the unfortunate impression he created in the most powerful sectors of Jewish society. The conflict goes on largely outside Himself. He is not even in a position to do anything positive to save Judas from rushing headlong into damnation, because, as Miss Sayers tells us, man's will is free and God's will must be fulfilled. Nor is He able to engage in open conflict with the enemy in the camp. Altogether the Hero is in an unfortunate position. G.W. Stonier accuses Miss Sayers of ignoring Jesus' "...cryptic aloofness and sudden fits of anger."(6) This criticism is hardly justified because Stonier bases his argument on biblical, not dramatic grounds. Miss Sayers' task was to judiciously select her material from the sources available and to recreate a dramatic entity as near as possible to the spirit of the original. She did not select the situations in which these two qualities were exemplified. Against this it can be argued on dramatic grounds, that the addition of these qualities would have led to a more fully developed central character. However, Miss Sayers does make Jesus humanly approachable, emphasising his practical and humourous side, and this in itself is a major achievement, because in the

circumstances there is not much more she could have done.

The "antagonistic" characters, Herod, Pilate, Proclus and Caiaphas, are sharply defined as human beings and correctly interpreted in their historical capacities. Herod appears in the first play only, where he is by far the most elaborate character. Miss Sayers refuses to accept the traditional conception of him as a half-crazed monster, a loathsome enemy of God, because, she says, he "... was not called Herod the Great for nothing..." History records him as a soldier of fortune and a political genius. He kept Judaea, the trouble spot of the Roman Empire, at peace for thirty years after it had been torn apart by religious factions, and he left it reasonably happy and very prosperous. In this play he is seventy years old, dying of a painful disease and mentally broken after a private life riddled with jealousy, suspicion and bloodshed. He is fighting to keep Judaea independent, and this is why he reacts so violently to news of a Jewish Messiah. He intends to keep order at all costs, but the methods he uses, although politically justifiable, are those of a man decaying both physically and mentally. We can sympathise with his motives, but not with the way he goes about doing things.

Pontius Pilate is portrayed as an ambitious, provincial Governor with a strong sense of duty, terrified at any possibility of a disturbance. He is harsh, overbearing and obstinate, but frightened of Caesar, with whom he has already been in trouble for his tactless dealing with the people he governs and despises. He is devoted to his wife and her ominous note to him just before

the trial of Jesus immediately puts him on the alert. He possesses the Roman sense of justice and quickly detects the illegalities by which Caiaphas hopes to get the Prisoner tried, condemned and executed with the minimum delay. When Pilate is forced by Caiaphas to admit that by releasing Jesus, who claims to be King of the Jews, he would be disloyal to Caesar, he has neither the force of character nor the self confidence to hold out for justice in the presence of his soldiers and an antagonistic mob. He can afford no more trouble with Caesar or his career would be at an end, so rather than risk it, he washes his hands of the whole business.

Although Herod and Pilate are seen in the perspective of their political and personal history, they are essentially static characters. In contrast, Proclus, the Roman Centurion, is a dynamic character, changing in outlook and ideas as the series progresses. He appears in the first play as a mature and well disciplined legionary of twenty-eight, who has taken service in Judaea as a Captain in Herod's personal bodyguard. He is thoroughly Roman in his sense of justice, decency and law, and is contemptuous of all non-Romans, especially Orientals. The next time we hear from him, he has considerably mellowed; still a decent, plain, practical man, but much older and more experienced. He is able to respect the Jews as human beings, a little bit odd, but entitled to hold their own views and to practise their own way of life without religious interference by Rome. When Jesus heals his "batman", Proclus apprehends in Him something more than mortal, something he cannot define, but

which he feels is much the same as that quality which distinguishes his own gods from men. By the final play this apprehension has become more explicit, and Proclus, detailed against his will to guard Calvary, makes a more positive affirmation of his belief.

Caiaphas, the Chief Priest, is the "arch-villain" of the piece. Although his portrait is deliberately painted in dark tones, and the listener has little sympathy for him, Caiaphas does not commit evil for evil's sake. He is the perfect ecclesiastical politician, appointed by Rome to keep his people in a peaceful, religious frame of mind. He is smooth, plausible, insinuating and unscrupulous — a thoroughly nasty piece of work. In his conduct of the trial and prosecution of Jesus, Caiaphas shows himself to be an intelligent and capable organiser, quick to grasp all the essentials of a situation. He immediately puts his finger on Pilate's weakness, drives his own argument home with relentless efficiency and thus wins the case. In the eleventh play, when for the first and only time he is completely sincere, he shows his thorough grasp of contemporary politics by pointing out the central weakness of Jewry. The Jewish nation, he says, is a small racial and political group struggling to maintain its independence in the Age of Empire. If it is to continue to exist in peace, order and security, it must give up struggling and come to terms with Rome, which means, in effect, accepting Rome's terms.

In the final play, still unscrupulous, sarcastic and menacing, he realises his own life has been wasted in a struggle to avoid the inevitable. But he still fights to keep the Sanhedrim in

order, and with diabolical coolness, proposes to circulate a completely false story to cover up the facts of the Resurrection. But Caiaphas knows he is beaten, because even as he gives the orders, rumours are already flying through Jerusalem that will undermine and eventually destroy his life's work.

The plot structure of The Man Born to be King is centred on the characterisation of Judas and the character of Baruch the Zealot, both of which are Miss Sayers own creation, bearing slight relation to the facts related in the four Gospel stories. In the author's own words they constitute "... the mainspring of the plot machinery". (p.30.)

In her characterisation of Judas Iscariot, Miss Sayers was faced with three problems: we are told little or nothing about him in the New Testament; he had to be provided with a convincing motive for betraying his Master; and some readjustment had to be made of his personal relationship with Jesus. Thus, the crisis of the action depended upon the characterisation of Judas. "One thing is certain:" the author tells us, "he cannot have been the creeping, crawling, patently worthless villain that some simple-minded people would like to make out; that would be to cast too great a slur upon the brains or the character of Jesus."(p.30.) Not only would it have been stupid of Jesus to have accepted such a man as a disciple, but it would have been grossly immoral of His to allow Judas from the start to rush headlong into damnation unhindered and unaided. Such inconsistencies in the character of Jesus would become all the more glaring in a drama.

To solve this problem, Miss Sayers sees Judas as the most intelligent, imaginative and practical of all the disciples. He is essentially an intellectual idealist, quick to grasp the meaning of Jesus' allusive and parabolic teaching; the first to understand the political possibilities of the Kingdom; the first and only one to realise the necessity of Jesus' death; and the theology of "Purgation through suffering." He is a passionately sincere man, activated by the worthiest of motives, but, according to Miss Sayers, his faith is rooted too firmly in reason and he is beset by an overweening intellectual pride. As Baruch says of him:

> He has a subtle mind, and would see through any crude attempts to corrupt him. But he may be led into deceiving himself with specious arguments. That is the weakness of all clever people. Intellectual dishonesty springing from intellectual pride — the sin by which Adam fell.

Thus Miss Sayers establishes Judas as a brilliant thinker, an imaginative idealist, who could quite conceivably be led into betraying Jesus, if rationally convinced that it was right to do so.

Once the character of Judas had been revealed and the precarious nature of his relationship to Jesus worked out, it remained to set up the machinery which would produce an acceptable motive for the betrayal. Miss Sayers attempts to do this by imposing upon the Gospel story a sub-plot of her own invention — the political intrigue of Baruch. She then provides continuity of plot by linking the intrigue to the character of Judas.

Baruch is the leader of the Zealot Party, a secret organisation which believed that the duty of every Jew was to fight for national autonomy. His Messiah is the militant revolutionary, who will lead the Jews to independence through force of arms. Baruch commands a powerful army of a thousand men, living in the country around Jerusalem and waging a campaign of assassination and terrorism not only against the Romans, but against the loyal Jews who do not subscribe to the Zealot ideals. In the fourth play Baruch comes into contact with Judas and begins to undermine his faith. It is Judas' fear that Jesus should succumb to the temptation of becoming Baruch's sort of Messiah that provides the motivation for the betrayal. Judas turns against his Master only when he believes Jesus is betraying His heavenly mission in a search for political power.

The central weakness of The Man Born to be King lies in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the hinge on which the crisis of the story turns. Now Judas, according to the play, is an intellectual, therefore he must possess a greater potentiality for doing either good or evil than the other disciples, and a greater freedom of choice between the two. But Judas' betrayal of his Master does not depend upon free choice; it depends upon a series of misconceptions, even coincidences, involving Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a horse or an ass, and Judas' misinterpretation of several chance remarks made by other characters. He suicides after discovering these terrible mistakes.

In a prefatory note to the eighth play, Miss Sayers explains

that the mysterious readiness of the ass for the entry into Jerusalem presented a major puzzle. She refuses to allow Jesus to consciously fulfil an ancient prophecy by secretly arranging beforehand to have the ass ready, so Baruch, who is hiding in the hills with his army, sends a messenger to Jesus, saying that he has a horse ready for the journey if He wishes to enter as a military leader, an ass if He prefers to enter in peace. Judas intercepts the messenger, misinterprets the message, thus confirming his fears. He rushes off to the Chief Priest and arranges to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. In the following play Judas again misinterprets a few chance remarks made by Jesus and John, which lead him to believe the military coup will take place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Again he rushes off to Caiaphas, momentarily fears he could be wrong, but intellectual pride gets the better of him and he resolves to go ahead and deliver his Master into the hands of the Sanhedrim. When Judas discovers that he has allowed both Baruch and Caiaphas to use him as a tool for the pursuit of their own ends, he commits suicide, thus fulfilling the scriptures. Miss Sayers arranges the whole course of events to mislead Judas. She allows him to jump to a quick series of conclusions, to make a vital decision in a time of intense mental stress, and she justifies his actions by saying "Life is like that".(p.208.)

The fundamental flaw in the characterisation of Judas lies in Miss Sayers' lack of clarity in her own attitude to him. She makes him an intellectual, a man whose beliefs rest on a

rational assessment of facts, and then accuses him of the sin of "disbelief", of not having faith in Jesus, by which she means the "childlike trust in a person" of John and Matthew.(p.208.) The two just don't go together. Either Judas was far more stupid to begin with than Miss Sayers makes out, or he would not have made the incredible blunders attributed to him. Dramatically, Judas is the most important character in The Man Born to be King, but Miss Sayers deliberately distorts his motions in order to fit them into a manufactured political intrigue, and then turns the whole crisis of her drama about their unconvincing relationship.

Considering the plays individually, only three of the twelve really suffer from this defect — principally the eighth, Royal Progress, which is concerned with the Entry into Jerusalem and exhibits the inconsistency more obviously than the others. In the ninth play Judas misinterprets the statements of John and Jesus; in the tenth he commits suicide after a violent attack of conscience. As far as Judas is concerned, the preceding plays deal quite legitimately with his fears that Jesus may become a political Messiah.

The first play in the series, Kings in Judaea, is a neatly constructed little Nativity play in itself; at the same time unobtrusively setting the political and religious scene for all the events which are to follow. It is built around the aged and dying Herod, who, after keeping Judaea at peace for over thirty years, sees unmistakable signs of his work being undone by the rumour of a Jewish Messiah. The nativity story is really

subordinated to this theme. We hear very little about the child Jesus except during the homage of the three wise Kings. The Magi themselves are of distinctive character and temperament -- the individual semi-stylised imagery of their speeches representing the three facets of wisdom: mind, body and spirit. The climax is reached with the Jewish mob tearing down the Roman Eagle from their temple, and the play ends on a note of foreboding as Herod orders the murder of all male children of less than two years old.

One of the most important, but least conspicuous parts in The Man Born to be King, is the Evangelist, whose function is that of a narrator. He opens and closes each play, telescopes the less important events, and provides vital clues to the plot or links between episodes, with brief but lucid passages in a prose that is very close to the authorised version of the Bible in its restrained but moving dignity. Throughout the series he is used with great economy and effectiveness, often becoming a startling anticlimax to a play by describing, in a few well chosen words, a violent or surprising action, which, if presented dramatically would have destroyed the balance of the play.

The second play, The King's Herald, is mainly concerned with John the Baptist, preaching and baptising as he prepares the way for Jesus. John and his disciples recognise for the first time some inspiring yet undefined quality in Jesus that eventually leads them into believing he is the Messiah. The scene in which John recognises this in his cousin Jesus, is handled with

a quiet and sincere effectiveness.

A Certain Nobleman introduces the first miracles — the turning of wine into water at the marriage feast in Cana, and the healing of the nobleman's son. The two incidents are linked by identifying the nobleman with the honoured guest at the wedding. The most moving sequence of the play is that in which Mary realises what her Son's vocation means in practice: the human mother, saddened yet gladdened by her Son's divine power.

The internal structure of The Heirs to the Kingdom is not explicit, as it is built around three distinct elements: the acceptance of Judas as a disciple with some revelation of his character, the strengthening of the priestly opposition to Jesus, and the healing of the Centurion's servant. The first note of disaster is struck when the Evangelist at the end announces the murder of John the Baptist.

As a unit in the overall scheme, the play develops the emerging split into two camps of the friends and enemies of Jesus. On the one hand the disciples, eager, enthusiastic and excited, together with the Jewish people slowly awakening to the fact that Jesus is their Messiah; opposing them, the Jewish and Roman authorities arguing amongst themselves, but agreeing on one point — their antagonism to Jesus.

The fifth play, The Bread of Heaven, is composed of two halves — the miracle of the loaves and fishes, closely followed by Jesus' refusal to accept the crown offered him by the people to become their version of a militant revolutionary and political Messiah. The second half deals with the miracles

of healing performed by the disciples on their travels. Judas and Philip travel together. Significantly, only Philip, the youngest and most credulous disciple, is able to perform miracles; not Judas because he lacks faith. Miss Sayers wisely chose to emphasise the human aspects of this Divine power, and in a warmly intimate scene, Philip, physically exhausted by the effort, relates his experiences to Judas.

The Feast of the Tabernacle also consists of two parts, each composed of a series of short sequences leading up to a Revelation of Jesus' godhead. The play further develops the character of Jesus as a dialectician, an aggressive and convincing arguer who becomes grimmer and more determined as the opposition solidifies.

The Light and the Life is built around an emotional or atmospheric framework. It begins in the serenity and peace of Lazarus' home with the gentle humour in the scenes with Jacob, the blind man Jesus cures. An ominous note is struck at the beginning of the second half when the brief but peaceful sojourn in the Trans Jordan comes suddenly to an end. The disciples worry about Judas who discloses in a sudden outburst that his faith is shattered, and there are suggestions of background plotting. The play ends with the wailing of mourners and Jesus' startling, even horrifying, challenge to the crowd by raising Lazarus from the dead.

The play is one of the best in the series. The framework emerges quite clearly and holds the sequences firmly in place. The final scene is most effective without being melodramatic,

while the episodes with Jacob are sharply characterised and written with warmth and understanding. Jacob is driven from home after Jesus has cured him because his parents believe it will anger the priests, and being respectable people they don't want any trouble. Jacob accepts his fate quite readily and goes off in an ecstasy of joy at being able to see again.

The crisis of the action occurs in the eighth play, Royal Progress, which describes the events leading up to the Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Its key point is Judas' decision to betray his Master, which turns out to be an ingenious trick of the plot and not a conscious choice between two alternatives; therefore the play is the weakest and least satisfactory of the series.

The real focal point lies in the ninth play, The King's Supper, because the theme and plot running through all the previous plays lead up to the Institution and the Betrayal. Miss Sayers emphasises the importance of these two episodes by introducing many echoes, associations and reminiscences of remarks and events, which took place earlier in the series.

The dramatisation of the Last Supper, for which the chronology of John's gospel is disregarded to allow its amalgamation with the Jewish Passover, is a triumph of dramatic craftsmanship. Not only is the order of the feast described and explained within the action, but the spiritual significance of the ceremony is implicit in the warmth and informality of the human relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The reaction of the disciples to Jesus' astonishing announcement "This is my body," is set in

an appropriate personal and historical perspective. Instead of the complacent acceptance with which the majority of modern churchgoers regard this symbolic phrase, it comes to the disciples as a violent shock and they can only feel bewilderment and fear. Thomas, unsatisfied with Jesus' allegorical statements, demands an explanation, and through it comes naturally but forcefully the spiritual meaning of the Sacrament.

The tenth play, The Princes of this World, describes the High Priest's attempts to have Jesus condemned to death quickly but illegally, and the trial before Pontius Pilate. In it Miss Sayers met two difficulties in technique, one of which she did not successfully overcome. The central character says little or nothing. In a stage play this can be very effective, because the leading actor can remain the centre of an audience's attention by his physical bearing and by the reaction of other characters to him. The first of these is obviously impossible in radio, so Miss Sayers has to rely upon the other characters making frequent allusions to the bearing and appearance of Jesus throughout the trial, and in the short scene with Herod she quite legitimately dispenses with him altogether. Although the listener is warned well beforehand when Jesus is about to speak, the trial is not dramatically sound, because in His most vital scene, the hero remains a negative character. It is not really the fault of the playwright, because there is hardly any alternative method for dramatising one of the most difficult episodes in the Gospels.

The second difficulty is the crowd. Its reactions to

certain speeches during the Trial are vitally important to the play, yet it cannot be present the whole time. Miss Sayers leads us to imagine, by the dialogue and her "microphone" directions, that the Trial is taking place in a room curtained off from a balcony overlooking the street, where the characters go to address the crowd when necessary. Thus she avoids the danger of the crowd noises becoming oppressive and meaningless.

The austere restraint of the Trial is contrasted with the logitimately melodramatic scenes which mark the end of Judas. In a casual meeting at Jerusalem, Baruch the Zealot puts a sudden end to all Judas' righteous thinking and self-deception about the betrayal, with a vicious exposition of all his romantic, idealistic illusions. Judas then hurries off to Caiaphas in a last frantic effort to put things right, only to be sunmoly informed that here again he has been used as a pawn in somebody else's game. Judas realises the brutal truth about himself, lets go a frightful tirade against the hypocrisy of Caiaphas and his priestly associates, and unable to repent his sins, snaches out in a fit of self loathing to his death. Handled with pace and emotion, these scenes provide a fitting grand theatrical exit for the villain of the piece.

<u>The King of Sorrows</u> is technically and artistically the most brilliant play of the series. Miss Sayers' delicate and sympathetic treatment of the events surrounding the Crucifixion, of the wide range of emotional reactions of various characters contrasted with the impartial businesslike approach of the soldiers detailed to carry out the task, is thrown into high

relief by the almost festive mood of the crowd. She builds up a picture of such completeness that its full dramatic impact must be unequivocally conveyed to the listener.

The play opens on the road to Calvary, where the crowd, full of ruffians, sentimentalists and even jokers, mock, howl and boo Jesus as he drags his cross to the place of execution. We then join in the procession itself, as the Roman soldiers, concerned only with doing their duty, struggle to keep the prisoner on his feet and the crowd at bay. The microphone then moves on to the friends and relatives of Jesus waiting by the roadside to join the procession as it passes. Roger Manvell compares the technique of this scene with the film: "The microphone, like a film camera, works in and out of close-up, moving now to one group, now to another, or pulling back to compass the procession as a whole."(7)

At Calvary the scene is given perspective by alternating the action between the groups present around the cross, and a number of short scenes in Jerusalem. To begin with we hear the reactions of the crowd in all its vicissitudes of sympathy, sadistic enjoyment and execration; then of the soldiers, disinterested and impartial. From them, we are taken to the quiet suffering of the group at the foot of the cross, and finally up to the cross itself. The scene is relieved by several short episodes which take place in Jerusalem: at the High Priest's house, Caiaphas realises he has lived in vain; at the Roman Barracks, Proclus, who is sympathetic to Jesus, is put on duty at Calvary; and in the Governor's Palace, Claudia relates her

dream, which Miss Sayers imbues with a deeper spiritual significance by combining in it the legends of the death of Pan and Christ.

The earthquake which followed the death of Jesus could easily have thrown the play off balance had Miss Sayers allowed it to become a melodramatic climax. She wisely subdues it behind the voice of the narrator and avoids sidetracking the listeners attention from the central character. Throughout these scenes the focal point is always Christ on the Cross although he says only the few words attributed to him in the New Testament. Atmosphere is achieved by the reactions of the crowd and soldiers, the restrained pathos of the two Marys and John, and the mockery of Jesus by the crucified robbers on either side of Him. The sorrow of Mary Virgin and John is slightly stylised for restraint and dignity, which balances the brutality of the crowd and soldiers, and leads naturally into the lyrical speeches of Balthazar at the end of the play, linking it with the first of the series.

The final play, The King Comes to His Own, exhibits Miss Sayers' craftsmanship more than anything else, for in it she condenses the nine supernatural appearances mentioned by the Gospels, into one, forty-five minute play, without a suggestion of repetition or sensationalism, by alternating her treatment between description and direct presentation. She also achieves a delicate balance between the essential humanity and the mysterious quality of Jesus' body, without lapsing into horror or melodrama, which would have been the easiest method of

obtaining dramatic effect. The supernatural elements are relieved by the insertion of two commonplace scenes which take place in the Sanhedrim and before the Governor's house, showing the reactions of both Jews and Romans to the Resurrection. Miss Sayers avoids the final temptation of melodrama by describing the Ascension rather than attempting to dramatise it. The series ends with a final message from Jesus, followed by a brief, formal dialogue between Gabriel and the Evangelist.

Prior to their broadcast, the twelve plays in The Man Born to be King received unprecedented publicity, with the result that over two million people heard them. No radio dramatist before Miss Sayers had commanded such popularity, and by increasing the audience's capacity to enjoy radio drama, she made a direct contribution to the advancement of this new art form. The plays do not stand as great radio drama, nor as great dramatic literature, because their appeal is directed to both the imagination and faith, and to the listener without faith the principal character lacks the necessary force and drive to establish himself as the continual focal point of the action. As a work of dramatic art, the plays also fail in those episodes which are not derived from Miss Sayers' biblical sources, but are the inventions of her own imagination.

Nevertheless Miss Sayers' thorough grasp of radio technique and her realistic approach to a most difficult subject were responsible for a series of plays which held the air extraordinarily well, and could easily bear frequent repitition. To many listeners they constituted thrilling, and often very

moving, entertainment, while to those who shared in the author's faith, they provided "... a religious experience in sound which in a remarkable way broke down the convention of unreality surrounding our Lord's person, and made His life, words and significance live in a new way for listeners."(8) The Man Born to be King was an attempt to do for radio what Oberammagau has done for the visible stage.

iv.
Clemence Dane.

Clemence Dane already had an established reputation as a highly successful dramatist and novelist when she turned to radio in 1941. Her seven radio plays on a single theme, collectively entitled The Saviours, were written in collaboration with the British composer, Richard Addinsell, and produced by Val Gielgud for the BBC between 1941 and 1942.(9) These seven historical dramas give seven expressions, differing in style, period and story, to the legend that the national hero who helped his people to become strong and civilised and then disappeared, will return again when bad times follow, to save them from distress and suffering. In a Preface to The Saviours Miss Dane explains "In Britain the symbol of that spirit is King Arthur, of whom Merlin prophesied that he should yet come to help his people. The Saviours shows how that prophecy has been and will be fulfilled."(p.v.)

The series begins with the destruction of Vortiger, his German wife and followers, together with the first prophecies of Merlin as a young lad of nineteen. Merlin then introduces Arthur, whose spirit is subsequently reincarnated in the following plays as Alfred, Robin Hood, Elizabeth I and Essex, Nelson, and finally as the Unknown Soldier. The saviour of the First World War, Miss Dane implies, will come again to save Britain not as a single hero, but in the persons of the common man and woman, warrior and civilian together.

As a stage dramatist, Miss Dane recognised that radio presents an entirely new set of problems, that it bestows new liberties and sets up new limits. "It implies," she wrote, "a completely new mental approach." (p.v.) Thus the reader must also adjust his mental approach and remember that the printed text is little more than half of each play, because both the Producer and the Composer made vital contributions to the dramatic shaping and differentiation of episodes, character and style. The dialogue was written to be spoken aloud and on the producer, with his control over the speakers of the words, lay the responsibility for drawing out of the human voices all that the human eye is unable to detect in the printed page.

In contrast to the sustained, positive realism of The Man Born to be King, Miss Dane's technique in each play is impressionistic. Short sequences rapidly follow one another to establish a gradual, cumulative effect, narration fades imperceptibly into dramatic episodes, normal time sequences are frequently disregarded, inanimate objects are given lines to speak, and the whole series is a mixture of prose, poetry, drama, narration, choral work, singing and music. The technique is often confusing to the reader, so he must continually ask himself "How would it sound?" — and it is not always possible to answer.

The reader is also without the music of Richard Addinsell, which, Miss Dane says, was not "... a mere decoration or accompaniment, but a fair half of the whole scheme."(p.vi.) Very often, episodes do not seem to hang together, the overall form of a play is hard to discover, transitions from one sequence to another

provide a jarring change in emotion, or the lyrics of a song appear trite and badly expressed. It must be remembered that in radio drama, music can play almost as vital a role as dialogue in adding character and quality to the emotion, in providing smooth links between sequences, and in plays like The Saviours, for which special music has been composed, it can sometimes impose its own form upon the form of the author's design.

The plays in Dorothy Sayers' series, The Man Born to be King, constitute a single work which possesses a coherent and continuous line of plot and character development shown up against a background changing in location but not in period. Although each play is self sufficient, much of the significance of its plot and characterisation is lost unless it is seen in relation to the whole series, which is the proper artistic unit.

The Saviours, on the other hand, consists of seven complete plays, independent in plot and characterisation, and linked with each other only because they illuminate an identical theme. Back references, explicit and implicit, are contained in them all, but this does not imply that the understanding of one depends upon the understanding of those which preceded it. The plays deal with separate groups of people in different periods of history. There is no continuous story line running through the series, but the stories inevitably assume similarities because they are all manipulated, some more successfully than others, to illustrate Miss Dane's theme.

Some degree of continuity is obtained by the introduction of Merlin, the National Prophet of Britain, into each of the seven plays. In the first three, he is both narrator and character, but after that he fades out of the action and adopts the role of informing spirit, filling in the historical gaps, describing and commenting on the action. In the first play, which bears his name, he is a rather unusual lad of nineteen whose prophecies amaze the corrupt and decadent German court and lead to its destruction. As narrator, he opens The Hope of Britain with a brief summary of the previous play and the events which have happened in the meantime. He had taken Uther Pendragon's son to Avalon and cared for him while a boy. Now is the time for Arthur to claim his rightful place as King of Britain, so Merlin brings him to London. Arthur then becomes the central character, and only at the end of the play does Merlin return with the prophecy "An Arthur will yet come to help his people."

As the Old Man in England's Darling, crouching by the fire in the Cowherd's hut, Merlin is unheeded by the other characters as he sings to his harp of the return of Alfred. He is a character in the scene, yet outside the action and free to indirectly comment on it through his songs. From then on he rarely appears as Merlin. The action of the following play, The May King, begins at "Merlin's Tomb" which the Merry-Makers seek to ask for luck. When Merlin emerges he is an old hermit, well known to the other characters, and as the action moves on, he hovers at the edge of the crowd, observing and commenting

to himself. In The Light of Britain, dealing with Elizabeth and Essex, he again remains aloof from the action. In the final scene, following the Queen's funeral, he becomes "An Old Player", whom we recognise as Shakespeare by a chance remark made by his boy companion -- "Write me a man's part, Will! A proper Hotspur!" By identifying National Prophet and National Poet, Miss Dane concludes the Elizabethan Era with a well chosen comment. In the two final plays, Remember Nelson and The Unknown Soldier, Merlin is wisely restricted to his role as narrator, for a romantic character would be out of place in modern warfare.

The writing of the seven plays was spread over a long period of time, and they improve immensely as the series develops, showing an increasing mastery by the author of her medium. Miss Dane's technique in Merlin is rather uncertain. Vortigar is not established either historically or personally, and the action is descriptive rather than dramatic. These faults are corrected in The Hope of Britain. The incidents are cleverly selected and developed with assurance, satisfactorily covering a long period of history, while Arthur is drawn not as a story-book king, but as a human being. Unheedful of Merlin's advice and blinded by success, he is faced with internal strife in his kingdom, and ruins his health by a fanatical drive to rid England of the traitor Modred. In this play, and the following one, Miss Dane makes excellent use of familiar, mythical incidents, effectively weaving them into the normal development of her plot and dramatising them without

romanticism or sentimentality.

When Arthur is brought to London, he is accosted by a knight and told to fetch his sword from the Inn. Finding the doors of the Inn bolted, Arthur discovers another sword embedded in a rock and draws it out to give to the knight. The courtiers and other knights suddenly appear, amazed, credulous or sceptical, and immediately proclaim him king. The return of Caliburn to the lake, glamourised by poets from Wace to Tennyson, is treated with a simple and effective naturalness.

England's Darling is constructed around the legent of Alfred and the cakes. A group of Englishmen, on their way to join Alfred's army, take refuge from the Danes in a Cowherd's hut. The Cowherd's wife, a goodnatured but illtempered woman, gives them some breakfast, but refuses to part with the oatcakes she is cooking for her husband. The Cowherd brings in a man weakened by travel and hunger, who, unbeknown to the company, is King Alfred, and then goes off to direct others to the camp. His wife goes about her household tasks, enjoining Alfred to watch the cakes, so he takes advantage of this solitude to offer up a long prayer for strength and purpose; only to be rudely interrupted by the wife's accusation that he let the cakes burn.

England's Darling is one of the best plays in the series. Its construction is firm, scene and action are continuous and the characters clearly defined. It has a large cast, but apart from the four principals, Merlin, Alfred, the Cowherd and his wife, the other characters, men of Sussex, Surrey,

Kent, Wessex, Essex, Wiltshire, Mercia and Berkshire, are representatives rather than individuals, though easily identified by their dialects and dialogue. The wife is an engaging and humorous person despite her quick temper. She will stand no nonsense from the men, and after refusing Alfred her cakes, she generously relents when she realises his exhaustion. She is furious with her husband after learning that the poor creature to whom they had given shelter, was the King of England. Miss Dane draws extensively upon the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles to supply the historical background to the play. Some of the lyrics, both those of Merlin as character and as Narrator, are beautifully written and should have been most effective with the addition of Richard Addinsell's music.

In The May King, Miss Dane takes up the story of Robin Hood where the story-books and ballads left off. The skirmishes with the Sherriff of Nottingham are over, and Robert Loxley is a respectable citizen who dines at the French Court. An old woman's plea to save her husband sends him back to Sherwood Forest where he once again dons the Lincoln Green and harries the Norman tyrants. The play introduces a theme which frequently recurs in the series:

> When Alfred was overlord
> A woman could carry her child through the land.
> Highway or forest, none touched her.
>
> Once a woman could walk alone across England.
> No-one took her necklace, none touched her.

Miss Dane is hard put to adjust this story of Robin Hood to the theme, for despite her efforts he remains a story-book character and not, by any stretch of the imagination, a

saviour of Britain. The play does present a convincing picture of social oppression under the Normans, so apparently Robin Hood was chosen as a convenient peg on which to hang the abstract quality of Magna Carta as a national saviour. Although The May King goes wide of its mark, it is a most delightful and entertaining play. The light-hearted, merry May Day atmosphere pervades the action, and provides an ironic contrast to the final scene in which Loxley is callously betrayed by the girl who had deserted him when he returned to the forest.

The Light of Britain contains the most violent wresting of history to fit the theme. Miss Dane makes Elizabeth divide the function of saviour with Essex. Her reason for doing this is not at all clear and one can only conjecture that she attempted to symbolise the character of Elizabethan England in reasoning, clearheaded age united with impetuous, adventurous youth. Essex does nothing in the play to earn the title of saviour. He is a violent, headstrong, ambitious young man who cares more about being the Queen's favourite than doing anything constructive for his country. He is jealous of his rivals, unable to appreciate or handle his elders; he is a failure at court because he is over ambitious, and a failure in Ireland because he is an inefficient administrator. Upon his return to London he does nothing further to enhance our opinion of him.

The play is severely weakened by this Elizabeth and Essex division. It is difficult to see why Miss Dane gives Essex

so much prominence, yet portrays him so unsympathetically, and why so little attention is given to Elizabeth, who is more obviously a National Saviour than any of the other heroes, save Arthur himself. Dramatically the focal point of her reign is the defeat of the Spanish Armada, but this episode is crushed into a short piece of narration by Merlin, while all that is given of the equally well known speech of Elizabeth to her men at Tilbury is one brief extract.

Technically, The Light of Britain takes every advantage of the liberties radio bestows upon the dramatist. The narration is racy and straight to the point, either linking scenes or providing background information; characters speak to each other across space or time, and without a trace of self-consciousness, reveal their thoughts through the interior monologue. The play contains many exciting sequences, while the ending, in which the disjointed but coherent conversation between the spirits of Elizabeth and Essex poignantly recalls their earlier and happier times together, is written with deep emotion, tenderness and an elegant grace.

Remember Nelson is broken into too many short sequences and labours under thirty speaking characters, four extras with a few lines each, twentyone ships all with something important to say and a chorus of waves. Although the narration never fails to clarify the action, dating and locating each scene, it is quite unnecessarily shared by Merlin, the Waves and the Ships of the Fleet. The dramatic effect this may produce in urgency is not worth what it adds in complexity.

The technique of this play is extraordinarily involved. It begins at the Battle of Lissa, where the Admiral of the Fleet exhorts his men to "Remember Nelson". The story is then told in flashback, beginning with several characters who remembered Nelson at various stages in his early career. After a few introductory remarks, the episodes they remember are dramatised, and slowly the story unfolds as far as the battle of Trafalgar. Finally we return to Lissa. The sequences are nearly all too short, flashing backwards and forwards in time with little or no warning. Scenes at different locations imperceptibly fade into one another, narration suddenly becomes dramatisation and a host of unimportant minor characters fade in and out of the story as it progresses.

Would this sound confusing to the listener? It is not easy to say. Most of the minor characters, whose only function is to advance the plot, either introduce themselves or are introduced, so there is no likelihood of confusion here. Again, Richard Addinsell's music may have clarified many of the sudden transitions and held the play together in a loose framework of abstract sound. It is impossible for the reader to imagine how the producer, Mr. Addinsell and the actors contrived to sustain the interest of the listener in such a large number of characters, and how they managed to fit so many short, under-developed sequences into an intelligible, dramatic pattern.

The final play in the series, The Unknown Soldier, comes back to the muddled and puzzled England of 1914 to 1918. Without a single person to act in the capacity of saviour, Miss Dane reincar-

nates the spirit of Arthur in the common people, both citizens and soldiers of Britain and the Commonwealth. Without a central story to unfold, Merlin holds the play together with narration covering the historical background, explaining and commenting on each scene. Into this narration, ten short dramatic episodes, and several impressionistic sequences are interwoven. Each one uses a different set of characters and none of the episodes is extensively worked out, but together, they steadily build up a comprehensive picture of the British people and their various attitudes to the events immediately preceding the First World War, and to the war itself.

At first we hear the casual, uninterested attitude of the British middle class to the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne, then the superficial knowledge of contemporary affairs taught in the schools. When faced with the reality of war, its seriousness is not immediately grasped; in a wave of cheery optimism ("It'll be over by Christmas"), and glamour, young girls admire the soldiers' uniforms, while young men hope it's not over before they get a chance to be in it. But the glamour fades into disenchantment as more and more families are separated, and the optimism becomes less cheery as the war shows no sign of ending. Gradually the common people discover they are faced with the inhumanity, horror, disgust and tragedy of a total war in which everybody, including women, is involved. But they find strength and purpose in the determination of all the unknown, unrecognised soldiers and workers of the British Commonwealth:

They will not know my name.
I shall come from an unknown grave.
All they will know of me is what I gave.

Merlin opens the play with a brief speech introducing Wace, Layamon, Malory, Caxton, a contemporary, Shakespeare and the Encyclopaedia Britannica, who each give their views on his prophecies. The six Saviours then speak the most significant extracts from their own play: Arthur his coronation promise; Alfred, a short passage from his Cura Pastoralis; Loxley, a fragment of Magna Carta; Elizabeth, her speech at Tilbury; and Nelson his famous slogan. Arthur returns to the play towards the end as commenting spirit, appalled at the condition of the modern world. In a brief conversation with Merlin he forsees that:

The war to end war is not yet begun.
O Merlin, I shall lie
among the great of the isle,
unknown, unknown!

The National Saviour's call to his people for strength and determination is answered by the young voices of the Commonwealth and by the Unknown Soldiers. Arthur happily concludes:

Then silently, silently I go
on to the Abbey where the four queens meet me
as long ago
At Avalon they met me, long ago.

The play ends with the last post, and Merlin's description of the burial of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey — "It is Armistice Day. A baby's cry breaks the silence, and the mourners hail the saviour, England's Darling, the Light of Britain, the Hope of the World." "It is not the least merit of Miss Dane's courageous adventure," one reviewer commented, "that there is

no false glory in her conclusion. The Arthur of 1914-1918 was the unknown, the obscure warrior in his millions. He will come again to save Britain..."(10)

Miss Dane's text comprises a wide variety of prose, poetry and prose-poetry. The narration varies from the simple, unadorned, lucid prose of Merlin's concluding speech in the series, to the deliberate understatement of Nelson:

> Fanny is colder
> than once she was;
> but that's because
> I've been so long at sea,
> twelve, when I went to sea

This is really no more than prose chopped up into rhythmic lengths for the convenience of the actor, but it possesses a simple yet moving urgency in its naive directness. The same note is sounded in Merlin's introduction to the scene at Tilbury in <u>The Light of Britain</u>:

> Elizabeth to Tilbury is gone
> to cheer her armies. Leicester's at her side.
> Her Captain-General of Cavalry
> is Essex, who has passionate service done
> in the Netherlands, and most where Sidney died
> at Zutphen.

At the other extreme is the strong, racy, rhythmic poetry in the description of Merlin's ride on horseback in <u>The Hope of Britain</u>:

> Dimly, through mist, Northumberland, Cumberland,
> Westmorland, Durham, the daffodil lakes,
> and the three high hills between Scotland and Trent,
> Pendle, Ingle and Penigent.

The poetry, often lyrical in quality, comes either as a climax or a kind of musical relief. Occasionally Miss Dane strikes a note of uncomfortable artificiality — as, for instance, in

Caliburn's song from the second play:

> The hand is strong,
> the heart is high.
> The king is young,
> and cannot die.

and later:

> I am the Sword.
> No-one can draw me but Arthur.
> When I am thirsty
> Arthur calls to me: "Drink!"

The addition of music can imbue the most trite lyric with some degree of emotion, and these lyrics were written to be sung or spoken aloud, not read from a printed text. The same consideration applies to the dialogue, which is, for the most part, simple, and direct, easy to speak, and adaptable to the mood and atmosphere of each play. It is often difficult to see how Miss Dane's long, easyflowing, narrative speeches were fitted into the dramatic pattern, or what would be the listener's reaction to disjointed passages as that near the beginning of <u>The Unknown Soldier</u>:

Shakespeare's Voice:	The dreamer Merlin -- skimble-skamble stuff!
Tennyson's Voice:	Arthur the king -- He perished by this people which he made, though Merlin swore that he should come again.
The Encyclopaedia Britannica's Voice:	Tennyson -- Layamon -- Malory -- they're only poets. As that first man said, the one from Jersey, they embroider the facts. But I'm the Encyclopaedia Britannica. I concern myself solely with facts. Merlin? Hm!

In each of the seven plays contained in <u>The Saviours</u>, Miss Dane's pattern and purpose are easy to apprehend, though one or

two are marred by unnecessary characters, indistinctness of characterisation and verbosity in speech. For the most part, her approach is that of the radio craftsman, in full command of her material and taking every advantage that radio bestows on the dramatist. At times Miss Dane is extravagant, but her extravagance is never a conscious striving for dramatic effect. The plays are moving, prophetic and beautifully written, a valuable contribution to both the technique of radio drama and its rapidly growing literature. The Saviours was a courageous adventure, because in attempting an unfamiliar medium to express ideas which could quite easily have become sentimentally patriotic in the hands of a less competent craftsman, Miss Dane risked failure and consequent damage to her literary reputation. The Saviours did not receive a great deal of attention from the critics, but those who noted it were generous in their praise. The Times Literary Supplement enthusiastically claimed "Without ambition like hers, this new art will make slow progress." (11)

V.
Features.

In the years immediately following 1939, the BBC found itself faced with rapid changes in national needs. For many people radio was the only source of news and entertainment, the only relief from the dullness of wartime restrictions or the one refuge from the continual nervous strain of the blitz. Because of its ability to contact almost the entire population, the BBC. appreciated that it had a vital role to play in sustaining morale, in clarifying the issues at stake in the war and in assisting people to accept wartime conditions more agreeably. The complete reorganisation of national life made it imperative to show the various parts of the nation how the other parts were living and facing up to new conditions of existence. All this provided radio writers and producers with a vast amount of exciting material, together with an obligation to present it to the listener as forcibly and entertainingly as possible. People wanted reassurance that what they were doing and what they were enduring was worth while, and they received this assurance from the BBC. through a very subtle form of propaganda.

Britain's entry into the field of radio propaganda was provoked by the use already being made of radio in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. What had begun as the BBC's Empire Service was soon transformed into an organisation of vital importance, which broadcast daily news bulletins and

and other programmes in different languages to many European countries. The power of radio as an instrument of propaganda had been conclusively proved as early as 1932 by President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" in the United States of America. The Beveridge Committee which enquired into the BBC. in 1949 firmly stated its potentialities in this direction:

> Broadcasting is the most persuasive, and therefore the most powerful, of agents for influencing men's thoughts and actions, for giving them a picture, true or false, of their fellows, and the world in which they live, for appealing to their intellect, their emotions and their appetites, for filling their minds with beauty or ugliness, ideas or idleness, laughter or terror, love or hate.(12)

The BBC's propaganda responsibilities to both foreign and home listeners steadily increased during the war years. It soon expanded beyond the broadcasting of news, or news commentaries by experts and the speeches of national leaders, for every type of programme, whether it consisted of the spoken word, drama or music had some effect in influencing the attitude of listeners to the war. The first piece of deliberate anti-Nazi propaganda directed at British listeners was a semi-dramatic programme called The Shadow of the Swastika, which denounced the evils of Hitler's regime in a forceful, exciting and entertaining way. It showed, more than anything else, that this type of programme, employing the elements of radio drama and aimed at influencing people's minds and emotions to make them adopt a particular attitude of the author's design, was a far more striking method of showing the British people what they were up against, than any amount of reasoned speech. The Shadow of the Swastika

was the first of many brilliant war-time features, a radio dramatic form which had been tentatively developed in the late nineteen-thirties, and rose to immense popularity as an instrument of propaganda during the war.

This is not to imply that feature writers, who were often highly reputable authors, prostituted their art for the express purpose of influencing the listener's attitude towards some end foisted on them by the BBC. According to Roger Manvell, "The success of British propaganda lay quite simply in the fact that the BBC stuck to the truth even when this was unpleasant, and truth in the long run is the best propaganda, especially when events begin to confirm the statements you publish. So radio was used to fight the war both as an instrument of information and as an instrument of strategy".(13)

After the first ten years of intoxication with the existence of radio, the BBC. settled down and began to explore the possibilities of this new medium. We have seen how a group of avowed experimentalists arose towards the end of the nineteen-twenties, and with the stimulation, financial backing and technical resources of the BBC., together with the support of critics and audience, evolved a technique for a new art form — radio drama. This group of pioneers, which included Lance Sieveking, Tyrone Guthrie, E.A.Harding and Mary Hope Allen, was given every encouragement to experiment. (14)

They were quick to realise that the work being done by the avante garde in another comparatively new medium, the film, was of great importance to radio. Men like Robert Flaherty

and John Grierson were developing the documentary film as an art form; and the radio pioneers soon adopted the precepts Flaherty and Grierson had discovered, and applied them to their own medium. The modern term,"Feature", derives from the name "Featured Programme", which was first given to all the semi-dramatised items produced by this group, that fitted no particular formula. Later these experimentalists formed the nucleus of the BBC Features Department, whose business was concerned with documentary or factual programmes; at first as part of the Drama Department under Val Gielgud, then in 1941, as a separate unit under Laurence Gilliam, who made the feature into one of the most important as well as popular forms of wartime broadcasting.

The first feature was broadcast on June 11,1931. It was intended "... to give an account of the events of the Spanish Revolution in the speeches of the protagonists and the actual words of the news messages by which the world was informed at the time."(15) The story was told without comment, the facts were allowed to speak for themselves. Music was used as the connecting link between the dramatic sequences, with the Spanish National Anthem as a recurring motif. In 1934, further possibilities of the feature were disclosed when the BBC broadcast a series of famous trials. The fifth in the series, the trial of "Lady Lisle" before Judge Jeffreys of the Bloody Assize, was adapted for radio from its historical sources by C. Whitaker Wilson, who describes in his book, Writing for Broadcasting, how he reconstructed a trial which lasted over a

week into a feature of an hour's duration. "It soon became clear that it was not a case of what should be left out but what should be allowed to remain in." (p.115.) By reducing the number of witnesses, using a narrator to give the introductory information, occasionally a running commentary, and concentrating on the dramatic and emotional incidents, Wilson did much to popularise a type of programme that is still broadcast regularly today. Authors and producers began to look further afield for their "actuality" material, and experimented with various methods by which it could be shaped into a work of art in terms of pure sound; but the real usefulness of this form was to be revealed several years later by the exceptional broadcasting needs of the war.

These exceptional needs, we have seen, resulted from the great responsibility thrown on the BBC to sustain the nation's morale, to keep it informed about the continual reorganisation of national life, to reveal the evils of Nazism and to keep radio listeners entertained. Many important contemporary authors brough their talents to the feature programme, some as occasional contributors, others as permanent members of the BBC staff, and developed it to a high degree of artistry. They included poets such as Louis MacNeice, Dylan Thomas, Henry Reed, Laurie Lee, Terence Tiller, Patric Dickinson, D.G. Bridson; dramatists -- J.B.Priestly, Eric Linklater, Edward Sackville-West; novelists -- Rayner Heppenstall, Compton McKenzie, Elizabeth Bowen; and critics -- Herbert Read and Stephen Potter. Many of these authors, who learnt

the technique of radio writing from features, have since put it to excellent use by writing radio plays of an exceptionally high standard. Others have taken advantage of the Third Programme, established in 1946, to write features of a more specialised and limited interest.

What, then, is a "Feature"? Since the early days of broadcasting the term has been used loosely to cover any collection of items strung together by a central idea. As each new author extended its range of subject matter and technique, a definition of the feature has become increasingly difficult, until now it is as vague a term as "poetry"; and the division between "Feature" and "Radio Drama" as blurred as that between "Poetry" and "Prose". In 1934, Lance Sieveking confidently stated "A Feature Programme is an arrangement of sounds, which has a theme but no plot. If it has a plot, it is a play."(16) The first feature which used characters to reconstruct an actual historical event, made nonsense of this definition.

Val Gielgud, in 1947, defined the term in a sense so indefinite as to be of no great use. "A Feature Programme is any programme item -- other than a radio play -- whose author makes use of the specialised techniques of radio dramatic production." (17) What does he mean by "other than a radio play" when a feature such as Louis MacNeice's Sunbeams in his Hat uses characters and plot to reveal human nature, and is based on what is considered the vital content of any drama, conflict.(18) In his Introductory Note to this programme, MacNeice is more specific. "'Feature', as distinct from 'play', is the BBC

name for a dramatised broadcast which is primarily either informative or propagandist (propaganda here being taken to include the emotive celebration of anniversaries and gestures of homage -- or of hatred -- to anyone or anything dead or alive). Features therefore, having an enormous diversity of subject, have also a great diversity of form. Some of them are as loosely constructed as scrapbooks, others come near to the unities and emotional impact of a play."(p.69.)

Laurence Gilliam, Head of the BBC Features Department, wrote "In broadcasting the term has come to signify a wide range of programme items, usually factual and documentary, presented by a variety of techniques, but mostly making use of dramatisation and edited actuality."(19) A play, Gilliam maintains, creates illusion for its own sake, a feature, in order to convince the listener of the truth of what it is saying, even though it is said in dramatic form. This is a good point, but it seems the truest definition has come from William Salter discussing an ambiguous programme by Michael Kelly, called Error in the Universe -- "The only absolutely safe definitions I can think of are that a radio play is a programme in more or less dramatic form presented by the Drama Department, a feature, a programme more or less in dramatic form presented by the Features Department."(20)

Broadly speaking, we can say the object of a radio feature is to present facts or to give information, and its method, basically, dramatisation. "Facts" is taken to mean anything that really happened, or anyone who lived either in the world

or in literature. The subject matter is almost limitless. There is a type of feature that is the equivalent to the literary anthology, in which a subject is chosen -- say, "Horses" -- and the programme constructed of a selection from all imaginable sources remotely connected with the subject -- horses in literature, horses in history, race horses, hobby horses, even clothes horses. But whatever he selects from actuality or literature as the subject matter of a feature, the author should be much more than a reporter. The material must be selected carefully for its dramatic and emotional appeal, and it must be rigidly kept under control, so that all the parts cohere to produce a single dramatic effect. "The essential quality of the feature programme," Laurence Gilliam wrote, "is that it should be the expression of one mind, whatever techniques it uses."(21)

The feature by no means excludes the field of imaginative creation -- Cecil McGivern's The Harbour called Mulberry is a superb piece of imaginative writing -- but for the most part, the subject matter is not invented by the author but drawn from the external world. The "creation" lies in the ordering and shaping of the subject matter into a unified coherent whole, and in its presentation to the listener as a vivid, aural experience.

In his collection, B.B.C. Features, Laurence Gilliam has published a wide variety of style and types.(22) There is the reconstruction of recent history (The Last Days of Hitler and The Vermeer Forgeries), the popular exposition of science

(The Brain at Work), a most striking form of literary criticism (W.B.Yeats: A Dublin Portrait). Most educational broadcasts can be classified as features; their scope also extends to the presentation of current issues, fantasy, satire, literary anthologies of a writer or several writers -- in fact there is no end to the possibilities. But no matter what the feature is called upon to say, it should say it in the semblance of dramatic form, whether it uses only two narrators or a host of characters. Also, if it is to be at all effective, the listener must be entertained, he must feel as well as think; if not, the feature can be no more persuasive than a straight, informative talk. The majority of features combine and balance elements of the talk with elements of drama to confer actuality on a group of facts, and to make the listener "see" as well as hear. To the author it can be the most exciting, but also the most exacting, of radio programmes, requiring a considerable degree of literary skill and dramatic ability, as well as a thorough understanding of radio technique.

Although a serious consideration of the history and development of the feature would constitute a study of its own, there is one author whose reputation as a radio writer rests largely upon several wartime features. Cecil McGivern's Junction X and The Harbour called Mulberry represent the highest point in radio dramatic technique achieved during the war period, and show just how thin is the division between feature and radio play.(23)

Junction X, according to its author, is a programme "...showing

how the British Railways are successfully carrying out their vital and gigantic war task in conditions of unparalleled difficulty." The immensity of this theme required a great deal of research, a thorough knowledge of both subject and medium, together with the dramatic ability to set it all down in an intelligible and vivid manner. McGivern lifts Junction X above the mere presentation of facts and gives it dramatic shape by centering his focus on a single fictitious railway station's activities over a twenty-four hour period; and telling the story by a narrator personally involved in the action and through the eyes of various characters with whom the listener may easily sympathise. There is, besides the narrator, a fictional "Listener", who reflects the changing attitude of the radio listener to the story as it is unfolded. At first he is angry with the narrator and his "silly play-acting" when there is a blitz on. The narrator then takes him on a conducted tour of Junction X, and the nation wide story of the British Railways is then recreated from conversations with the men who run the station, a description of the main events during one day and several brief flashbacks to complete the background information. Dramatic suspense is not created and held by the plot, but inherent in each episode is a feeling of exhilaration, which is nicely sustained by the transitional narration to the end of the programme.

The theme and the period in which this feature is set would have offered a wonderful opportunity to a man of Sieveking's temperament for a galaxy of sound effects: guns,

planes, bombs, trains and tunnels. McGivern makes use of them all -- his treatment is fundamentally realistic -- but with the utmost economy and suggestive implication. After an effect has been established, music frequently replaces it. Music is also used to colour the long descriptive passages of narration, to set the atmosphere, to bridge time lapses, and to point climaxes in the dialogue or changes in emotion. McGivern continually makes the listener "see" what he describes:

> Darkness over Britain ... but things to be seen in the darkness if you look widely and carefully enough ... The glint of rails -- dull silver ... Hanging in the sky, clusters of yellow light -- the red and green and yellow of signals ... A sudden gush of red hot ash from the engine smoke stack.

The narration is full of urgency and excitement. A sequence on the footplate of an engine is introduced by train effects, which fade into rhythmic music and this is held behind the voice of the narrator:

> The footplate of Engine 2574 rocks and sways and jerks ... Here is the true sensation of speed -- more than in a car, more than in a plane... the 50 miles an hour seems like one hundred and fifty ... rock, sway, jerk ... nothing to be seen outside ... blackness ahead, blackness around...

<u>Junction X</u> is lightened by an occasional touch of humour or inconsequential dialogue to relieve the intensity of the compact episodes. McGivern drives home the facts of his story by presenting them clearly and logically in the form of a normal radio drama. The narration, sound effects and dramatic sequences hang together in a closely knit, but fluid, texture of sound and mark this programme as one of the most successful and intelligently written radio features of the war.

Cecil McGivern's second feature, The Harbour called Mulberry, first broadcast on March 5, 1945, nine months after D-Day, is the story of the floating harbour which played so large a part in the Normandy Landing. The techniques of radio presentation are again fully exploited to emphasise the human impulses behind a series of events which proved to be the turning point of the second World War — a tremendous, nation-wide, communal achievement produced by the fortitude and integrity of democracy. McGivern's feature makes this point forcibly, but without a trace of sentimentalism or false patriotism. Its theme is of an even greater magnitude than Junction X — the story of an engineering project of immense complexity that took years to plan and years to construct -- but the facts are so logically ordered in clear, non-scientific terms, the motivation of the people concerned portrayed so sympathetically, that the feature becomes not a series of dry abstractions, but a drama of intimate human reality.

The essential element of drama, conflict, is maintained throughout and despite the change of both antagonist and protagonist in each "act", McGivern's expert construction never allows the suspense to flag. At first the conflect is extremely general: the Allies versus the Axis. The feature begins after the evacuation of Dunkirk, and in the first sequence, McGivern creates a brief picture of Nazi strategy in fortifying all the ports of northern Europe, as well as stating the necessity for Britain to capture at least one of them, before an invasion of Hitler's Europe can begin. The

idea for floating piers to be used to land forces on the enemy beaches is suggested by, McGivern implies, the Prime Minister. Then piece by piece the plans for two prefabricated harbours are put together, and details of their construction and eventual use given, so that the listener has a broad general knowledge of the background to the next part of the story. The transition is swift and dramatic:

Narrator: (quietly but very moved) The decision's made. It's over -- the probing, the raiding, the waiting, the watching, the worrying, the headaches ...

The Contractor: (Exploding) Over my foot! They're just about to start!

The contractor draws a deep breath before outlining the tremendous quantity of manpower and materials required to construct the harbours within the time limit of six months.

Once the construction is under way, the conflict changes to the engineers versus time, as they struggle to finish the harbour against the handicaps of minor labour troubles, winter storms, enemy bombs and gunfire. The tempo increases during the final weeks of preparation, when frantic efforts are made to get the pier-heads ready by the dead-line. Music -- an unresolved chord, full and vibrant -- ends the second part, as the harbour is launched ready for towing across the channel.

A huge armada of ships of all sizes and shapes gathers in the Southern English ports in readiness for D-Day. When the harbour is floated into place, the conflict once more is changed to the harbour versus the weather. The blockships are sunk,

the breakwaters anchored, the steel piers connected; then the music, full and triumphant, announces the harbour complete. An unexpected summer storm which suddenly blows up, almost wrecking one of the harbours, forms a natural dramatic climax to the action. This is followed by the denouement, when the storm smoothes out and the harbour, chipped and battered but still intact, is ready for the invasion. The feature ends on a note of majestic triumph -- the music swells up, the roar of aircraft is heard and a sailor cries out "Dakotas! And, look, soldier, there's the sun!"

The Narrator is the central "voice". His viewpoint is Olympian and his dual function of commenting and explaining, similar to that of the Greek chorus. He fades in and out of the action, interviewing or conversing with the characters. At one moment he is personally involved in the story, and the next, outside it completely, able to see into the future or connect the various parts which are being enacted all over the country. He is not the cold, impersonal narrator of so many radio features, but a human being vitally interested in what happens, so, as well as giving shape and continuity to the script, he establishes a lively, balanced viewpoint for the listener. Most of the characters are types representing the servicemen, the officials and contractors involved in planning, making and using the harbour. The soldier, a typical, grumbling, down to earth man, follows through the action lightening the feature with touches of goodnatured humour.

"The hero of this story," the Narrator says, "is not a man."

The harbour is continually before our eyes, its immensity and strategic significance never forgotten. It is characterised by a musical motif, first suggested at the beginning of the feature, then a fragment is heard after the launching of the first pierhead, and finally, as the pieces are towed across the Channel, it swells up broad and majestic to underline the emotional grandeur of the project. The music, specially composed by Walter Gaehr, is extensively used for the same variety of purposes as in McGivern's earlier feature, Junction X.

McGivern's treatment of the theme is broadly expressionistic, partly resulting from the mobility of the narration and partly from the use of many techniques pioneered in the experimental plays of the late nineteen-twenties. It is not an obvious expressionism, but a type of radio shorthand that allows McGivern to compress a great deal of information in a short space of time, and convey it more vividly and forcibly than would have been possible through straight dramatisation or unadorned narration. McGivern's vital concern is with facts, so they are never obscured by technical tricks done purely for dramatic effect. The dialogue is carefully written to establish an immediate impact over the microphone, and aided by the music, to sustain emotional interest in the story of this great engineering achievement; magnificently told without any attempts at rhetoric or highflown poetry. The prose is slightly stylised in the narrative passages, but it is never bombastic or pompous. When it expresses a general patriotic feeling like:

> Yes they're coming ... the workmen of Britain ... awkward, independent, embarrassed, hating the uprooting from their

> homes -- but at bottom, willing, steady and ready to laugh ... and in their fingers unequalled skill ...

it is not a matter of vague generalisation, because each quality is exemplified in the following dramatic sequences with a genuine sympathy and humanity.

The Harbour called Mulberry uses the full resources of radio production to build an exciting drama out of facts and the conveying of information. At every point the human interest of the story is emphasised without sentimentality, giving it an unusually great emotional power. The feature is an excellent piece of wartime propaganda, but the facts are never deliberately manipulated to produce a preconceived feeling of patriotism or democratic faith. These ideals arise quite naturally from the framework of the story.

Cecil McGivern had a profound influence on the subsequent history of the radio feature. He showed writers the necessity for sound construction, clarity in the presentation of fact, and the importance of appealing to the emotions as well as to the intellect. He proved conclusively that what had begun as radio's equivalent to popular journalism, had achieved the status of an art form in its own right.

This claim rests on the fact that the feature programme originated and developed within the sphere of radio itself, as distinct from the forms which broadcasting has borrowed or adapted from other arts or methods of publication. It is pure radio, a new means of expression for the creative writer and producer. Most people have been conditioned to think of drama

largely in terms of sight; they go "to see a play", or go "to the pictures", and this has probably been the greatest retarding factor in the development of radio drama. There has been no such preconceived tradition to distort the function of the radio feature. That is not to say most features avoid all suggestion of the visual element; they approach it in exactly the same manner as the radio play. Words and word pictures are the substitute for the absence of sight.

In 1951, Hugh Ross Williamson wrote "If radio can claim to be an art form at all, it must rest its claims upon the feature... The feature, in fact is the radio art form ... The very limitations of the medium are transformed into advantages to create something new which can be expressed in no other way."(24) The first part of his statement contains a basic fallacy. Radio is not an art form but a medium of communication through which one or more art forms may be transmitted, just as literature is a medium for the art forms of poetry, the novel and the essay. Williamson's second statement is equally untenable. We have already seen how Lance Sieveking, Tyrone Guthrie, Patric Hamilton and many others created plays inconceivable in any other medium but radio, by turning its limitations to their own distinct advantage. The truth of the matter is that some radio features justify this form as a unique and individual means of expression just as many radio plays do the same thing for radio drama.

A feature's claim to be a work of art rests largely on the author's selection of illustrations for the presentation of a group of facts, just as the radio dramatist selects his episodes

to reveal some part of human nature, or some episode in his story. The feature rises above mere reporting through its unity of purpose and design, its intimate emotional appeal and ability to communicate to the listener — not through its ability to record. There are endless possibilities for bringing together disparate elements from any subject whatever to form an entirely new creation whose manner and effectiveness of communication would be impossible in any other medium. The feature affords the greatest freedom to the writer both in technique and theme. He has at his disposal all the resources of radio production; for the illustration of his theme, he has all the ingredients of radio — sound effects, dialogue, narration, and all kinds of literature from poetry and the novel to science and statistics. In fact he is free to draw upon the entire range of fact and imagination in so far as it can be expressed in sound. This tremendous freedom of selection, the huge demand for scripts on every subject, the short time limit (usually half an hour, sometimes up to an hour), and the reasonably generous financial inducements offered by the BBC have been responsible for a tremendous growth in popularity, and the generally high standard of the feature programme.

Williamson included in his definition of the feature, that type of radio variety programme typified by Tommy Handley's "ITMA" during the war. Up to 1932, when the BBC moved into Broadcasting House, variety, along with features and drama, had been produced in the one Department under Val Gielgud.

As it became a more and more popular form of radio entertainment, Eric Maschwitz, Editor of The Radio Times, whose heart had always been in show business, took over Variety in 1933 and directed it until 1937, when he resigned from the BBC after making a stage hit with his musical comedy, Balalaika.

During the war years, "ITMA" achieved far and above the greatest listening figures for any radio programme. Tommy Handley evolved a form which has become a basic pattern for many similar variety shows, such as Much Binding in the Marsh, Take it from Here and Ray's a Laugh. The script writers for these series produce a half-hour programme of wit each week, constructed around one or more star characters, who are involved in a chain of dramatic situations from which the satire and wit arise. Radio enables these situations to totally disregard all restrictions of time and space, to utilise the most extravagant fantasy and to capitalise upon all kinds of symbolic or humorous sound effects. One moment the characters may be satirising current affairs in a quick succession of puns, jokes and wit, the next moment parodying a recent film or enacting a scene in Ancient Egypt. These programmes rest on a type of humour that is entirely dependent upon radio for its effect; read, or seen on the stage or screen, it would be quite meaningless.

The one essential of the variety show is that the audience must be kept on its toes, and this depends upon the consistency of the chief artists, upon pace and smooth production, and teamwork between actors, writers and producer. Because the individual never laughs so loudly as when he is with a crowd, the practice

evolved in 1935 of playing, (and later recording), variety shows before an audience. Few of them have succeeded which ignore this indispensable aid to the solitary radio listener's enjoyment.

The audience comes to look forward to the recurring verbal tag-line or gambit — such as Mrs. Mop's "Can I do you now, sir?" or Colonel Chinstrap's "I don't mind if I do!" — phrases that became widely known throughout Britain. This type of programme, depending upon a cultivated "spontaneity", places a severe strain upon scripters and performers alike, because it has to be new every week, and great ingenuity is required to retain the effectiveness of catch-lines which identify and endear the characters to the audience. The most popular practice is to make use of several "stock" situations carefully designed to suit the performers' personalities in each script, and to exploit these with every possible verbal variation until they grow stale and have to be replaced by new ideas. Roger Manvell considers that the spirit of these shows, the stock situations, characters and tag-lines, will carry both performers and audience over many moments of indifferent humour and even through whole programmes which fail to come off. "For shows of this kind build up a fund of audience goodwill which almost amounts to participation, and no one will be able to measure the contribution of "ITMA" to stimulating good feeling throughout Britain during the worst years of the war."(25) Like many feature programmes, it served a useful propaganda purpose.

Variety has attracted many writers of specialised skill and imagination because it can offer them a series of weekly scripts extended over a considerable period, and this makes it possible for some writers to specialise in the work and perfect their technique. For this reason, the variety show, which is, like the feature, a direct product of radio, has been elevated to an individual and unique entertainment form. Both types of programme originated in the BBC Drama Department, and have, with the radio play, an equal claim to be considered as "Art Forms".

The third hybrid offspring of radio drama, the serial, also matured during the years 1939 to 1945. Serials are the backbone of American radio and most commercial networks in Australia, but they made few appearances in the BBC before 1938, because the need to bring back the listener day after day, week after week, to hear the sponsors' goods advertised, did not exist in a State-owned monopoly. Serials are of more psychological and social interest than as an "art form". Roger Manvell cynically remarked of a rather notorious BBC serial, "Mrs. Dale's Diary", that "... it is the only form of drama in which the dramatist can allow his characters to live in natural time; they can take a full nine months to have their babies, if necessary, for, day in, day out, these characters parade their ordinary lives and ordinary problems to their ordinary listeners."(26) Hardly conditions favourable to art.

Not all serials, of course, follow the pattern of "Mrs. Dale's Diary". Some writers have brought them to a very high standard

in the creation of thrillers, which, provided they do not extend over too many episodes, can be extremely entertaining. But the greatest value of serialisation lies in the adaptation of lengthy novels which can be spread over a longer duration than the usual one and a half hour maximum of the normal radio play. Not every kind of novel will bear this sort of treatment, but it would be quite suitable for the sprawling, loosely constructed, 19th Century novels of authors such as Trollope, Dickens or Dostoievsky, who emphasise character more than atmosphere. The many episodes would allow the gradual building up of character in scenes without any other dramatic point. On the other hand, to treat Hardy, Conrad or Emily Bronte in this way would only lead to disaster, because these novelists depend for their effect, on a tightly constructed plot of interlocking incidents and the creation of a particular atmosphere impossible to recreate at the beginning of each episode.

Feature programmes of every kind benefited from the war equally as much as radio drama. Writers and producers were provided with a wealth of material that was of a common experience between them and their audience, while there was every incentive and encouragement to use it in fresh, exciting ways. The feature soon became the most flexible and resourceful vehicle for ideas, employing actuality, live or recorded, as well as the normal ingredients of radio drama. "Before the war ended," wrote Maurice Gorham, "'features' had become the BBC's chief means of dealing with public affairs in such a way that ordinary people would both listen and understand."(27) Their popularity

extended after the war, and the form is still used by the serious writer on the Third Programme as a unique means of self expression, and by the popular journalist as a means of interesting people in a dramatic way about all kinds of things beyond their immediate horizon.

vi.
Conclusion.

It is no accident that the best radio literature up till 1945 was written during the war. Writers found their inspiration in mirroring the common experience of all civilised people in terror, disgust, tears and hope. Without most of the technical machinery available before the war, both writers and audience "... turned their attention from what the machinery could do, to what it could do ... the end had taken over from the means."(28) There was a return on both sides of the Atlantic to simplicity of method. Writers asked themselves, some for the first time, "What is the object of writing a radio play?" The answer they supplied -- "the same as writing in the form of any fiction, to tell a story, as directly and persuasively as possible." Their attitude is summed up in a statement by the American radio dramatist, Arch Oboler: "... Mr. Corwin and I have declared a recess on techniques during the war period. We have tried to simplify our writing. We agree that this is not the time to experiment. This is the time to say the things that must be said, and to say them simply, completely and clearly."(29)

This simplicity of approach was not only dictated by the mechanical exigencies of the war period, but it was a conscious attitude of many dramatists. Sound effects were kept at a minimum and a far greater reliance was placed upon the use of words. Eric Linklater went further in this direction than

any other dramatist, by doing away almost entirely with sound effects and music, establishing atmosphere by words and argument alone, and appealing equally to the head and heart. Apart from using lively characters and small casts, Linklater made no other concession to easy listening.

The two dramatic series, The Man Born to be King and The Saviours are not altogether typical of the great quantity of wartime radio drama which was written and produced to supply the ever increasing demand of an audience cut off from most other forms of entertainment. Even so, these plays were hampered by wartime conditions. Val Gielgud, the producer of both series, said in a Production Note to The Man Born to be King:

> Before the war I would not have dreamed of undertaking plays of their calibre with less than a week's rehearsal, [they each went on the air after two days rehearsal only] with all the advantages of a dramatic control panel and a suite of studios in which such disturbing elements as crowds and effects could have been isolated from and very simply balanced against the main scenes and characters. (p.41.)

Eric Linklater, Dorothy Sayers and Clemence Dane are all distinguished authors who chose radio drama as the most suitable form in which to express certain ideas they thought needed expression, with the result that they each made a single outstanding contribution to a popular art form. But the tremendous demand for radio drama during the war years called for many authors who were willing to devote nearly all their literary energy to writing radio plays, or adapting novels or stage-plays.

Val Gielgud has collected and published a selection of the

best "popular" plays written specially for radio between 1937 and 1946. The authors represented in this volume are by no means great literary figures, nor do they pretend that their plays have anything of vital importance to say, but they are all fastidious craftsmen working in a medium they have come to thoroughly understand by constant practise. These plays are typical of the huge quantity of drama broadcast by the BBC since the late nineteen thirties. They are, in fact, the life blood of radio drama, because a dramatic art form cannot exist without plays to support it, and the number of radio plays written by highly reputable contemporary authors has been very few indeed.

The plays in Radio Theatre cover a variety of styles -- comedy, fantasy, thriller and the play of character.(30) With the possible exception of Emery Bonett's One Fine Day, they are all of ephemeral value; but in their general simplicity of treatment and direct approach, they clearly demonstrate the influence of wartime conditions on the dramatist. They are all experimental to some degree, though none requires elaborate studio machinery.

Music at Dusk, written and produced by Val Gielgud on May 17,1939, is little more than a study in sentimental atmosphere, but it contains the first use of personal narration, a technique later extensively used in The Saviours. In an introductory note to the play, Gielgud says that narration is too often regarded by the radio dramatist in the same light as the stage directions of stage-play, although the latter are only suggestions

or practical notes for the producer. In many adaptations of stage plays these directions are transformed into long, impersonal narratives, setting scenes, linking sequences, describing the movement of characters; so they often sound disconnected from the play. In Music at Dusk, Gielgud set out to tackle this problem. The narrator deliberately discards impersonality and becomes a principal character in the play. He begins by telling the listener something about himself and goes on to relate an event in his life, which is then dramatised as the main body of the play. It is told as a personal experience, warmly and intimately, exploiting the fact that a radio audience consists of individuals in a familiar environment who are susceptible to the personal touch.

Gielgud claims a place in the history of radio drama for Mr. Pratt's Waterloo, written by himself and Philip Wade, and produced on December 19, 1937, because it deliberately set out to be a comedy. He complains of a shortage of comedy in broadcasting up to that time, owing to an inability to aurally reproduce the English tradition of farce. Mr. Pratt's Waterloo is a mixture of satire and domestic humour. It moves at a pace, works up to a well-timed climax and has a neat dramatic twist before the curtain; but apart from that it possesses nothing to recommend it to the listener today.

Smash and Grab by Norman Edwards, first produced by Val Gielgud on September 5, 1943, is a well written and tightly constructed radio thriller, which shows very clearly the advantages

of simplicity in treatment and approach. The play works within a restricted canvas of time and space, using only a few characters sharply defined for easy identification by the listener. It has a strong but simple plot which strengthens in suspense, works up to a violent climax and, at the end, an unexpected twist adds surprise to shock. Although the characterisation is conventional and the ending a trifle slick, Smash and Grab shows that radio plays cannot afford to be too unwieldly or formless without weakening their dramatic impact.

The Tunnel by Mabel Constanduros and Howard Agg, produced by Peter Watts on January 2,1946, is another example showing the necessity for firm construction in radio drama. It is ingeniously developed and employs the flashback technique in an unusual way, connecting past and present by the sound effect of a train. Suspense and atmosphere are well sustained and the interruptions of the narrator are cleverly obviated, but not enough care was taken over the length of the sequences and the final working out of the plot is a little too mechanical to be convincing.

The most interesting play in the volume is Emery Bonett's fantasy, One Fine Day, produced by Val Gielgud on April 30,1945. Concerned with the exploits of the god Apollo among an English film unit on location, it is a delightful mixture of satire and high comedy. The story moves with great freedom in time and space, but Bonett's sure craftsmanship never allows it to slip into extravagance or whimsy. He makes extensive use of recorded music for changes in scene, intensification of

atmosphere and individual character themes. It is a gay, light-hearted entertainment-piece and although it lacks the underlying seriousness of Louis MacNeice's The Dark Tower, both plays are outstanding examples of radio fantasy.

The war years, with their blackouts, bombing, the closing of theatres and the lack of paper for books or periodicals, cut down alternatives and left radio as the principal medium of entertainment. Moreover, it was always there, irrespective of the blitz, and this fact alone earned the BBC tremendous prestige. So that, by the end of the war, British broadcasting had passed far beyond its exuberant, adolescent phase, and had grown up. It possessed resources immensely superior to those of 1939, both in technical equipment and experience, programmes and popularity. "The BBC that faced the task of post-war broadcasting," Maurice Gorham wrote, "was a much bigger, stronger and more vigorous concern than the BBC of 1939. It had faced and overcome the gravest challenges, learnt speed, efficiency, big thinking, and the habit of changing its ideas."(31)

The popularity of radio drama rose in leaps and bounds during the war, while "Saturday Night Theatre" became one of the best known regular spots in the Home Service. For the first time there was an audience almost compelled to give the necessary attention to radio plays, due to lack of alternative forms of drama and an intense desire to "escape" from the war. Writers and producers were forced to revise their attitude to the technique of the radio play and learnt the value of simplicity. Many serious authors were attracted to the new dramatic form,

and the period saw the first flowering, in the plays of Clemence Dane, Louis MacNeice and Edward Sackville-West, of what was soon to develop into a considerable body of poetic drama for the microphone.

VIII

THE FIFTH PERIOD : 1946-1954.

i.

Outline of the period.

Since the end of the war, the two most significant events in British broadcasting have been the re-introduction of a regular television service and the establishment of the BBC Third Programme, both of which took place in 1946.

Throughout the entire period of public service radio in Britain, both critics and playwrights have periodically predicted with confidence, that the addition of sight to broadcasting would mean the end of radio drama as surely as the addition of sound to the film announced the extinction of another dramatic art form -- the silent picture. At the present time, it is too early to estimate the precise effect television has had on radio drama, but apparently it has not been nearly as disastrous as the critics of the nineteen-thirties expected. More serious authors have been attracted to write radio plays since 1946 than in any other period in the development of the form, while the publication of many of their plays has created a valuable library of radio drama. Nor has the popularity of the form declined in the face of competition from the added attractions of televised drama; on the contrary, it has received a new lease of life, both directly and indirectly, from the establishment of the Third

Programme.

In November, 1944, the Director General of the BBC, W.J.Halley, now Sir William Halley, announced that after the war programme material would be re-orientated into three national services instead of two. The Home Service was continued, the Light Programme began on July 9, 1945, and the Third Programme on September 26, 1946.

One person was put in charge of each programme, but not of the departments which supplied it with material, which continued to work for all three. The Director General declared that the three services were to be run on a competitive basis as if they were owned by outside firms. There was no clear cut antithesis between the Home Service and Light Programme. Maurice Gorham, the first Controller of the Light wrote "My brief was to entertain; the programme could interest people in the world around them but it must never cease to entertain."(1) The Home retained "Saturday Night Theatre"and "ITMA", which, according to Gorham, rightly belonged to the Light, while the Light scheduled a programme of Chamber Music to compete with "ITMA". Both services were on the air from 9 a.m. to 12 midnight.

Between these two services and the Third Programme there was a very pronounced antithesis. Whereas the Light and the Home catered for the tastes of a very large section of the radio audience, as far as their tastes were ascertainable from Listener Research, the Third Programme was directed at a small minority group less interested in entertainment as such, than with ideals in radio programmes, with culture and with art.

Therefore Listener Research was of no use to the Third.

Even before the war, criticism had been levelled at the BBC's monopoly of broadcasting in Great Britain, and at the timidity of its policy. It was claimed that lack of competition was responsible for mediocre standards, and that in attempting to please most of the people most of the time, the interests of many minority groups were being neglected, if not ignored. The Third Programme was designed for a large number of these minority groups, the sum of which would represent a considerable proportion of the community. Now the listener must contribute to the success of a radio programme, in particular a radio play, by bringing to it concentration, an act of will and a conscious shutting out of all distractions. Not all listeners are willing to make such an effort, therefore the BBC thought it was not fair to penalise those who were willing, by designing all programmes to be listened to with one ear only. Hence the Third Programme was designed for the attentive listener who possessed more educated tastes in music, drama and other broadcast material. It was not expected that anyone would listen to it continuously or use it for background listening, but that people would select those items they wished to hear from The Radio Times and shut out all distractions while listening to them.

Initially, the Third Programme was controlled by George Barnes, with Etienne Amyot as Programme Planner and Leslie Stokes, Presentation and Publicity Officer. It is completely planned in London, not regionalised like the Home Service, and

by 1947 was broadcasting between 6 p.m. and midnight, and Sunday afternoons. One half of the Third Programme's fortytwo hours per week is devoted to "serious" music and the remainder consists of plays, talks, features and documentaries. There is no news, dance music, sport, variety shows or popular serials.

Unlike most American radio networks, where time is precise and valuable because it is sold to advertisers, the BBC's schedules are less rigid. The alternative services work within quarter-hour units, with few items running longer than an hour, but the absence of news bulletins and regular items in the Third Programme means that there are no fixed points in its schedule, and this allows greater flexibility in planning. As a result there is no time limit on the length of items, no necessity for them to be whittled down into the quarter-hour units, and no fear of disrupting the whole of the day's programme if one item runs a few minutes overtime. Elasticity of timing is a fundamental principle of the Third Programme, because clock watching must inevitably cramp the style of producer, author, musician and speaker.

In a concise and well defined declaration of the Third Programme's general policy, its controller, George Barnes said:

> For whom, then, is the Third Programme and what is its policy? To begin with, I would say that it is for the alert and receptive listener, the listener who is, first of all, willing to make an effort in selection and then to meet the performer half way by giving his whole attention to what is being broadcast... We shall make no effort to appeal to everyone all the time, nor shall we try to be all things to all men... The policy of the Third Programme is to set a high standard in its choice of broadcasts of music, drama and speech and to achieve the highest available level of performance.(2)

The Third Programme is undoubtedly the greatest medium for creative broadcasting in the world. Designed for an audience of a uniformly high intelligence, it provides every opportunity for experiments in the use of radio as a vehicle for several art forms. But even though its programmes are specifically for the educated listener, the Third Programme has never pretended to be an instrument of education. The B.B.C. Handbook, 1949 is quite adamant on this point. "The intention is to entertain and to interest the listener, and any educational purpose which may be served is a by-product of that intention."(p.126.)

What has been the effect of the Third Programme on radio drama? It has given the form a new lease of life by setting its standard high enough to produce plays which would have been impossible under less enlightened conditions. The list of productions for the first six months alone, includes works by Chaucer, Aeschylus, Ibsen and Marlow, and adaptation of George Orwell's Animal Farm, three plays of Shakespeare, a Bernard Shaw Festival of seven plays, Tennyson's Queen Mary and several plays by Louis MacNeice.

It is often argued that the segregation of the radio audience caused by the introduction of the Third Programme unfairly denies a good four-fifths of that audience the opportunity to listen to plays of such a high standard. To some extent this is true, but it can also be justifiably argued that the people who really want to listen to these plays would make the slight effort required to tune in to the Third Programme at the right time. The backbone of the BBC's dramatic output nevertheless

remains with the Home Service, especially in the two popular series "World Theatre" and "Saturday Night Theatre". The Classics are by no means confined to the Third -- Ibsen, Wilde, Webster, Shakespeare, Euripides, Anouilh, to name a few, have all been frequently represented in the Home Service.

More important than the number of high quality plays produced or commissioned by the Third Programme, is the immense prestige it has conferred on the BBC. Before 1946, one of the most powerful factors deterring reputable authors from radio drama was the general mediocre standard of the plays broadcast, which largely resulted from Reith's "domestic fireside policy", so carefully calculated to offend no section of the community. Many authors naturally drew the conclusion that to write plays that would be understood by the listening public necessitated some debasement of their own literary standards. Although Louis MacNeice deliberately set out to prove this was not the case at all, radio drama continued to be spurned by both the serious, difficult or "intellectual" author and listener. When the Third Programme was inaugurated, there existed a market for such intellectual material, together with an audience which possessed an above average intelligence and sensibility. The Third did much to dispel the prejudices of many authors and listeners who had hitherto been most resistant to all forms of radio programmes.

In 1942, Louis MacNeice had spoken out for the possibilities of a poetic radio drama. After the war many poets followed his example when they saw that the BBC was just as concerned

with the arts it served as with its listeners. Apart from an intelligent audience, the Third Programme offered many advantages over the Home Service in the conditions of broadcasting plays. The only time limit is the listeners' endurance. Exceptionally long plays are often broadcast in two halves, and a brief item placed in the interval to relieve the mental tension. The major dramas are repeated two or three times, often in the same week, which allows a greater number of people to hear them and helps mitigate the ephemeral nature of broadcasting.

Another advantage radio plays enjoy, is that they are far less subject to the rigid censorship of the alternative services. Readings from The Canterbury Tales in 1946, and in 1947, adaptations of Aristophanes' Lysistrata, Vanbrugh's The Relapse and Robert Donat's reading of Venus and Adonis, quickly dispelled any criticism of the Third Programme regarding censorship. Adaptations are usually given at full length, only those cuts being made which are essential in transferring them to the medium of broadcasting. Many contemporary authors have taken advantage of these conditions, but strangely enough, most of the poets who have written outstanding radio plays which are at the same time important contributions to modern literature, have spurned the intelligentsia and directed their work at the ordinary listener to the Home Service.

ii.
D.G. Bridson.

The first dramatist to demonstrate the potentialities of radio as the vehicle for a new form of poetic drama was D.G. Bridson, a young author who was "discovered" by E.A.F. Harding of the BBC's North Region, and induced to join the Corporation's staff in the early nineteen-thirties. He learnt the technique of radio presentation by writing features under the direction of Harding, and was very much influenced by Tyrone Guthrie's use of choral work and impressionistic musical effects. But whereas Guthrie had used these as distinct sequences to heighten the drama, or to comment on the action, Bridson recognised that they could be naturally integrated into the action of the play itself, to produce something which aspired to the conditions of opera.

The March of the '45 combines poetic narration, choral singing, music and brief sequences of normal dialogue.(3) The story follows Prince Charles Edward Stuart from his landing in the Hebrides to his final defeat at Culloden Moor, highlighting the action with bagpipes and Jacobean songs, and covering the sequence transitions with a quick-fire verse commentary, skilfully varied in form to match the changes in mood and tempo. It was first produced on February 28,1936, and repeated twice during the year on November 10 and 12.

The play is simply an adventure story told in words and music. No attempt is made to analyse Charlie's character, to

expose the mental and emotional turmoil of his soul; in fact the central character does not figure largely in the action at all, and less is made of his personal romanticism than his irresponsibility and stubborn, unrealistic determination to conquer England at all costs. The other characters are insubstantial sketches, sharply drawn but subordinated to the course of the action.

The action is described by two principal narrators; their dialect and that of the different minor characters varying according to the area which the army has reached as Charles advances further South into England. Sound effects, music and singing are used to advance the plot, to build and sustain atmosphere or mood. The most dramatic incidents of the story -- the gathering of the clans and the storming of Edinburgh -- are introduced by the two narrators in stirring, descriptive verse. Their voices fade into the subdued shouts of the men and skirl of the bagpipes, which build in volume and intensity to a climax capped by a vigorous male chorus. This is followed by more narration which then spotlights a particular dramatic interlude of normal dialogue. In the BBC transcription, the battle scenes, consisting of violent physical action, so difficult to present convincingly in radio drama, were handled with remarkable clarity and restraint. The shouting of the men, the background atmospheric music and the descriptive narration were beautifully combined in a three dimensional sound montage which conveyed a vivid impression of hopeless confusion, without the listener being in doubt for a moment as to who was

winning or what precisely was happening.

Again, the fluctuation of Prince Charles' fortunes, as he advances further South into the English winter, was not only described by the narration and interludes, but was reflected in the tone of the music and singing. The chorus, music, dialogue and narration, interdependent and so beautifully blended, made this play one of the most stirring adventure stories yet written in terms of pure sound.

Bridson's theme, a man's defeat by the ill-fortune of circumstance, is stated early by the two narrators, and repeated twice — when Charlie's fortunes are at their peak and later when they begin to wane.

> Time will not temporise,
> Fire will not hang ...
> .....
> Winter can be very severe about the Solway ...

The poetry shows a remarkable adaptability to the various requirements of the plot, mood and atmosphere. Always retaining its clarity, the verse is capable of expressing a wide range of emotions, from a vivid picturesque description to the fast moving narration of a battle. It never fails to make an immediate and unmistakable impact upon the listener. The B.B.C. Annual, 1957 cites The March of the '45 as the most distinguished radio piece of the year. "Here, probably for the first time, radio drama and art definitely met. Both from the poetic and the broadcasting point of view the level of this play was remarkably high."(p.29.)

In the strict sense of the word The March of the '45 is not

so much a play as a feature, because it is less concerned with human beings than with an historical event. But Bridson tells the story of the Jacobite rebellion as a human epic, emphasising its emotional grandeur by making use of every resource of verse, music and sound effects. The programme led the way to many more experiments, as feature writers and dramatists adopted the techniques Bridson pioneered. The Saviours is indebted in no small measure to The March of the '45, but Clemence Dane's plays lack the broad dramatic sweep of their predecessor, and in comparison, are rather fussy, stuck-together pot-pourris of music, verse, narration, dialogue and effects. The first author to approach Bridson's breadth of vision and masculinity of approach was Louis MacNeice, whose martial pageant in sound, Christopher Columbus, was afterwards published with a timely apologia for the poetic radio play.

iii.
Louis MacNeice.

Prior to the outbreak of war, many "serious" or "difficult" contemporary authors ignored radio as a medium for their art mainly because of their contempt for the radio audience. They understood that too great a strain could not be placed on the listening capacity of an audience numbered in millions and consisting of small groups of ordinary people, diversified in their occupation and social situation, their intellectual and aesthetic capabilities. Moreover these people were not inclined to make, and most of them were incapable of making, a concentrated listening effort in order to meet an author half way; therefore the only manner in which they could be approached was by "writing down"; that is, by writing according to standards the author would normally consider low. Rather than jeopardise their artistic integrity, many of the literary intelligentsia preferred to do without broadcasting altogether.

During the war, serious authors were drawn to radio, partly from choice, partly from necessity, and produced work that was of a high literary standard as well as being good entertainment. The major gift of the war to broadcast drama was Louis MacNeice, who had been a leader of the rebel, intellectual poets of the nineteen-thirties with Stephen Spender, W.H.Auden and Cecil Day Lewis. These poets possessed one unavoidable characteristic -- their work <u>was</u> difficult: they were understood and enjoyed by only a small proportion of the reading public.

MacNeice was the first serious writer, who held the respect and admiration of the professional critics as a lyric poet and classical scholar, to show that it was possible for writers like himself to approach and entertain the British listening public without lowering their standards or risking their artistic integrity. MacNeice's radio plays and essays on radio drama had an immense influence upon shaping the evolution of a substantial body of poetic drama for the microphone in Great Britain.

After lecturing in America at Cornell University in 1939, Louis MacNeice returned to London the following year and offered himself to the BBC as a script writer in support of the national cause. He joined the Features Department and learnt there the technique of radio presentation by writing a number of programmes aimed at clarifying the moral issues of the war. Since then he has given British radio a profusion of excellent programmes which includes features, radio drama, actualities, talks, adaptations and variety. His most notable contributions include a series of programmes which resulted from a visit to India as a member of the joint Features and News team sent by the BBC to report and commemorate the transfer of power to India and Pakistan(4); an adaptation in verse of Goethe's "Faust" which Laurence Gilliam considers "one of the outstanding achievements of sound broadcasting"(5); an excursion into the field of variety -- The March Hare Saga (6); and two original broadcast plays which are among the finest work in the medium -- Christopher Columbus and The Dark Tower.(7)

MacNeice has won a unique place among modern writers by his masterly and imaginative command of the microphone for the expression of ideas. His work has a high intellectual content, not always immediately comprehensible, yet he commands both admiration from the professional literary critics, and popularity from the listening public. At first sight it might be inferred that for a serious modern poet to command such popularity he must inevitably have made some concessions to popular taste. But this could not be further from the truth. None of MacNeice's published scripts shows any acceptance of standards lower than those by which his poetry is written. Christopher Columbus and The Dark Tower are not only good radio plays, but significant contributions to modern literature, which stand high among the whole of MacNeice's creative output. His success in the field of radio drama is entirely due to a practical, down-to-earth, common-sense approach to a popular art form, which is nonetheless an art form.

As an Introduction to Christopher Columbus Louis MacNeice published a general exposition of radio drama which he later amended and expanded in a General Introduction to The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts. MacNeice's approach is that of a craftsman working in a medium which may instruct but must never cease to entertain. He makes no bones about this point -- "... you can get away with anything -- so long as you entertain". (8) On this basic proposition MacNeice presents his theory of a poetic radio drama which will seduce the imagination of the ordinary listener who would naturally feel aversion to printed

or spoken poetry as literature. It can be roughly divided into three headings -- the British Radio Audience, the poet's relation to it, and the artistic compromise required to approach this audience through the form of radio drama.

MacNeice refuses to subscribe to the conception of the ordinary listener as a lazy, unintelligent escapist, fascinated by sensational reporting, incapable of listening to anything with an intellectual content and violently prejudiced against "Art". The man in the street may not be over intelligent, he says, but "I refuse to believe that ...(he is)... as insensitive or as emotionally atrophied as is sometimes assumed by the intelligentsia."(9) Radio drama does not appeal only to reason -- its primary appeal is to the emotions, and emotional appeal is the greatest contributory factor in entertainment. If the listening public does not possess a very high intellectual capacity, it does possess a strong desire to be entertained, and entertainment must be the first consideration of any artist if he wants to obtain a hearing.

That the ordinary listener prefers sensationalism and sex, the vulgar and emotionally false, is not due to any inherent trait in his own character, MacNeice maintains, but is the result of emotional conditioning in this direction by the "entertainment industry" itself -- and for this, the BBC must accept some responsibility. MacNeice's implication is that the public could be just as easily conditioned in the opposite direction towards the beautiful and emotionally true -- given the right approach by the author.

But, MacNeice asks, how is the poet to get in touch with this huge, unsophisticated audience, without writing down? The answer is by working within the limits of the medium and its audience. The poet's task is to contrive ways and means to seduce the imagination of listeners whose surroundings have nothing of the glamour or sense of occasion they would feel in attending the theatre or cinema; listeners who would normally feel themselves allergic to poetry as literature. The poet must regard the audience as primitive, and therefore appeal to the more primitive elements in everyone, whatever else he does. This does not imply a lowering of standards, but is a simplified statement of the fact that the first duty of an artist to his audience is to hold their attention, to entertain them while he says what he has to say. Shakespeare is regarded as a great dramatist today because his plays continue to hold the stage -- they entertain an audience in a theatre, irrespective of anything else they do. Their moral and literary value is incidental to this fact.

The radio dramatist, MacNeice holds, must forget about literature and concentrate on <u>sound</u>. This is how literature began with the Homeric and Icelandic bards and how it continued up to, and even beyond, the invention of printing. Naturally, the radio play will preclude the more subtle nuances of symbolist poetry but it does not preclude the basic human emotions and their expression through the broader forms of poetry. The man in the street dislikes the <u>idea</u> of poetry, but, MacNeice declares, when it is spoken over the radio in a play which grips

his attention "... he will, like the audience of the primitive bards, listen to the words, or rather to the sounds, as they come and will like them or not according to their emotional impact."(10)

The third part of MacNeice's theory -- The Requirements of the Medium -- is a consideration of the technique of radio writing. Above all else he emphasises the necessity of craftsmanship, a complete and thorough knowledge of how an audience's attention may be won and held. The one essential of any radio dramatic script is construction, which implies dramatic unity and economy. Characters and situations must be clearly established, the line of development must be strong and simple, because the writer is working within a narrow time limit and his speakers are invisible. Every effort should be made to avoid confusing, boring, or sidetracking the listener, and overstraining his memory. To be able to do this not only requires a thorough knowledge of the artistic canons of radio drama, but a familiarity with the mechanical means by which radio drama is produced and transmitted.

MacNeice insists that the radio play must make its appeal to the listener on one plane only and "... can only reach its heights when the subject is slightly larger, or at least simpler, than life and the treatment is to some extent stylised -- when, we might say, it is competing with the Soviet art-cinema rather than with Hollywood or the standardised news-reel."(11) MacNeice had in mind D.G.Bridson's The March of the '45, a brilliant example of a popular story treated broadly, rapidly

and vividly, and using all the resources of radio; a play which bears out in exemplary fashion, the tenets of his theory.

MacNeice's exposition of radio drama is by no means an abstract theory, but the clearheaded, point/ed and objective observations of a man who had made a conscientious study of a new, popular art form. It is based on a knowledge of radio mechanics, an appreciation of the work of radio playwrights who preceded him and, most important, the trial and error of his own experiments in the medium. He had a profound influence on the major poetic dramatists for radio who followed him, who rarely did anything to flout the rules of this form that MacNeice laid down. Their plays all have a theme larger than life and are stylised in treatment. Moreover they all entertained "the ordinary listener", for only two have been broadcast on the Third Programme. The extent of this influence may be gauged from another surprising feature they each have in common, a feature which MacNeice seems to have obtained from The March of the '45. Christopher Columbus, The Rescue, The Dark Tower, The Voyage of Magellan and Moby Dick are all based on the journey through space and time, a convenient framework favourable to a broad, lucid and dramatic treatment. Even in Under Milk Wood, the two Narrators take the listener for one complete day's journey through the lives of the characters in a small Welsh town.

In 1942, Louis MacNeice was commissioned by the BBC to write a play to be performed in celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of America. In collaboration with William Walton, the British composer, he wrote

Christopher Columbus, a play that stands out as one of the longest and most ambitious projects by the BBC. It was produced by Dallas Bower in the Home Service on December, 12, 1942, with the BBC Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Chorus under Chorusmaster Leslie Woodgate.

Christopher Columbus is a play about Columbus' discovery of America, not about Columbus himself. We do not hear the posing and resolution of a dramatic conflict, but rather an historic pageant in sound, relying almost as much upon William Walton's music as the author's words. The theme has a natural dramatic quality of its own, and conveniently falls into two parts of approximately equal length.

The first act deals with Columbus' long struggle for recognition and support. It begins when he first comes to Spain, after his requests for a ship have been refused by the Portugese Government. He is sent from nobleman to nobleman until he is granted an audience with the Queen of Spain, through the intervention of her Confessor. She refers the matter to a Royal Commission, whose members are unanimous in their dislike of Columbus, and consequently refuse to hear his arguments. Almost at the point of despair, he tries to forget his wild ideas in a quayside tavern, but the chance remarks of a few good intentioned drinkers reawake in him his fanatical desire to find a western route to Asia. Columbus decides to leave Spain in search of patronage, and then follows a brief scene with his mistress, Beatriz, whom he forsakes in favour of a "higher mission". While farewelling the Prior, who first offered him

refuge in Spain, he is urged to wait upon the Queen once more, for the war against the Moors was almost won. This he does, but again she refers the matter to a Commission. This time they agree to the voyage upon certain conditions, but Columbus will not listen to them and proposes such outrageous conditions of his own, that they are furious and again refuse him. Just when his fortunes seems at rock bottom, we hear that the Queen herself has agreed to finance the expedition -- and at this point the first act ends.

The second act deals with the next development of Columbus' story: the great adventure of the voyage into unknown seas and his subsequent return to Spain. After the embarkation scenes, the act concentrates on Columbus' mental conflict between doubt and faith, his suppression of a near mutiny when the crew notice the compass is playing up, and the landing on American soil. The scene changes back to Spain and the play ends with a long sequence describing Columbus' triumphant procession from Seville to Barcelona.

MacNeice's treatment of the story is an extreme simplification of history. His judicious selection of incidents shows a sound dramatic judgment in omitting all that is irrelevant to the theme. The play does not presume to be a study of Columbus the man, but of Columbus' exploration, and MacNeice cannot therefore be criticised for not doing complete justice to his principal character. This would have required the continuation of the story further on from where MacNeice left off, in order to show Columbus' failure as a ruler, the tragedy of his disgrace and his conduct in misfortune. But, as MacNeice explains in

an Appendix to the play, an heroic subject like the discovery of America demanded an epic, rather than a psychological, treatment. By including Columbus' later career the listener's attention would have been transferred from the event to the man, thus introducing an anti-climax, which is usually fatal in a radio drama.

Everything in the play is subordinated to the theme, so MacNeice selects from Columbus' idiosyncrasies only those outstanding traits essential to contribute to the mounting climax of the story -- his pride and patience, his visionary imagination and sense of mission, his single-minded devotion to his quest, his air of mystery and masterful determination in a crisis. The weaker side of his character is deliberately slurred over because it is of no importance to the theme.

The adaptation of such a well known, historical theme to the broad and simple treatment required for radio dramatic presentation, inevitably resulted in some inaccuracies, but none are of very great importance. For instance, MacNeice changed the date of birth of Columbus' son to bring the liaison with Beatriz Enriquez into romantic relation with the theme. This aspect of the story is briefly treated in two short scenes, not merely to add "love interest" as an additional attraction for the ordinary listener, but in order to show Columbus' almost fanatical single-mindedness. The scenes with Beatriz avoid any trace of sentimentality and are written with exceptional restraint. This throws her casual remarks to a bystander, after Columbus has sailed, into a moving dramatic relief:

Vasco: And what may he be leaving behind?

Beatriz: Only a woman he does not love ...
Only that and a child he will never know.

One review of the play's first performance was more trenchant about another of MacNeice's historical liberties -- his "... preposterous suggestion that the Salamanca Commission on the exploration project, representing as it did the learning of the Spanish Church, could possibly have included believers in a flat earth. The real question in debate, of course, was not the shape of the globe, but its circumference."(12) They were right, the critic continues, in saying Columbus' judgment of the distance from Spain to Asia was a wild underestimate. Ironically enough, it corresponded to the distance from Spain to the American lands of whose existence Columbus never dreamt and did not recognise when he reached them.

The construction of Christopher Columbus is simple and strong. It consists of a single dramatic movement of increasing suspense, leading, in a variety of episodes, to the climax of the discovery, and the final sustained crescendo of Columbus' triumphant return to Spain. The continuity of sequences is graceful and orderly, the allusions are always precise, the transitions smooth, the progress effortless and economical. The story is told by a mixture of realistic dialogue broken up by long passages of narration and stylised choral work, usually accompanied by music. V.S.Pritchett finds the radio play most effective when stylised, but he prefers a more massive method to the cinematic technique MacNeice employs in many of his sequence groups.(13) The rapid succession of many brief scenes

can function as a valuable compression or expositional device, leaving more time for an extensive development of the important episodes. For instance, that part of Act I in which Columbus is handed on from one nobleman, to another compresses the events of several years into a few minutes, while the opening sequences of Act II convey a tremendous amount of information in three or four diverse fragments of conversation. As long as the author keeps a close check on it, the cinematic technique is often more dramatic than long passages of bare narration.

MacNeice dispenses with the narrator in Christopher Columbus and adopts the theatrical technique of conveying all background information through the dialogue. The stylised treatment allows him sometimes to "plant" characters for the express purpose of describing some action. When the ship's crew sight strange men on the shore of the New World, one of the sailors announces "Wait and I'll describe them ..." The final triumphant procession to Barcelona is conveyed to the listener by several onlookers who are there for no other apparent reason. Emotional appeal is given to these passages by background music. MacNeice points out that "... the whole of Columbus' triumphant procession from Seville to Barcelona had processional music in the background; this meant that the running commentaries in verse during these sequences were delivered, over the music, with much the same tempo and punch that characterise a real running commentary delivered over the noise of a crowd on a sportsground."(14)

Some of the narration is disguised in the voices of Doubt and Faith and their respective echoes, who act as a sort of Greek

Chorus, commenting on the action or pointing the dramatic conflict by representing the projection of Columbus' inner dialectic in simple, unadorned language:

Faith: You shall achieve what you have designed —
Echo: you have designed.

Doubt: The steed you are riding is doomed to a fall —
Echo: doomed to a fall.

Faith: Beyond the horizon is something to find —
Echo: something to find.

Doubt: Beyond the horizon is nothing at all —
Echo: nothing at all.

MacNeice never loses an opportunity to increase the dramatic appeal of his play. The plot has in it a number of twists, reversals, minor climaxes and anti-climaxes, yet each of them drives the story relentlessly forward. The interspersed stylised passages have a strong, engaging rhythm and vivid, emotive associations. William Walton's music, though not indicated in the text, played a structural, not merely a decorative role, in the transitions between sequences, as a background to the stylised passages and an accompaniment to the many sung lyrics and semi-choral interludes, thus heightening the listener's response to MacNeice's poetry.

The poet who writes stage-plays must reconcile the form of his verse with the limitations of the theatre. In cadence and rhythm, he is limited by what may be spoken aloud by actors to an audience, without sounding wearisome, while his imagery must be capable of being understood in one hearing, (though the visual appeal of a play may compensate for occasional obscure passages). Similarly the verse dramatist for radio is restricted to what

can be immediately perceived by the ear alone. The ear is the receiver and interpreter of meaning, therefore meaning must be exact. In writing Christopher Columbus, Louis MacNeice carefully avoided all obscure associations or derivations, and relied for his effect on a strongly accented musical line, which radio especially favours, together with simple, strong imagery based, for the most part, upon sight and other sense perceptions. The dialogue and narration are set in a rimed, irregular verse form based on the rhythms of ordinary speech. It sustains pace and momentum without sounding monotonous through an oppressive metronomic beat. Almost colloquial in its cadences and accent, the verse moves naturally between the most highly emotional flights of imagination and the flats of casual, quick-fire conversation, as well as adapting itself without effort to a diversity of characters. Above all MacNeice's poetry possesses the one quality essential to all forms of drama: it is easy to speak. The B.B.C. Year Book, 1949, stated "Actors love the sinewy quality of his writing for speech, the sharp contemporary tang of his scholar-poet's idiom."(p.61.)

As the first attempt to produce a "full-length" play on the Home Service, Christopher Columbus was, like The March of the '45, a courageous and ambitious venture. The plays have many similarities. Bridson and MacNeice were both admirable craftsmen who used the full resources of radio to tell an exciting story in a vigorous and dramatic manner. Their example was soon followed by several poets who learnt from Christopher Columbus that it was possible to be popular without being vulgar,

to seduce the imagination without crudity, to make the necessary compromises dictated by the limitations of the medium and its audience without a lowering of artistic values, and to produce a work of popular entertainment without pandering to popular taste.

Louis MacNeice's best known radio play, The Dark Tower was, suggested to him by Browning's poem, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came", a work whose meaning has yet to be rationally analysed. It was first produced by the author in the BBC Home Service on January 21, 1946, with special music composed by Benjamin Britten.

"The Dark Tower," MacNeice points out in an Introductory Note, "is a parable play, belonging to that wide class of writings which includes Everyman, The Faerie Queene and The Pilgrim's Progress."(p.21.) Far from being an antiquated literary form, allegory can be very effective so long as it is clothed, not disguised, by a realistic or surrealistic surface meaning. MacNeice holds that the taste for realism is over:

> The single-track mind and the single-plane novel or play are almost bound to falsify the world in which we live. The fact that there is method in madness and the fact that there is fact in fantasy (and equally fantasy in 'fact') have been brought home to us not only by Freud and other psychologists but by events themselves. This being so, reportage can no longer masquerade as art. So the novelist, abandoning the 'straight' method of photography, is likely to resort once more not only to the twist of plot but to all kinds of other twists which may help him to do justice to the world's complexity. Some element of parable therefore, far from making a work thinner and more abstract, ought to make it more concrete. Man does after all live by symbols.(p.21.)

The Dark Tower moves on a dual plane: as a fantastic, earthly adventure, full of suspense and surprise, and in a world of

spiritual values and symbols whose meanings are not algebraically worked out, but clearly emerge from the events and people Roland encounters during the course of his quest.

The allegory of The Dark Tower is based on the story of a young man who must venture forth from his home, his parents and his friends, to meet a dragon which will certainly destroy him. The play is a morality and its moral is the truth that evil is indestructible by human agencies but must, nevertheless, be constantly challenged and driven back if good is to survive. The dragon is the symbol of all the forces of evil pitted against mankind. It can never be destroyed but man must always exercise his free will to keep it at bay, for only by the constant renewal of sacrifice can it be prevented from infecting life. MacNeice introduces a subsidiary theme by identifying the dragon with the threat of Fascism, and allowing Roland to be temporarily seduced from his duty by the promise of happiness and pleasure, just as the generation which reached maturity between 1918 and 1939 was faced with the same problem. Thus the spiritual values analysed in the play are brought into sharper focus by relating them to contemporary events. Roland is the symbol of the hero who must sacrifice himself for the good of his fellow men, and the play tells of his education for this destiny before he can accept it, his defeat of those forces which attempt to seduce him from his quest, and his final challenge to the powers of evil.

Although Roland is a symbolic figure, he is also a human being. When we first meet him he is an eager, intelligent and restless

boy, being taught by his tutor that he must reject love and comfort and prepare himself for a timeless quest which can only end in his own sacrifice. He is more lively and sensitive than his brothers who had previously sacrificed themselves in the quest he is about to make, and therefore more liable to seduction. Roland's decision is harder because he loves and is loved by Sylvie, but he knows he must forget her. Beset by doubt in the validity of all he has been taught, he asks the Sergeant "Do you believe in all this ... do you think that there really is any dragon to fight? ... nobody's <u>seen</u> this dragon." In order to quell his doubts, Roland's tutor sends him off to visit Blind Peter.

Blind Peter is another obvious symbolic figure, but he, too, is clothed in flesh and blood by the intensity of the repentance he feels for his past life. He lives with his conscience, regretting a time when the Dragon was loose and no one had challenged it. He had sent men to their death by turning informer and eventually blinded himself at the sight of so much evil for which he was responsible. MacNeice identifies Fascism with the dragon through the figure of Blind Peter, who stands for those who succumbed to Fascism without resistance and were spiritually destroyed by accepting it.

In Roland's conversation with Blind Peter, MacNeice makes his allegory more explicit:

> Roland: Why put the blame of everything on the Dragon?
> Men have free choice, haven't they?
> Free choice of good or evil —
>
> Blind Peter: That's just it —
> And the evil choice is the Dragon!

> But I needn't explain it to you, sir; you've made up your mind,
> You're like your father — one of the dedicated
> Whose life is a quest, whose death is a victory.
> Yes! God Bless you! You've made up your mind!

But Roland has not made up his mind. It has been half made up for him by everything he has been taught. He has not yet accepted the righteousness of his destiny through a conscious decision made in perfect freedom of will. Sylvie again tries to seduce him from his destiny, but the conversation with Blind Peter had moved him and he suddenly realises that the reason why he must go on is not to save Blind Peter himself, but to prevent a recurrence of his type. He is farewelled by the Sergeant Trumpeter and his mother, who gives him a burning ring to remind him of his duty. Amid a roll of drums Roland sets off on his quest against the forces of evil -- but he is not yet fully convinced of its necessity.

After further temptation from a lecharous soak who attempts to persuade him that the quest is a dream and that he is being used by others for their own ends, Roland boards a ship "For the Dead End of the World and the Bourne of no Return." It is a ship full of "souls at sea", intent on pleasure and killing time. Again he is almost seduced by the voluptuous Neaera, but at the last minute he sees Sylvie beckoning from the barren shore, and leaps overboard to join her. Through the figure of Sylvie and the people on board the ship, MacNeice introduces a subsidiary theme in the play -- the conflict between the duty of sacrifice and the desire for happiness. Neaera had beset Roland with the temptations of mercenary love, physical comfort

and superficial pleasure; Sylvie offers him domestic happiness. This theme ties up with the idea of Fascism symbolised by the dragon, for the shipboard company is MacNeice's own generation which grew to maturity between the two wars: a generation marked by a cynical fatalism, the gradual abandonment of faith and obsessed with the desire for "a good time". Just as this generation solved the conflict between pleasure and duty by freely uniting against Fascism in 1939, so does Roland regain his spiritual strength and freedom of will — but not before he temporarily succumbs to the attraction of Sylvie's offer. After a tremendous struggle with his conscience, Roland forsakes her and enters a terrifying spiritual jungle completely isolating him from the land of his birth. The play turns into a hideous nightmare, as phantasmal voices mock, leer and jibe at his mental turmoil, while it seems that the whole world of the living, dead and unborn call upon him to save them.

Gathering strength from the memory of his mother, he notices the ring has stopped burning, which means she is dying. Her voice calls him home and believing it his duty to return, he is about to turn back when he discovers a stone with the inscription:

> To Those ...
> Who went to their Death of their Own Free Will
> Bequeathing Free Will to Others.

But Roland still suspects that he did not set out of his own free will and was pushed into going from the start. In the very act of returning he stops and suddenly decides to go forward again to make his challenge, with all the surrounding forces pitted against him, including the girl who used her love to

keep him back and even his mother who first urged him on. This sudden reversal is quite effective as a dramatic device, but it does seem the one weakness of the play. MacNeice anticipates this criticism in his Introductory Note, maintaining that people do make such sudden decisions in real life. To the reader, Roland's flash of what seems like mystical revelation does not fit into the logic of the play. No doubt, as MacNeice adds, it would not be obvious to the listener, and is not therefore so reprehensible as it appears to the reader.

The final scene is the most moving in the play and is an almost perfect use of radio to achieve its own unique form of dramatic climax and resolution. Roland's heart beats with fear as mountains slowly rise and imprison him in what was once an horizonless desert. The heart beat is taken up by the drums and orchestra and swells in intensity as Roland is urged on by the voices of all his childhood friends. The Dark Tower rises out of the ground, and under its shadow Roland makes his challenge to the dragon. At first timid, his voice grows in resolution and fierceness until he puts the trumpet to his lips and blows out the final note of triumph. We hear the approving voice of the Sergeant Trumpeter who helped train him for his destiny "Good lad, Roland. Hold that note at the end", and the play closes as the note is enriched and endorsed by the full orchestra. It is difficult to imagine the impact of this last scene without the music. However Edward Sackville-West gives some idea of what MacNeice meant when he said the music was structural and added another dimension to the play: "The music at the end of

The Dark Tower does not come to a 'full close': on the contrary, it ends on an unresolved chord (a dominant seventh —Benjamin Britten's invention, one must suppose), which rightly, and most ingeniously, leaves the listener expectant. The moral of the play is that Roland's quest never properly ends, but has to be taken up afresh by each succeeding generation; hence the suspended chord..."(15) In a previous review of the play's first performance, Sackville-West wrote "Britten's music achieved overwhelmingly dramatic effects by the simplest of means..."(16)

Louis MacNeice showed remarkable insight in perceiving the great freedom radio offers the dramatist for the use of symbolism and the allegorical method. Symbolism on the stage or screen usually appears clumsy or affected, while the effort to disguise it in terms of emotional and dramatic appeal too often submerges its meaning. But radio appeals primarily to the imagination, and symbolism properly belongs to the imagination. MacNeice capitalised on the freer imaginative appeal of radio by clothing his allegory in the fluid structure of the dream, and telling a story which not only retains its symbolic logic, but deals with human values as well as spiritual. Roland's struggles with his conscience, his temptations, his doubts, his wavering from duty, have at some time or other been experienced by us all in much the same way — though not in the same surroundings.

The dream structure also allowed MacNeice the greatest possible freedom in the treatment of his theme, as well as affording him the opportunity to indulge in every kind of antic and device which would attract the listener and augment the

play's entertainment value; but they are, at the same time, integral to the development of the story. The Dark Tower abounds with unusual expressionistic and magical effects. When the Soak is unable to tempt Roland into the tavern, he conjures one up around him by words and music. After Roland forsakes Sylvie, he enters into a nightmarish jungle of weird music and gibbering voices, as the characters he has previously met, join in a delirious, choral chant swelling to a tremendous climax which is sharply broken off by Roland's agonised scream of denial — "No." His mental conflict is frequently objectified, as, for instance, in the scene at the Chapel where his doubt is expressed by the voices of Blind Peter, his father and mother. MacNeice brilliantly exploits the use of sound effects in the scene on board ship in which the embarkation, the gambling, the landing and the love affair between Neaera and Roland are economically suggested by brief snatches of dialogue, atmospheric music and effects. The dreamlike quality is maintained throughout the play by smooth transitions from sequence to sequence. As in Christopher Columbus, the traditional Narrator, who would have no place in a dream, is replaced by the clever use of different characters who give information by unobtrusive methods while getting on with the action.

The Dark Tower avoids too much visual imagery, and concentrates on pure sound which gives the play a smoother dramatic flow. An over-abundance of long descriptive or narrative speeches tends to hold up the action and irritate the listener by making

him all the more conscious of his blindness. The most striking feature of MacNeice's poetry is its eloquence. Even when most colloquial the dialogue sparkles with life. There are in the play no purple passages, no self contained lyrics, no extraneous poetry — every word contributes to building of suspense or atmosphere. The poetry gains from many rich associations with other works with a quest theme, particularly The Faerie Queene and The Pilgrim's Progress. It is only by these associations and MacNeice's strong sense of rhythm that the dialogue would be overtly recognised as poetry.

The symbolism is restricted to what can be made abundantly clear in simple terms. It is never literary or obscure. The imagery of his verse is entirely without abstractions or intellectualism, subjective or interpretative attitudes. Its meaning is always immediately apparent, for MacNeice, rather than obscure the allegory, is frequently at pains to drive it home to the listener in the guise of ordinary, everyday, casual conversation:

Roland: And that means I'll fight the Dragon?

Tutor: Yes — but let me tell you:
We call it the Dragon for short, it is a nameless force
Hard to define — for no one who has seen it,
Apart from those who have seen its handiwork,
Has returned to give an account of it.
All that we know is there is something there
Which makes the Dark Tower dark and is the source
Of evil through the world. It is immortal
But men must try to kill it — and keep on trying
So long as we would be human.

Roland: What would happen
If we just let it alone?

Tutor: Well ... some of us would live longer; all of us
Would lead a degraded life, for the Dragon would be supreme
Over our minds as well as our bodies ...

The theme of The Dark Tower is old, hackneyed and done to death, but Louis MacNeice placed it in a new, unusual setting and peopled it with fresh and exciting characters. By relating his theme to contemporary events and dramatising it in terms of credible human experiences, MacNeice has made one of the most imaginative and significant contributions to radio drama. Roger Manwell considered it "... the most beautiful and rewarding of the plays yet written for broadcasting."(17) Edward Sackville-West, a man whose opinion is based on practical experience in the same form, was no less generous in his praise. After the first performance of the play, he ranked it as MacNeice's "... most remarkable achievement in the medium, and among the half dozen most moving broadcasts I have heard"(18); of a repeat performance he was even more eulogistic(19), and by the time the play had been published, Sackville-West was convinced that The Dark Tower was the most exciting, imaginative and profound play he had ever heard.(20)

No contemporary author has done more than Louis MacNeice to develop the art of poetic drama for the microphone, both through his own plays and the influence on later dramatists exerted by the observations he made on the form. He showed what could be done with the radio play provided the dramatist was willing to make a thorough study of the requirements of the medium and its audience. Few writers of MacNeice's quality have been able to apply themselves so wholeheartedly to radio,

and very few of those who attempted radio plays have rivalled his complete mastery and imaginative use of the microphone. One critic remarked on his unique position in modern literature:

> The professional literati respect him, and watch with some foreboding as one of the major poets of our time walks easily and gracefully through the labyrinth of broadcasting, revolutionizing its technique, and making exciting contact with an audience of millions.(21)

iv.
Edward Sackville-West.

The Rescue, by Edward Sackville-West, is a radio melodrama based on Homer's Odyssey, which, with an orchestral score by Benjamin Britten, was produced by the BBC in two parts on November 25 and 26,1943.(22) The play is subtitled a "melodrama" in its original sense, as given in the Oxford English Dictionary: "a play, usually romantic or sensational in plot and incident, in which songs are interspersed and in which the action is accompanied by orchestral music appropriate to the situation." The Rescue is a music drama, which approaches the form of opera. In a critical Preamble, Sackville-West discusses the problems that confront the writer and producer of music-drama, in relation to the dramatic structure of his own play. He points out in a concluding note that these observations deliberately avoid the ground covered by Louis MacNeice's preface to Christopher Columbus.

Sackville-West evidently agrees with MacNeice's insistence upon the broad, lucid and dramatic treatment of a theme larger or simpler than life, to which everything else, including the characters, is subordinate. Columbus' voyage of discovery is an event comparable in this respect with the theme of The Rescue — the return of Odysseus to Ithaca. But the two authors differ in their approach to the listener and their particular aim in each play.

MacNeice emphasises the importance of entertainment value

to a far greater extent than Sackville-West — "You can get away with anything — so long as you entertain." In Christopher Columbus and The Dark Tower, he shows more respect for the ordinary listener by continually striving to attract and hold his attention with a wide variety of dramatic 'tricks', which are a trifle irritating to the reader but would undeniably add light and shade to the plays in performance. In comparison with The Dark Tower, The Rescue is practically ascetic. Sound effects, and acoustic distortion are almost eliminated, there are no impressionistic devices, the sequences are developed at length, there are more characters and consequently a greater effort in concentration is required of the listener.

"This austerity," Sackville-West wrote, "is deliberate, for I am convinced that — especially in broadcasting — a love of stunts is the sign of the tyro."(p.10.) No doubt he was thinking more of Lance Seiveking's gratuitous stunts with sound effects, than the wholly functional stunts of MacNeice. Sackville-West has no time for the dramatist who crams a script with every sound effect for which the story provides the slightest excuse. He goes on to add — and this is the key to The Rescue — "With a very few important exceptions (trains, cars, doors opening and shutting, and the like) there are no sound effects which cannot be rendered 'on the air' with incomparably greater imaginative accuracy by music."(p.10.) Sackville-West concurs with MacNeice's observation that a considerable degree of stylisation is invaluable in a poetic drama for radio. MacNeice's stylisation is substantially a matter of recurrent

sound patterns and "unrealistic" speech, with less reliance placed on the musical framing of the dialogue. In The Rescue the emphasis is reversed; as compensation for the austerity of his script, Sackville-West leans heavily on the richness and variety of Benjamin Britten's music.

To Sackville-West, radio drama represents a return to the recitative of the earliest opera.(23) Opera, he thinks, has obtained its ne plus ultra by "... a progressive fusion of once separate elements into a homogeneous texture which, in depth and poignancy of effect, transcends any single one," and is now returning to the almost pure declamation in which it originated.(p.7.) Operas composed for the stage which show this tendency to return to the origins of the form have not been entirely successful because of an incomplete fusion of words and music, and the declamation of verse in a theatre cannot compete with a musical background unless the voice is mechanically amplified -- and this ruins its expressive qualities. Sackville-West believes that the microphone offers the dramatist and composer a unique opportunity for the fusion of their arts, which stems from radio's ability to carry the soliloquy. "The intimacy of the microphone -- the fact that the speaker is addressing each listener personally -- the absence of that awkwardness, which is nowadays felt in the theatre when an actor addresses the audience: these considerations alone must prompt a poet to avail himself of so expressive an opportunity."(p.14.) From this point, Sackville-West continues, "... the next step, which consisted in adding an orchestral commentary in such a way

as to produce the effect of a new kind of aria, was now slow to occur to me."(p.14.)

In any criticism of The Rescue, words and music should be considered together because it was planned with a view to giving the composer at least as many opportunities as the author, and the text written into a hypothetic structure of music. The reader must therefore bear in mind that in those sections marked in the text where music is present the words are not self-subsistent.

Homer's Odyssey forms only the basis of The Rescue. Rather than "adapt" its story for broadcasting, Sackville-West allowed his imagination to work upon the Homeric material, but at the same time, he kept this material under the rigid control necessary to set it in a firm, radio dramatic structure. This implied many omissions and many changes, but by restricting his plot to those parts of the Odyssey set in Ithaca, he kept a tight rein on incidents and characters. To have included everything, Sackville-West remarks in the Preamble, would have resulted in a play lasting nine hours. Instead, he chose "... to narrow down the focus on to the events of two single days, and in such a way as to extract the maximum of dramatic interest from certain characters in the story: Odysseus and Penelope, their son Telemachus, the poet Phemius, Odysseus' old friend the swineherd Eumaeus, and the goddess Athene herself." (pp.11-12.)

The normal time sequence of the events in the Odyssey is retained, but some of them are modified to fit more easily into

the dramatic pattern. Irus bears little resemblance to his Homeric counterpart, while Telemachus' recognition of his father is reshaped and embroidered to suit the exacting demands of purely aural representation. Most of the exciting episodes of Odysseus' journey are omitted, but briefly referred to in retrospective soliloquies or in the dialogue. This allows Sackville-West to concentrate on one or two major dramatic episodes and develop them at greater length in fewer sequences than is customary in radio drama. He obviously dislikes MacNeice's use of the cinematic technique and allows no irrelevancies to complicate the unity of his plot. The dramatic movement of The Rescue is straightforward and closely knit, single-minded and clearly developed.

For some reason not made explicit in his Preamble, Sackville-West dislikes the narrator in radio drama. The Rescue, however, does not completely use the "stage" dramatic method any more than Christopher Columbus does, for Athene often acts as narrator, while many long, uninterrupted speeches by other characters also fulfill this function. Sackville-West admits that his task was made easier by the natural time sequence of the events, the limited scope of the action and the preconceived musical structure into which he fitted the dramatic episodes. To the reader these long speeches have the effect of slowing down the action, which does not abound in exciting incidents. The first sequence, which sets the scene in The Rescue, consists almost entirely of lengthy soliloquies interrupted by passages of stylized speech between

Phemius the poet and Mentor. Nearly all the remainder of Part I is solely concerned with representing the terrible affliction which has fallen upon Odysseus' people, and the hardship they have endured under their oppressors since he went away. It is a long time before the story proper gets under way, and when it does, the action is drawn out and slow moving.

V.S. Pritchett believes that herein lies the paradox of radio — "... it is most dramatic when it is least active, where there is most meditation aloud."(24) Certainly the microphone is better suited to the individual meditation than violent action, but Pritchett's is a dangerous generality for it disregards the listener and "entertainment value." A meditation cannot afford to be static, nor must it hold up the action. The inner conflict can be exciting and full of suspense so long as the action is centered there and not described second hand through a series of uninterrupted monologues. It is doubtful whether musical accompaniment would compensate for lack of action in the many long, explanatory soliloquies in The Rescue.

It is Sackville-West's deliberate avoidance of violent action which severely weakens the climax of the play. After skilfully creating tension at the beginning of Part II and building it up to what should be a splendidly barbaric climax in the slaughter of the Suitors, Sackville-West represents this episode second hand, rather in the manner of the Greek dramatists than of Homer. After Penelope has delivered Odysseus' bow to the suitors, the focus is transferred from the banquet hall to a brief recognition scene between Odysseus and Euryclea.

Then follows one minute of transitional music which takes the listener to Penelope's private room, and a yell of pain from the orchestra is the first indication of what is happening in the hall below. In this part of The Odyssey, the highest point of the action occurs when, after the suitors have each failed to draw the bow, Odysseus grasps it in his hand, ties the string and fits the first arrow to it. This is completely omitted in The Rescue, while the massacre itself is described by Euryclea to Penelope with the accompaniment of shrieks, groans, yells of pain and sharp atmospheric passages of music. After the best part of the slaughter is over, the focus returns to the hall where the last of the enemy, Irus, is coaxed from his hiding place and brutally murdered by Odysseus. The whole of this sequence is not worthy of the careful preparation made for it, and it does not provide sufficient contrast to the anti-climax which follows and concludes the play. Sackville-West is quite aware of his muffled climax, and notes in his Preamble that this and the storm sequence in Part I revealed the limitations rather than the advantages of radio drama.

If Sackville-West's treatment of physical action is inadequate and unconvincing, his power of characterization approaches the novelist's precision. The two central characters, Odysseus and his wife Penelope, are not drawn in the broad sweeping strokes of Columbus, larger than life and displaying only those characteristics vital to the plot; they are humanised, and therefore emerge from the play not as figures of epic grandeur, but real human beings facing up to perpetual human problems.

Penelope had been deserted by her husband while in the prime of life, and when the play opens she is approaching the weariness of a middle age which seems to hold no prospects for her. Proud, dignified and sensitive, she is acutely aware of her situation:

> The hours drop to the ground
> Like tired leaves,
> And decay,
> And sink into the earth and become part of it.

Even Telemachus, her son, has now reached adulthood and is no longer part of her life. Struggling against doubt, yet emotionally convinced Odysseus will return, Penelope weaves her interminable shroud in a room of high, white, glaring walls, in order to ward off the clamorous insistence of unwanted suitors as well as the temptation of submitting to the best of them, which would mean ultimate possession of Ithaca by the invader.

Odysseus is a man of forty-five, a middle-aged hero well past his prime, who has suffered intolerably under a god's vengeance and now, mistrustful, hardened and cynical, desires only a quiet, uneventful life. Although he has not altogether disliked his adventures, he is weary at the prospect of further hardship: but spurred on by a passionate love of his country, Odysseus complies with Athene's instructions and returns as the liberator of Ithaca. Not until the second half of the play does he achieve the stature of a Greek hero, and even then he is severely handicapped by his beggar's disguise and the nebulous dramatisation of the play's climax. The long, retrospective soliloquies of Odysseus and Penelope enable

Sackville-West to illuminate many intimate, personal traits through their reactions to past events as well as to the present.

The minor characters, Telemachus, in whom can be seen some reflection of Odysseus when young, Eumaeus, the faithful old swineherd, and Irus, the evil, sinister, scheming little clown with his quick laugh and nervous gestures, are also drawn with clarity and perception. Sackville-West devotes great care to the numerous "bit parts" who make their impact on the listener with unequivocal immediacy. Even the suitors at the banquet provide a striking variety of objectionable characteristics: one cool and insolent, another fussy and dictatorial, others cynical, coarse, cultivated, or old and waspish.

Music is used more extensively and for a wider variety of purposes in The Rescue than in any other radio play. Apart from adding emotional colour by backing the long recitative speeches, it is used to establish atmosphere and background scenery, as an aid to characterisation, for the representation of gesture or movement, as a substitute for those sounds usually conveyed by recorded effects, and as sequence transitions. All the long recitative speeches are punctuated by music which decreases in volume during the speech itself, and increases to emphasise each emotional peak. The long soliloquies which open the play are accompanied in this manner, intensifying the atmosphere of sterility, oppression and nervous tension suggested by the dialogue. In the second part, the entry of

Odysseus as the old crippled beggar into the suitor's banquet hall is established by music which is at once functional and atmospheric. Phemius diverts the company's attention to the door, and the music fades in -- "a sinister, lame, dragging measure, very quiet but kept in the foreground, with voices in background." Music, assisted by a few verbal indications from the characters, is frequently called upon to indicate physical action, such as the two transformations of Odysseus into the old beggar. Reviewing a performance of The Rescue, William Salter considered that one of the most dramatic sequences in the play occurs when Telemachus describes the outline of his father's shadow cast on the wall by the old beggar, immediately before recognising him.(25) Telemachus' speech is given an orchestral backing and as it fades into the background, Athene's trumpet traces the changing outline of the shadow over a subdued passage of music.

Music is also used to represent gesture, a dramatic element most broadcast plays ignore. The nervous highpitched speeches of Irus, the quisling, are interrupted by brief orchestral "gestures", together with the irritating noise of his rattle. Music is even used to represent dialogue; in Part I it conveys almost the whole of Penelope's apparently long arraignment of the suitors. In the softer passages, we hear snatches of her speech and the resulting roar and hubbub from the crowd below.

Music aids characterisation by the association of a single instrument with a single person, rather in the manner of Prokofiev's

"Peter and the Wolf". The string orchestra accompanies Odysseus, the xylophone Irus, and Penelope is associated with the alto saxophone. What must have been one of the most interesting sequences in the play, is Phemius' invocation of the gods in Part I. As he calls on each god, he is answered by the orchestra: the harp for Apollo, the flute for Hermes, the oboe for Artemis and the solo violin for Persephone. Then the four instruments play in a quiet counterpoint, and fade out behind the dialogue. In the following scene, music takes over the job usually done by recorded sound effects. The news that Odysseus lives is followed by a storm with deep rolling thunder, flashes of lightning and the screech of rain squalls all suggested by the orchestra, fading in and out of the dialogue with a steadily increasing tempo and intensity of emotion.

Each act is roughly divided in two by a long passage of transitional music, the second of twenty minutes duration. In Part II, music functions both as a means of mental relaxation and as a connecting link between the two movements of the action -- Odysseus' plans for revenge and his arrival at the banquet. All the highpoints of the action within each act are climaxed, and their impact sustained, by fairly long passages of music lasting from thirty seconds to two minutes. Sackville-West considers that he and Benjamin Britten miscalculated by allowing insufficient time for transitional music. Although the reader has no means of ascertaining this, it is evident that most radio dramatists are afraid of long intervals consisting of music or silence. The radio play

appeals to the imagination by offering suggestions, but it is a general tendency of most plays to overcrowd the imagination by too many words, incidents or characters, and not to allow enough time for these suggestions to unfold. The Rescue is a long wordy play of not much plot or variety of incident. Thus the need for pointing the high spots of the action becomes all the greater, partly because the listener cannot see them and partly because he should not be overtaxed by long verbal explanations. "In a short script," Sackville-West wrote, "where a scene rarely lasts for more than six minutes, fifteen or twenty seconds of music is amply sufficient to supply the link; but in a ninety-minute script the links should be proportionately longer, because the listener's mind becomes more firmly anchored in a scene the longer it lasts." He then adds an objective criticism of his own play. "Thus, in Part II of The Rescue the transition music which should carry the listener with Odysseus and Telemachus on their journey down the mountain, signally failed to do so because, coming after a scene which had lasted thirty minutes, the imagination demanded a more spacious relaxation. And there were other points at which the dramatic burden needed a fuller support from the orchestra." (p.15.)

Radio critics who have reviewed performances of The Rescue are all of the opinion that Benjamin Britten's score was not only appropriate, but remarkable for the variety of tasks it found itself put to. Roger Manvell wrote "The score of The Rescue is characteristically ingenious; it gives us landscapes and seascapes, the hubbub of petulence, the horror of violent

death, the songs the sirens sang, and the compelling advice of Hermes and Athena. Also it places as it were before our eyes -- only by the use of the xylophone -- the mincing gait of Irus and his malicious steely smiles. My only complaint against the music is that there was not more of it."(26) It would seem that music admirably made up for radio's lack of the visual element, and filled out The Rescue into a more complete illusion by setting it in another dimension. "If The Rescue failed elsewhere," wrote V.S.Pritchett, "it triumphed here in the assimilation of the music to the word, and reached points of pure loveliness in the arias in which the many soliloquies were cast."(27) Reviewing a repeat performance in 1948, William Salter was even more lavish in his praise -- "... never, one imagines, has music been better, or more integrally used in a radio play."(28) In the face of these opinions, the reader can be left in little doubt of the suitability of Britten's score.

Sackville-West maintains that a major cause of the dullness, flatness and vulgarity of which many radio plays are accused, is the dramatist's neglect or perfunctory treatment of the visual element. There is a genre of "unvisual radio drama" based on the ideas postulated by Rudolf Arnheim in Radio, but apart from Tyrone Guthrie's The Squirrell's Cage and Louis MacNeice's He had a Date, there have been few serious attempts at this form. For a radio play to create a complete illusion in the imagination of the listener, the dramatist must frequently suggest, by indirect and unobtrusive methods, the appearance

of the characters and the scene in which they are acting. In Christopher Columbus, MacNeice uses characters in the play as narrators to describe at length the scene and action, as in the triumphant procession with which the play ends, or he contrives to make his characters refer to Columbus' mannerisms and appearance or to the scenery in an evocative manner. Sackville-West prefers the second of these methods, and uses it constantly in The Rescue.

Phemius' opening soliloquy invokes the Mediterranean scene with beautiful clarity:

> Ghost-shadow of the olive; secret grove
> Of salt-wind-stunted oaks; the ruthless omen
> Of eagles' flight; the voice among the leaves;
> Snake in the stone and swallow on the sea;
> The heavy-lidded cave; the blind white wall.

Odysseus' description of the sunset anticipates the slaughter to come, as he approaches the banquet-hall:

> Now, dying his daily death, Apollo
> Sheds his blood on the broad step,
> Across the columns' well-turned abacus,
> And pours his scarlet flood in at the very door.

As the old beggar enters the banquet-hall, he is described for the listener by the suitors:

> Agelaus: Rags — thunder-yellow tatters, vile and filthy — flutter round his trembling limbs.
>
> Eurydamus: His skinny arms, when he raises them, feeling his way forward, are like dead branches dyed red by the firelight.

Each sequence takes place in a specific location which is carefully described within the texture of the dialogue — the glare from

the bare, white walls of Penelope's room, the entrance to the Naiads' cave where Odysseus is left by the sailors, his description of what he sees when he wakes, and the banquet-hall with its white blood stained columns and wall.

The above passages underline the literary quality of The Rescue; and on this point it differs fundamentally from Christopher Columbus and The Dark Tower. MacNeice advises the radio dramatist to forget about literature, and concentrate on sound. His own work has a deceptive spontaneity and is conceived in more imaginative radio terms than The Rescue. Sackville-West does not handle the flexibility of the medium with such freedom or lightness of touch as MacNeice, although this inadequacy may have been partly mitigated by Benjamin Britten's music. The stylised speech of the soliloquies is more "unnatural" than MacNeice's, and although its rhythms are attuned to the spoken word, the images and metaphors are inclined to be selfconsciously poetic, so their full import is not always immediately apparent.

The style in which The Rescue is written varies from colloquial prose to a highly literary verse. Each part opens with a long deliberately poetic speech, but apart from these, Sackville-West insists that all the dialogue is written in prose, although it has the appearance of poetry. The object of this form was to assist the actors with the rhythm and emphasis of the spoken word as opposed to written dialogue. Like the Elizabethan and the Jacobean drama, the dialogue frequently changes from stylised to ordinary speech and back again, but whereas the early

dramatists almost invariably wrote their climaxes in poetic idiom and used the vernacular mainly for comic relief, many of The Rescue's high points, including Euryclea's description of the massacre, are written in vernacular prose. The prose is a mixture of humour, irony and home-spun speech and the style more lyrical and metaphorical than Homer. The Rescue is a humanised, unheroic version of The Odyssey.

The meaning of the play is conveyed by the poet Phemius, who, in two or three moving speeches, pleads for the Greek view of imagination in life:

> Men seldom know me when they see me.
> I am here and not here; I am
> The captured shadow; the intersection
> Of Past and Future;
> The moment of death;
> The mysterious blood of sleep; the eyes
> Of the statue whose gaze is inwards.
> Victory and defeat have in me their resolution, in that
> Ever future voice beyond the interval
> Where joy and grief are one.
> Think of my face, all you who listen.
> Look into my eyes, before they fade into your night.
> Forget the poem I made; but remember
> The purer voice you hear behind my words.

Broadcast in 1943, The Rescue possessed a deeper meaning for its audience than today. The return of Odysseus is a symbol that has been constantly reinvigorated through the history of mankind. Ithaca, ruled by intruders, looted, oppressed and starving, patiently awaiting a deliverer from over the sea, is wartime Europe, and particularly, Greece itself. By emphasising and elaborating this symbolism, Sackville-West rooted his story in current experience and imbued its perennial freshness with an ever wider significance and contemporary interest.

The Rescue is a far more massive and bulky play than Christopher Columbus or The Dark Tower, and its literary quality more pronounced; but as a fine example of imaginative collaboration between playwright and composer, it marked a promising new departure in radio drama. Sackville-West substituted an original and refreshing approach for the old cliché-ridden methods of representing motion or scenery. His capacity for making the listener see with clarity and precision has only been rivalled by Dylan Thomas in Under Milk Wood. As an experiment in radio-opera and as a creative adaptation, The Rescue conclusively proved that broadcast drama was on an equal footing with the stage for completeness of illusion in dramatic representation.

V.
Laurie Lee.

The Voyage of Magellan, A Dramatic Chronicle for Radio, by Laurie Lee, with special music composed by Brian Easedale, was first broadcast by the BBC in October, 1946, during the opening weeks of the Third Programme.(29) The play closely follows the pattern for poetic radio drama worked out by Louis MacNeice and Edward Sackville-West. Lee has accepted many of the dictats laid down by these two authors and adapted them to his own particular requirements in an original and exciting work which led many other "serious" writers to consider radio drama as a legitimate, individual mode of expression.

In August, 1510, Magellan sailed for South America with a fleet of five vessels. He put down mutinies, discovered giants, found a passage through the land barrier to the Pacific and was then, himself, killed by natives. Storms and sickness reduced his fleet from five to one ship, and only eighteen survivors returned to Seville three years after they had set out. The story of man's first voyage around the world presents a theme of adventure and achievement on an equally grand scale to Columbus' voyage across the Atlantic. As themes for radio drama, both are larger and simpler than life, and through their remoteness from contemporary affairs, more susceptible to a broad, sweeping and dramatic approach.

The Voyage of Magellan and Christopher Columbus both subordinate everything to getting their story over to the listener

in the most forceful and entertaining terms possible. The magnitude of these stories placed great emphasis on narration to compress them into a restricted time limit without losing their continuity, but Lee differs fundamentally from MacNeice in the construction of his play and its narrative technique. Columbus is written within a natural time sequence and describes a series of events through which the action progresses from point "A" at the beginning of the play, to point "B" at the end. Its dramatic movement may be represented by a straight line. The Voyage of Magellan, on the other hand, moves through a complete circle, ending at the same point in time and space, where it began.

The play begins some time after the eighteen survivors of the voyage have returned home. They are honouring a promise made on the other side of the world to do penance to the Virgin. One of the eighteen, an old Sailor, unfolds the story of the voyage to a blind Beggar, through a series of dramatic flash-backs, and intermediary narrative speeches. when the focus returns to the street with its drums and mourning. The Sailor acts as a convenient means for abridgement -- it is his description which allows Lee to cross the Pacific in a speech -- and as a chorus, commenting or passing judgement on the action from the point of view of an old man obsessed by a sense of guilt from what he had experienced. Although the technique of enclosing narrative within narrative and scene within scene appears extraordinarily complicated for radio, Lee avoids confusion by the strong construction of his play, which throws the

dramatised past and the narrated present into a vivid, clear-cut juxtaposition.

The role of the Beggar, to whom the story is told, is of vital importance, because it is with him that Lee intends the listener to identify himself, and by doing so, to adjust his mental attitude to the play. This is facilitated by making the Beggar blind, and by setting up around him approximately the same conditions as those in which the listener, who also cannot see, hears the sailor's tale. Today a voyage around the world is an all too familiar event, so the Beggar is used to set Magellan's voyage in its proper historical perspective by expressing his disbelief and incredulity at the Sailor's tale; thus imbuing it with something of its emotional significance to a person who heard it in the 16th Century:

> Sailor: We are eighteen men who three years ago were young:
> we are sick and aged,
> for we have sailed in terror around the world.
>
> Beggar: I hear you, sailor,
> but I do not believe you.
>
> Sailor: Be patient, listen,
> let your sharp eyes follow my story.

Thus the play proceeds on two planes: the Sailor's narration and dialogue with the Beggar spoken above a funeral background, and retrospectively, Magellan's voyage set against a constantly changing background. This enables the story to end where it began. The shape of the play, like the shape of its story, is a circle.

The journey, which consists of an action continuously moving through space as well as time, is particularly susceptible to

radio dramatic treatment, but the large canvas this sort of theme usually implies, makes the reduction and selection of dramatic sequences of prime importance to the dramatist. If his sequences are too long their impact may be weakened by the necessity for long passages of narration, yet if he increases the number of sequences to cover all the important points in the progression of the journey, the parts remain parts, and will not combine to produce a single all-embracing effect. In his play, Lee included not the dramatic incidents of Magellan's voyage, but those incidents most suitable for radio dramatic presentation. The three years of Magellan's voyage are concentrated into an hour's duration, the Pacific is crossed in one short narrative speech, and the crew of two hundred and fifty is represented by four sailors. As with Columbus, the drama centres on Magellan himself. The listener shares his enthusiasm and hardship, his quelling of the mutiny and his unfortunate death.

The Voyage of Magellan is constructed of many short sequences, each advancing the story one stage further, securely held together by the Sailor's narration. Lee's technique is closer to The Dark Tower than to The Rescue. The sequences are not visualised as separate pictures, nor are they so long or so fully developed as Sackville-West would have liked. They flow smoothly one into the other, without losing their distinctness, in a continuous stream of brilliantly lit images, carrying the listener with them, dazzling him with sound, then allowing his imagination a brief respite in the narrative passages.

Lee uses three methods to bridge his sequences: verbal tran-

sitions, music and silence. He frequently imposes one speech on another, fading out the first as the second comes up. For example, the first flashback is introduced by the Sailor, who describes Magellan's preparations of the stores for the voyage -- and as he speaks the sound of the tellers, noting each item then punctuating it with a hammer, fades into the foreground, while the sailor's voice fades out. This sound sequence is repeated twice, to give the effect of continuous action on two different levels. Lee even places a flashback within a flashback; when the Sailor describes Alvarez's opposition to the voyage, the focus transfers to Alvarez himself reading over a letter he is about to send to the King. In it he mentions an interview he previously had with Magellan, so the focus then transfers further back to a direct dramatisation of the interview.

Lee makes excellent use of the dramatic pause, by building a scene to a loud and exciting climax, then suddenly cutting it off, leaving a short period of silence before the next sequence begins. The murder of Mendoza, the mutinous captain, is an example:

> Mendoza: (laughs) Fool ... fool ... am I to be caught by words, ha? ...
> (laugh chokes in a stabbing gabble)
>
> Espinosa: Barbosa! Barbosa! strike! We have won!
> (quick shouts — silence)

In his use of music, Lee was considerably influenced by Sackville-West. The transitional passages are not so long, but he employs the same technique of suggesting a theme at the end of one sequence, establishing it, fading it down beneath the

narration, then taking it out as the next sequence begins. As in The Rescue, music is used to paint the scenery, establish atmosphere, as sound effects and to point the climaxes both within the dialogue and the narration. The music of a "Sketas", the drums and trumpets of a religious procession, fade in during the Beggar's opening announcement, then reach a climax and subside into the rhythm of funeral drums as the first sequence commences.

As the expository dialogue nears its end, the Requiem comes up under the Sailor's speech, swells into a broad orchestral theme, then mixes into a ringing bell, which is held behind Magellan's first speech. Here music is used both to set the opening scene and establish an atmosphere of solemnity and religiosity, with undertones of death. The muttering of prayer and the music of religious ritual constantly recur during the play — from the opening Requiem, the Sailor's prayer in the storm, Magellan's conversion and baptism of the natives, to the closing Requiem which fades under the Sailor's last speech and ends the play as it began. Bells, brass and percussion predominate in the orchestra, and lend an overall atmosphere of primitive, almost barbaric religious ritual, of much the same kind as in Macbeth.

Lee employs an unusual "musical" effect to suggest the bleak, lonely seascape as Magellan's fleet searches for the straits around South America. Behind the Sailor's description of the cold and the crew's feeling of utter hopelessness, Lee fades in the barely audible, thin, high note of a tone disk, which is interrupted by distant shouts and gunfire when the search party

returns with news of a channel. In the tense scene between Magellan and Alvarez, his early antagonist, a distant guitar fading in and out of the dialogue, heightens the mood of suspense and intrigue.

The first storm at sea is very similar to the storm sequence in The Rescue. Instead of the customary thunder record, Lee uses the orchestra: "(Crescendo of drums from "Great Sea" and sudden yell of brass, quick diminuendo)". The drums and brass break into the Sailor's visual description of the storm, and the four members of the crew begin a quick, frightened, latin service, backed by the muttering of prayer. The cymbals announce the clearing of the storm, and the note of relief is expressed in the Sailor's next speech. Most of Lee's sound effects are presented expressionistically by music. The religious motifs evoke the required atmosphere quickly and accurately, while the few naturalistic effects are of greater value and suggestive power because they are used with such economy.

Sackville-West's influence is also apparent in Lee's use of music to intensify or sustain the emotional climaxes of the play, and to suggest tempo and mood in the action. At the first mention of mutiny following the terror of the storm, a drum rhythm fades up behind the dialogue, suggesting impending evil. As the sailors announce their discontent and homesickness, each speech is punctuated by the stroke of a bell and the sequence gradually builds in excitement up to the final chorus:

> This place burns with the ice of hell,
> Let us go home!

The music reaches a sudden crescendo, only to be capped by Magellan,

his voice ringing as if between cliffs of rocks. Lee excels in the use of dramatic contrast by juxtaposing violently opposed emotions either between two sequences or within the dialogue itself.

The most moving sequence in the play follows the Sailor's narrative description of the hardship and horror they endured while crossing the Pacific:

> Sailor: And the fiends of hunger and hell came up out of the waters and we sailed through them demented, for days that would not end ...
>
> (A cracked bell. A trickling of water. A laugh which ends quickly in a long sigh ...)

These few sound effects immediately create a powerful atmosphere in a space of a few seconds. "Then starts a dry, sad, broken song, with guitar." In the simplest language and with a strong regular rhythm, a voice sings longingly of the girl he left behind and of his present plight:

> O light are her haunches
> And warm is the lover
> Who lies with her sleeping
> Above San Roque,
>
> But I am a sailor
> And heavy the blanket
> And cold the deep ocean
> I bed with today.
> (Rosa, Rosa de San Roque,
> Cold is the lover I bed with today.)

Superimposed on this mournful lament, and in violent contrast with it, is the Sailor's description, in bizarre and horrifying images, of the crews' hallucinations:

> He died; and they put him in the sea,
> and he floated away like a melon ...

The sea is full of melons!
Watch how they roll and grin and chatter against the ship.

Two vividly presented emotions, yearning and despair, are conveyed simultaneously to create a composite image suggesting the horror and hardship of countless days under a blazing sun, on the open, motionless sea.

In the delineation of character, Lee is closer to the methods of MacNeice than to those of Sackville-West. He selects only two characters for detailed treatment, the Sailor and Magellan himself, both of whom are drawn in broad, emphatic outlines, with all but their most essential traits eliminated. The Sailor, disease ridden, haunted by memory and obsessed by sin, is the central character in the play, and through his long narrative speeches, tends to overshadow Magellan. Lee is first and foremost telling a story, so we only hear enough of Magellan to make that story interesting and credible, and to keep him within the listener's range as leader of the expedition. He is presented as a man of fierce pride and courage, fixity of purpose, strength of character and breadth of vision. From the first opposition to his project to his death he shows no uncertainty, no suspicion of failure, no lessening of determination. In many respects he is very like MacNeice's Columbus, but where Columbus personally succeeded, Magellan failed. Lee suggests that it was his overconfidence and pride that allowed him to set out on the needless expedition which resulted in his death. He is more unscrupulous and less tactful than Columbus. Far from popular with his crew, Magellan nevertheless commands respect as a Captain. The Sailor

describes him:

> We did not love Magellan,
> he was sharp as pepper, hard as a turtle,
> crafty, bloody, cold as pitch.
> His eyes were like canons, not the eyes of a man.
> Yet he was a man.
> .....
> he drove us through seas no keel has cut before;
> he sailed us like a fiend, out of our knowledge;
> .....
> We did not love Magellan, — but he was a captain.

The subsidiary characters are inclined to be flat and nebulous. None show any marked personal traits; they only serve in the furtherance of the plot. Lee apparently relies on the actors to make them credible people and on the producer to create a dramatic pattern of light and shade from their voices. The four Marineros, representing the ships' crews, function only as a chorus, speaking their reactions to the various incidents, commenting on the action or the behaviour of their leader.

Lee's dialogue and narration are strongly stylised, yet simple, concentrated and immediately intelligible. Like MacNeice and Sackville-West, he avoids naturalism to maintain a sense of distance in character and story. For the most part, the play is written in a heightened rhythmical prose, designed primarily to be spoken. Lee's short, graceful sentences, and limited but vividly used vocabulary constitute an admirable style for radio. At times it has the quality of beautiful and original poetry — the starving men's dreams of home and Magellan's Christian appeal to the islanders — but it always holds firmly to the dramatic line and never drifts into pure embellishment. The lyrical passages show an effective simplicity, a striking control of rhythm and an emotive content, not deep or complex, but extremely

moving. The imagery is predominantly sensuous; we are made to see, hear and feel the debaucheries of the sailors, the mutiny, the hardship and wonders of the voyage. It never ceases to grip the attention and can, in a sentence or two, touch a scene into life. The dialogue reads beautifully, but spoken aloud, its dramatic effect would be considerably greater.

The form of speech, Lee explains in a short Introductory Note to the play, aims "... first to capture the eye before attempting to move the other senses. Written for radio it plans to transmit, above all else, a visual experience, and for this reason the story is told to a blind beggar, with whom the radio listener is identified."(p.5.) In Christopher Columbus MacNeice took every opportunity to fill out his scene with visual description in an attempt to compensate for the radio listener's blindness. Sackville-West went to even greater lengths in the long, descriptive passages of The Rescue and Lee does much the same in The Voyage of Magellan. The chief danger with visual description is that too much of it may easily result in making the listener conscious of his blindness, thereby destroying the completeness of the play's illusion -- and Lee does not escape this danger. His visual imagery is carefully observed and beautifully expressed; the technique of having the story told to a Beggar perfectly sound -- but the Beggar does not have to be blind before the listener will identify himself with him. Lee held the contrary view, and his over-frequent reminders to the listener of the Beggar's blindness soon become tediously extravagant. In his very first speech

the Beggar announces "My bowl is as empty as my blind eyes."

The Sailor approaches him and says:

> I will sit with you in your darkness
> and look at this bright street.
>
> Your eyes are like slates
> on which I would write a story.
>
> ...only a blind man such as you
> could see what I have to tell and believe it.

Magellan's "... eyes were like canons, not the eyes of a man"; the Marineros "... were all blind at the dawn of that journey." In the Sailor's narration, he describes the first landing: "This land, blind man, was pride and terror to our eyes." On finding the channel; "We rejoiced, beggar, in being blinder than you are", and crossing the Pacific: "Listen, blind man, that you may see the hunger and death." In the fatal encounter with the Indians, Magellan is stabbed in the face and his eyes covered with blood. One of his officers sees him: "Oh God, blind me! They have stabbed him," and he, too, is blinded. The play closes with the same irritating insistence:

> Sailor: We have come to say Mass for the living, and for
> the souls of the dead;
> but you, blind man, if you could look upon us
> who are left,
> would not know whether we lived or died.
>
> Beggar: Sailor, I do not need to look,
> by my ears I know your death is already with you...

This repetitious imagery suggests that Lee cannot accept a medium which omits the visual sense as capable of presenting an adequate interpretation of reality. The Beggar's function is to set the story in its proper historical perspective, and this he does quite effectively. But his blindness is too obviously a technical

device, a deliberately manufactured situation not at all essential to the play.

Like the two historical poetic radio dramas which preceded it, The Voyage of Magellan gains its effect by working with poetic intensity on a basis of fact. The stories of Columbus, Odysseus and Magellan were well known before hand, but in the hands of three poets who possessed unusually original minds as well as a thorough familiarity with the requirements of radio, they were once more brought to life in a new form. Reviewing the first performance of The Voyage of Magellan, Edward Sackville-West was not impressed with either the production or the acting, but for the play itself, he was full of reserved admiration: "The authenticity of the poetry was very arresting and lifted the programme on to a more enduring plane than that usually inhabited by commissioned scripts."(30)

vi.
Henry Reed.

Henry Reed's radio adaptation of Herman Melville's novel, Moby Dick, was first broadcast in the BBC's Third Programme on January 26, 1947, with special music composed by Anthony Hopkins.(31) Like the historical dramas of Louis MacNeice and Laurie Lee, it is a dramatisation of a story reasonably well known. But whereas these other two plays were based upon a loose framework of incompletely documented fact which allowed the greatest freedom for imaginative treatment, Henry Reed was tied far more securely to his original material because it already existed as a complete work of art. Although the Odyssey also existed as a complete work of art, it formed only the basis on which Edward Sackville-West constructed an entirely original radio opera; he did not pretend for a moment that his work was a faithful adaptation. This, however, was the aim of Henry Reed. As he said in an Introduction to the play, there were duties to be observed towards Melville, his readers and those who might become his readers. Whether Sackville-West consciously thought he was obliged to perform the same duties to Homer is extremely doubtful.

In adapting a play or a novel for radio, the dramatist encounters an ethical problem: is he to sacrifice fidelity to the original material in the interests of recreating out of it a new and complete entity, or is his first responsibility to preserve the spirit of the original even if it means rejecting

certain additions or omissions which would improve its effectiveness in the new medium? Hollywood has provided some notorious examples of the former attitude with films faintly resembling the play or novel on which they are said to be based. When the script writers, directors, actors and other people concerned with the production have all added to or deleted from the original material to suit their own requirements, and the Company directors have distorted it further to suit the requirements of the American film audience, the result may still be a good film though it contains only the slightest trace of the work on which it is based. One of the best examples of modern adaptation is Ruth and Augustus Goetz's stage play, The Heiress, based on Henry James' novel, Washington Square. The spirit of the original is cleverly preserved in character and atmosphere, James' prose is transformed into convincing Victorian dialogue, and the characters, with one exception, emerge as the exact counterparts of their originals. The exception is Morris Townsend, who undergoes a slight transformation as the result of a minor plot alteration which is vital to the dramatic construction of the play.

It is categorically true that a work of art designed for one medium requires considerable changes in form, and sometimes in content, to adapt it to the peculiar requirements of another medium. The adaptor's task is primarily to preserve the spirit of the original by making only those changes indispensable to the transfer. The only excuse for altering content, as distinct from the omission of episodes, is to suit the demands of a new

form, which will enable the adaptation to stand on its own feet as a complete work of art. The adaptation for radio of a novel or stage play is further complicated by the tremendous amount of compression involved. The average radio play runs for little over an hour, and to reduce a novel with the scope of, say, Crime and Punishment, to that duration would be almost impossible. Therefore is assessing a radio adaptation, such as Henry Reed's Moby Dick, two viewpoints must be considered: to what extent does it preserve the spirit of the original, and is it a good radio play in its own right? Obviously the opinion of a listener will be coloured by whether or not he has read the original. If he has he will look for a faithful reproduction, if he hasn't he will only expect a good radio play.

By far the greatest proportion of radio drama today consists of adaptations of films, novels and plays. Many commercial programmes capitalise on the fact that most listeners are familiar with the story of their plays, and are content to produce slipshod adaptations which rely for their effect on a series of reminders to conjure up in the listener's mind a picture of the original. The listener may easily confuse his knowledge of the original with what he hears — and this introduces a third problem in the task of assessing an adaptation. One thing does, however, emerge from the tangle, and that is: an adaptation must be a good radio play, and disregarding all else, this is what the critical listener is entitled to expect.

Edward Sackville-West's review of the first performance of Moby Dick is coloured from the outset by having read Melville's

novel: "As a radio script, Moby Dick attempted the impossible..." He regards the novel as a stupendous drama of almost Shakespearean proportions and despite the fact that Reed's play did "... for long stretches... succeed in casting over us the sombre spell of the book..." it was impossible to confine the broad and powerful atmosphere of the novel within the limits of a broadcasting studio. "Mr. Reed did not quite make it, but it is doubtful whether radio could ever capture the magnificent sweep, the cumulative intensity, the grandeur, yet penetrating insight into character such large scale novels present." Despite its many impressive features, which Sackville-West freely admits, the radio play was to him a magnificent but memorable failure.(32)

Considered from this point of view there are few novels whose atmosphere, characters and incidents could be completely preserved in radio adaptation. The listener must therefore readjust his critical attitude and first look for what Henry Reed achieved, before criticising his shortcomings.

Reed's play owes much to the theory of poetic radio drama formulated by MacNeice and Sackville-West. In its broad treatment, dramatic plot and firm construction it resembles Christopher Columbus, while Reed's use of music and the soliloquy clearly derives from The Rescue. The play concentrates on the central drama of Melville's novel, the tragedy and symbolism of the mysterious Captain Ahab and his demoniacal search for the white whale; but irrespective of whether the symbolism is grasped by the listener, he is caught up in the exciting action of the play and his attention held remorselessly to the end.

The construction of the play is compact, and although it covers a variety of dramatic incidents, there is no overcrowding nor overtaxing of the listener's imagination by long sequences of violent action. An element of suspense is well maintained from start to finish, first by the mysterious stowaways, then by the revelation of the Parsees and their relationship to Ahab, finally by the mounting climax in the pursuit of Moby Dick himself. The sequences are not overlong, the transitions smoothly handled by music or sound effects, while the episodes are firmly held together by the joint narration of Mapple and Ishmael.

The prologue of the play, Mapple's sermon in the church, is admirably conceived but structurally unsound: "Opening music, through which long, faint, shuddering winds seem to pass. We are in an echoing church." Unfortunately the sermon, which is intended to set the moral and religious tone of the play, is far too long and too insubstantial. In a radio play, the exposition must quickly involve the listener in the characters and background of the story, but not for some time does Reed intimate that the scene is set in Nantucket, while the character of Mapple does not fall into perspective until he is heard as Narrator and Chorus after at least fifteen minutes of dialogue.

The prologue ends with an uprush of music which takes the listener to the wharf where the creaking of the Pequod and the shouts of the crew indicate her departure. An atmosphere of mystery and anticipation is well sustained up to the climax of Part I — the first whale hunt, of which the listener is given a rapid but quite detailed description. This sequence is

beautifully handled and shows Reed's clear understanding and exploitation of radio technique for the most dramatic effects. After months of voyaging, the first whale is sighted. The sequence is introduced by "A mild, swaying music ... suggestive of intense calm and heat", which fades into Cabaco's simple lyric to the accompaniment of a guitar. Superimposed on this are a few lines of drowsy, good humoured dialogue. The spell is broken as Cabaco finishes his song "... on an octave higher than the previous stanzas and thins the note out into silence. Pause. Then faint, and far away three indistinguishable words are cried out from the masthead ... Tashtego and Daggoo repeat the cry (There she blows); it is taken up all over the ship." The sequence builds up to a thunderous climax as the hunt gets under way. The tension increases, there is the sound of running feet, a moment's silence, then a horrible cry from Ahab for Fedallah the Parsee. The muttered surprise of the crew is followed by a second scream from Pip when he sees the terrifying Parsees. There is the noise of running feet, of wood moving against wood; whispers of surprise from the crew, a suggestion of music in the background, finally the roaring sound of rope running through blocks, and four loud smacks as the boats hit the water. These few sound effects whip up excitement in a matter of seconds with greater accuracy and economy than several pages of the most frenzied dialogue.

The whale hunt, in all its wild confusion, is cleverly presented by alternating the focus between the men in the boats and Pip and Mamman who describe the scene from the masthead of the

Pequod. A descending swirl of music carries the listener frOm the ship to the boats, where shouted orders and the straining of the rowers is heard over a great noise of the sea. Before this becomes oppressive, it is relieved by another sweep of music which takes the listener back to the masthead, and a passage of vivid narration follows. After the whizz of the harpoons and the frenzied threshing of the whale, the climax is reached in Pip's excited cries "I can see red blood!...", punctuated by crescendos of music — which rises to fortissimo then cuts out abruptly. By the careful use of dialogue and effects, music and narration, Part I ends with a marvellously vigorous climax, while at the same time the listener has been equipped with a realistic picture of whale hunting in preparation for the encounter with Moby Dick in Part II.

The opening sequences of the second half are deliberately written in a lower key as preparation for the appearance of the White Whale. After an atmosphere of tense expectancy has been set, there are several minor climaxes of increasing fervour leading up to the major climax — Moby Dick's destruction of the ship — with which the play ends. During the calm before the storm, the Pequod meets several ships whose captains give news of having seen the whale. Ahab's determination to kill it grows more fanatical and infects the rest of the crew, but as they learn more of the terrible creature, their enthusiasm wanes, until it is only Ahab's force of character that prevents Starbuck and the crew from compelling him to return home. The violence of a storm and the death of a sailor heighten the

suspense. The tempo of the action then momentarily relaxes as Ahab quietly confides to Starbuck the reasons behind his determined search.

Suddenly Ahab

> breaks off with a great, astonished intake of breath, and then he utters a tremendous cry of recognition:

Ahab: TH-E-E-ERE! —

> (his voice is joined, as the word extends itself by three other voices in the distance).

The 4 Voices: There, there, there she blo-oows!

> (The cry is taken up all over the ship; general tumult).

The greatest problem of the adaptation, Reed mentions in his Introduction, was the final pursuit of Moby Dick. In the novel each of the three hunts is described without repetitiveness, and all are exciting. He could not cut them down to one or two hunts, yet three would become tedious. So they are all included but treated impressionistically: the first by the same cross fading technique between the boats and the masthead as in the previous hunt; the second chase is in the form of a verse intermezzo spoken by the spectator Ishmael. Then follows a break before the final hunt, when the focus returns to Ahab. The function of the Parsees is revealed and Ahab's frenzy of excitement reaches a peak when he discovers Fedallah is missing. There is a lull in the intensity of dialogue and music before the boats are lowered again. The final hunt is represented mainly by music punctuating brief snatches of dialogue. It takes on a new note as the whale rushes among the boats, and, in

a tremendous climax, charges and smashes the Pequod:

> OMNES: (a terrible cry) The Whale! The Whale!
>
> (An infinesimal silence; then music up loud, and a roaring and tearing noise, and an enormous thud as the whale hits the ship. It seems to detonate and is followed by a crashing and splintering, and by cries worse than any so far heard. There is a great noise of the sea pouring into the ship. Music rises and dominates everything and at last subsides behind Ahab...)

He flings his last harpoon at the whale, "A great zoom... the whale music pounds out in full and frantic force for 10 seconds. A strangled cry is heard from Ahab..." as he is dragged overboard by the rope. He dies with the name of the great White Whale on his lips, and "The music surges up in a loud finale."

Reed keeps his action moving in such a way that it is always visible to the inner eye. The appearance of the turbanned whalers in Part I and the three hunts in Part II are fine examples of typically visual scenes translated into equally effective aural terms. Moby Dick is a play crammed full of violent action, yet each incident is picturesquely dramatised without straining the listener's ear after too many diversions. The action is carefully broken up, without losing its continuity, by brief periods of rest to ease the continuous strain on the inner eye, which gives the highest points in the play an unusually powerful effect.

An inherent danger in Reed's technique is his tendency to overload the sound texture. As the Pequod leaves port, there is a three deep montage: the normal dialogue is spoken over the sound of flapping sails and Starbuck's shouted orders.

The complicated effects of the whale hunts, and of the sequences in Part I which lead up to the storm, could easily become indistinct and blur the action without careful handling by the producer. Whether Stephen Potter allowed this to happen in his first production of the play is uncertain, as two reputable critics were somewhat opposed in their views. Philip Hope-Wallace contended that it was a production of great precision, clarity and evocative power(33), while Edward Sackville-West, thinking more of the play than of the performance, said that it was not altogether Stephen Potter's fault "... if all the sound and fury of Part I were more irritating than graphic."(34) Shouting and confusion can create quite a powerful atmosphere provided they are not allowed to dominate the sound pattern too consistently or for too long — and this Henry Reed tends to do. More effective and economical is his manner of revealing the fearful Captain Ahab by the fading up and down of the tapping made by his ivory leg.

Reed's extensive use of music to take over from the action, or to add its own emotional colour to a sequence, is largely based on Sackville-West's methods in The Rescue. Music extends the action and points the rapid changes of scene during two of the whale hunts as the focal point shifts between the small boats chasing the whale, and the ship itself, where a total impression of the action is being described. A musical motif symbolises Moby Dick's approach and subsequent appearance. The impressive theme steadily swells to dominate the orchestra in the great struggle with which the play ends. Music is also

used as an emotional backing behind the soliloquies to broaden the effect of the poetic speech. One of the most beautiful passages in Moby Dick occurs when Captain Ahab dwells on his hatred of the whale. As the sailors' shouting and singing recedes into the distance, it is overlaid by a long phrased adagio melody which is held behind Ahab's soliloquy:

> Ahab: (softly) I leave a white and turgid wake; pale wa'ers, paler cheeks where'er I sail. The envious billows sidelong swell to drown my tracks. Let them. But first: I pass!
> Time was when the sunlight spurned me, and the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; I am damned, most subtly and most malignantly, damned in the midst of paradise, I am madness maddened.

Of this passage, Roger Manvell wrote "After the larger dimension of action among the ship's crew, Ahab's voice in soft close-up has an overwhelming emotional emphasis, which is enhanced by the music behind it."(35) Written in a heightened, almost oratorical prose, the soliloquies are imbued with immense strength and beauty through their pronounced rhythm and richly associative imagery. In a speech of mingled regret and sadness, Ahab addresses the whale's carcass hanging from the mast:

> Ahab: ...Thou hast been where bell or diver never went; hast slept by many a sailor's side, where sleepless mothers would give their lives to lay them down... And you cannot see what man have done to you...

He gazes entranced at the beautiful white form of Moby Dick:

> Ahab: Look, Look, man. How beautifully he slides through the water his whole, long, dazzling sides; the sea is ca'm again for me and him; luxuriously he goes, his court of birds attending him... Oh beautiful Moby Dick, wisely thou hast thy hideous jaw beneath the water. No, not the white bull of Jupiter surpasses you! Oh calm, enticing calm, oh whale, thou glidest on...

The dialogue proper consists of highly stylised prose which

adds a quality of distance or remoteness to the story. The sentences are for the most part short, but the reader should remember that literary punctuation does not necessarily bear any resemblance to the dramatic delivery of the lines. When read aloud, and punctuated according to sense and emotion, it is clear that the prose was written by a dramatist with a sensitive ear for spoken language. Easy to speak, smooth flowing and beautifully eloquent, the dialogue, with its picturesque sensuous imagery and command of rhythm, is ideally suited to the emotional grandeur of the play.

Sackville-West's influence can again be seen in Reed's poetic introductions to the scenes in Moby Dick. Not only do they function as narration, setting time and place, condensing or commenting on the action, but, put into the mouths of Ishmael and Mapple, they recapture something of the single focus Melville imposes upon his story by his use of the first person singular. They also serve to ease the listener's hardworked imagination by providing periods of calm between the stormy, action-packed narrative. Reed's verse is fairly regular, the lines long, the imagery simple and the meaning always explicit. The descriptive passages are exalted, refreshing and vivid:

> "... In the strangled exile of winter
> The iceberg breaking south and far from its proper confines;
> Till a link in the ice-chain melts, and the wind for a lulling moment
> Suspends its roaring song. The spring has begun to enter.
>
> The reek of blood through the mist, and blood baked in sunlight,
> The slither of blood on the deck, and blood in the tempest.

Equally impressive is the swift, racy narration of the second pursuit of Moby Dick:

The leviathan,
A score of lances in his round, white sides,
Lashes and beats the water. Ropes, men, harpoons and boats
Are the white whale's drapings now...
I have seen Laocoons agony, and his children
Yearning and torn by the Hydra, ...

The mysterious Captain Ahab dominates the play. He is drawn as a figure of heroic proportions, but less emphatically than Laurie Lee's Magellan. Despite his subnormal obsession, his fanatical intensity and courage, Ahab is still a human being. At times his obsession is quite insane, but the reasons behind it are always explicit. As his entrance in Part I is prepared for, the listener is led to expect an inhuman maniac, a hard-headed, unsympathetic slavedriver, but after his first speech it is clear that Ahab is popular, generous and respected by his crew. Monstrous as his passion for vengeance may be, he is a man of such intense sincerity and will power, that the sympathy of the listener is quickly won over to him. Ahab's humanity emerges in his befriending of the small black cabin boy Pip, who loses his mind after falling overboard. Their relationship in the play is similar to that between King Lear and the Fool.

Starbuck is indefinitely characterised. He possesses the courage to cross Captain Ahab, but knows him well enough to realise he will earn Ahab's respect for doing so. Stubb is a delightful character, as he coaxes the rowers with "cooing satirical gentleness" -- "Pull, my children, why don't ye pull? Why don't ye break your backbones eh?" The remaining sailors are vaguely differentiated: Manxman, the old dreamer; Cabaco, the lighthearted, devil-may-care singer; Queequeg, the good-natured Pacific Islander; Ishmael and Mapple, who stand apart

from the action as commentators. In comparison with Ahab, none of the other characters have much importance except as foils to him, and for their contribution to the story; hence there is no necessity for them to display any marked idiosyncrasies apart from those of a surface nature to give the producer and actors something to work on.

Moby Dick is undoubtedly one of the most successful, exciting and finely written plays for the microphone. As a piece of radio entertainment, it is complete and self-sufficient, but to what extent has Reed succeeded in preserving the spirit or essential core of Melville's novel? The book is a profuse, oratorical and complex work, packed with documentation, and behind it all, an elusive, symbolical structure. The style ranges from the majestic to the absurd; it has a magnificent breadth of vision, penetrating characterisation and mysterious overtones, yet it abounds with improbable, rhetorical dialogue. Moby Dick is a tremendous novel to survive compression into a radio play of only about ninety minutes duration.

In his Introduction to the play, Henry Reed discusses some of the problems which confronted him in making a radio adaptation of Melville's novel. He considered none of the contents to be superfluous. Everything, including the long preliminary chapters on the technicalities of whaling, of whaling history and the history of whales are essential to a cumulative and comprehensive picture. "Melville has chosen a subject and decided to omit nothing relevant to it. He is creating one particular world in all its completeness."(p.6.) When the time arrives for

the final pursuit of Moby Dick, he is determined that the reader should be thoroughly familiar with every detail of whaling technique and therefore be in a position to concentrate solely on the beauty and terror of the white whale itself, which contains the central meaning of the novel.

In reducing Melville's immense canvas to the required time limit, Reed was obliged to omit a large proportion of this material. He rejected the documentation in favour of the book's central drama — the tragedy of Captain Ahab and the symbolism of his self-imposed mission of destruction. Ahab is the tragic hero who meets death through a trait in his own character and achieves glory through suffering. His weakness is inordinate pride, a force in his own soul which drives him beyond the bounds of human endurance and ends in his own death. This overweening self-confidence is motivated by the great white whale, which to Ahab, is something larger and more infinite than a specific animal.

To achieve clarity and conciseness in the presentation of Ahab's drama involved some alteration of Melville's novel. In it, Ishmael survives for no better reason than to tell the story and relate the final chapter, but in Reed's adaptation, he perishes with the rest of the crew and the play ends with the destruction of the Pequod instead of an anticlimax. Ishmael is before the microphone more continuously than he remains in the forefront of the reader's attention as narrator of the story, while his poignant friendship with Queequeg is eliminated. The character of Pip is emphasised more in the adaptation than the novel, to reveal the humanity of Ahab and to relieve an all male cast with a treble

voice.

Reed has modified, transposed and added to many of the long speeches of Ahab and Starbuck, but in the main, he retains the remoteness, the eloquence of Melville's prose, and transforms his conversations into excellent dialogue. The multifarious incidents, the huge canvas, the variety of topics which the novel contains are all held together solely by the unified tone of voice imposed on them by the teller of the tale. Reed's adaptation is held together by a firm dramatic construction which breaks up the high points of the action by periods of rest and prevents them from sounding merely as a disjointed series of "roaring climaxes". They are also connected by passages of original narration put into the mouths of Mapple and Ishmael. In restricting his adaptation to the demoniac Captain Ahab's supernatural revenge, Reed successfully avoids the dangers of digression and superficiality without becoming overinsistent or monotonous.

Both Melville and Reed tell their story in realistic terms. It is not juggled with to fit a pattern of symbolism, but the spiritual meaning emerges as visible objects begin to take on a new, mysterious significance. The whale, for example, is seen clearly and accurately before it is recognised as a symbol. The symbolism of <u>Moby Dick</u> is not such a precise equalisation of object and meaning as in <u>The Dark Tower</u>. In both the play and the novel, it gradually becomes clearer that Ahab is pursuing something more than a whale, but its exact meaning is impossible to define. Reed sees it as "... the face and the unquestionable

judgment of God"(p.7.), but he refuses to continue the parrallelism because it would be false to what Melville thought about the ambiguities of existence. Ahab, like Prometheus, will not accept God's judgment and rebels by seeking to destroy it. Since that can only mean tragedy, the expedition fails. The whale is both good and evil, beauty and terror, imperturbable and all powerful. To Ahab it represents all the evil that has inflicted mankind — hence his implacable pursuit. But the whale also symbolizes the Judgment of God to Melville, therefore Reed constantly suggests that Ahab's efforts to destroy it are morally wrong.

The core of Melville's novel lies in his chapter on the beauty and terror of white objects, animate and inanimate. Reed transforms this chapter into a magnificent, abundantly clear conversation between Mapple and Ishmael:

> White horses the blizzard rides, a shrouded Figure in the mist, his white voice winding round you. Under the tropic wave the white shark glides and waits. Whiteness is terror.

Whiteness is also beauty, and the beauty and terror of all things is symbolized by the albino whale.

Without the elaborateness of Melville and within a far smaller scope, Reed does capture the novel's spiritual theme and presents it inside the framework of a radio drama that must remain one of the most intelligent, imaginative and faithful transformations of a work of art from one medium to another. "What better praise," wrote Philip Hope-Wallace, "than the word 'adaptation' didn't come to mind. This Moby Dick was not only a perfectly valid projection in another medium of Melville's splendid book; it was

independently and sensually 'alive' as a new film or opera or play, catching and holding the imagination from start to finish."(36)

vii.
Dylan Thomas.

Dylan Thomas' play for voices, Under Milk Wood (37), is the most completely original and the most thoroughly poetic contribution to the art of broadcast drama. Just as his lyric poetry was outside the main trends of his time, this play has no precedent in form, content, treatment or style. The publication of Under Milk Wood and a collection of his radio scripts, in conjunction with Thomas' early prose, offer a unique opportunity to trace his development from an obscure, introspective and exceedingly difficult lyric poet, to a dramatist who could work at ease within two modern entertainment or art forms — radio drama and the film.

During the course of Thomas' career he displayed a tendency towards more objective and impersonal modes of thought and expression. This tendency first came under notice in 1939, with the publication of seven "poetic-prose" stories in The Map of Love.(38) Before that time he had done a considerable amount of reviewing for literary magazines — an occupation that assumed greater importance in relation to his purely creative work as time went on — and he had written the scenarios for several films. This latter pursuit was very much in the nature of hack-work, but through it, he must have learnt the elements of dramatic technique for more permanent productions at a later time.

The stories in The Map of Love show the first manifestation

of many elements which characterised Thomas' later prose and dramatic works, particularly Under Milk Wood. The stories are all set in Wales, most of them with pastoral backgrounds, and they evoke a small, intensely individual world of thought and feeling. Thomas' sensitive perception of character is felt more precisely than it is presented, but his unusual capacity for brilliant flashes of imagery permeates the writing.

1940 saw the publication of Thomas' autobiographical stories, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog (39). They show a shrewder psychological insight than the earlier book, and an increasing ability for swift vivid characterisation. The mystical background of "The Jarvis Hills" is replaced by the evocation of a real Welsh world with an atmosphere and character of its own, which Thomas brilliantly suggests in startling bursts of powerful, visual imagery. Here for the first time is seen one of his favourite and most characteristic literary devices, the catalogue of images, enumerated at length, to produce a cumulative, overall effect. The no doubt exaggerated list of his juvenile crimes in "The Peaches", the description of the farmyard in the same story, and the list of auditory impressions in "Just Like Little Dogs" are typical examples. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog is a more mature work than The Map of Love. It shows greater accuracy of thought, a more controlled and sensitive use of language, and through all the stories run an exuberant sense of humour and a saucy love of life.

In 1943, Dylan Thomas delivered his first radio talk, "Reminiscences of Childhood", which was broadcast on February 15.

It evokes a brilliant picture of Swansea, the dirty, lovely, industrial town where he was born, and blends with it recollections of his own childhood games and fancies. Incoporated in the texture of the script is a poem published some years earlier — "Hunchback in the Park". Predominantly descriptive and immediately intelligible compared with most of his poetry, it easily blends with the nostalgic but unsentimental quality of the talk.

To hear Dylan Thomas deliver a radio talk is an unforgettable experience. His voice, eloquent, majestic and grand, had a remarkable variety and range. He took a tremendous joy in what he did, while his instinctive sense of comedy and theatre combined delivery and subject matter into an artistic whole which has rarely been equalled by any single radio performer. Thomas was never a member of the BBC staff, but he did a considerable amount of radio work, appearing in features and plays, and giving readings of his own or other people's poetry. Louis MacNeice, in many of whose productions he appeared, has said that Thomas was a subtle and versatile actor. He liked to roar and be emotional, but he also liked grotesque character parts; he "took production" and he knew how to throw lines away if required to.(40)

In the scripts that followed "Reminiscences of Childhood", Thomas developed a singularly individual approach to the microphone, and through it, made his art and personality widely known. His verse was obscure, but the persuasion of the poet's voice and interpretation did much to increase his popularity

as a writer. It became apparent that he was slowly moving away from the introspective obscurity of his early verse as he found himself completely at home with a new, popular form of expression. During a conference with students at the University of Utah, when he was visiting the United States in Spring, 1953, Thomas said:

> It is impossible to be too clear. I am trying for more clarity now. At first I thought it enough to leave an impression of sound and feeling, and let the meaning seep in later, but since I've been giving these broadcasts and reading other men's poetry as well as my own, I find it better to have more meaning at first reading.(41)

The broadcast talks show Thomas' increasing interest in people other than himself, and in the outside world. His vision turned from an inward gaze to a broad and generous acceptance of life, and as his form of expression became more objective, his own personality was gradually excluded from his subject matter. At last, in Under Milk Wood, he left the stage entirely, and what had merely been dialogue became drama. From the scripts published in Quite Early One Morning it is obvious that Thomas' transition from prose to drama was not only natural but inevitable.(42) "Reminiscences of Childhood" and "Memories of Christmas" only concern ideas related to himself. His own memory is the subject matter. The literary style, buoyant, witty and striking, packed with imagery and infatuated with words, developed greater clarity and directness as his microphone technique improved. The Joycean portmanteau words, the catalogues, the alliterations, every kind of rhetorical trick, imbue each sentence with glorious

life, but the expression is carefully controlled and the line of thought clearly preserved.

"Quite Early One Morning," written some ten years before, is certainly the original version of Under Milk Wood. It gives an account of an early morning walk by the poet through a small Welsh seaside town, and though it has the same time sequence as the later work, it is limited to the early hours of the morning, and takes place in winter following a storm, not spring. Thomas describes the dreams of the sleeping town, then the dreamers getting up and starting their daily business. The talk ends with a short "dramatic poem" in which several of the townspeople speak: Miss May Hughes, "The Cosy", who becomes Myfanwy Price in Under Milk Wood; Captain Tiny Evans and Parchedig Thomas Evans who are the prototypes for Captain Cat (they both possess the same ship -- "the Kidwelly") and the Reverend Eli Jenkins. Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard is already well established:

> Dust the china, feed the canary, sweep the drawing room floor;
> And before you let the sun in, mind he wipes his shoes.

Phoebe and Clara Tawe Jenkins suggest Polly Garter and Mary Ann Sailors, while Cloth Hall and Manchester House stand ready for Mog Edwards. The small village in the winter dawn, beautifully evoked in precise and vivid imagery, provided many of the topographical features of Llaregyb.

In "Quite Early One Morning" Thomas has almost completely effaced himself. He is recording, not remembering, and the listener's attention is focussed more on what he sees and hears,

than what he personally feels. Daniel Jones says in the preface to Under Milk Wood that the success of this early broadcast induced Thomas to attempt a larger dramatic work against a similar background, entitled "The Town was Mad". Jones describes the poet's efforts to discover a suitable form, to sort out the problems of time sequence, narration and plot. When it was half completed, Thomas changed his mind and decided to re-do the whole thing, limiting his picture to the confines of the town and extending his time sequence to form a complete day. The result of this was Under Milk Wood, but between 1945, when "Quite Early One Morning" was broadcast, and 1953, when the major work was completed, Thomas wrote several more radio talks, a dramatised feature and a film scenario, all of which helped to develop his dramatic technique and increase his understanding of radio as a means of expression.

"Return Journey", first broadcast on June 15, 1947, can best be described as a dramatised autobiographical talk, though officially it would be labelled a feature. On a winter's evening, the poet revisits the town where he once lived as a boy, in search of a person who represents his lost youth. Through a series of brief dramatised episodes worked into a central thread of narration, Thomas gives a retrospective picture of his own boyhood, seen in relation to his surroundings and contrasted to the postwar, bomb-scarred, snow-covered city of Swansea against which the narration is set. Although Thomas is the narrator, and his subject matter essentially himself, he presents an objective revelation of his own personality

through the impartial eyes of an apparently casual observer, and through the eyes of the people the narrator talks with, who knew Thomas as a youth. "The young Thomas" he looks for could easily have been someone else.

This feature shows Thomas' remarkable capacity for laughing at himself, his childhood pursuits and his own appearance. The narrator describes the boy he is looking for to the barmaid — someone with

> Thick blubber lips; snub nose; curly mousebrown hair; one front tooth broken after playing a game called Cats and Dogs, in the Mermaid, Mumbles; speaks rather fancy; truculent; plausible; a bit of a shower-off... a bombastic adolescent provincial Bohemian...

He laughs at his first job as an eager, credulous, raw cub-reporter; he laughs at his mediocre school career, where his only claim to fame was an "undisputed right to the championship of the spitting contest", and he laughs at his first youthful encounters with the opposite sex.

"Return Journey" is a delightful piece of writing, depending as much upon sound as content for the perception of meaning. Thomas' style was developing in lucidity and purpose; the prose has an easy-flowing, strongly rhythmical quality, while the imagery, precise, vivid and illuminating, was becoming characteristically his own. He touches a scene into life with a few lines of description which create in a flash the exact impression: the wind "slicing up from the docks" and "the dervish snow". Occasionally there are lapses into extravagant conceit when, for instance, he talks of "snowflakes sailing down the sky like Siberian confetti". In a few words of dialogue

he quickly reveals a character: the barmaid, the old reporter, the man by the sea, the park attendant. Thomas was growing increasingly fond of the catalogue, the long list of adjectives or nouns, images or impressions: there are the many business firms of the town, the subjects he discussed and the names of the people he knew as a youth.

The tone of the script is predominantly nostalgic, an impression that is probably heightened by Thomas' recent death at the age of thirty-nine. The sadness of the final passage, in which he mourns his lost youth, reads like a presentiment of his death and has now taken on a new significance:

NARRATOR

We had reached the last gate. Dusk drew around us and the town.
I said: What has become of him now?

PARK-KEEPER

Dead.

NARRATOR

The Park-keeper said:
(The Park bell rings)

PARK-KEEPER

Dead...Dead...Dead...Dead...Dead...Dead.

"Return Journey," Edward Sackville-West said of its first broadcast, is an exemplary piece of radio. The rhythmical prose "... carries the whole weight of memories and impressions, sweeping them effortlessly along on the tide of this poet's astonishing eloquence. The characters (Thomas included) loomed as it were in and out of a dissolving web of words, music and sounds. This is the best way to write for the medium."(45)

By 1947, it seemed inevitable that drama should be the next step in Thomas' career. This impression is supported by Daniel Jones in his Preface to Under Milk Wood:

> The publication of Thomas' Collected Poems in 1952 marked the end of one period of his literary development; after this, according to his own words, he intended to turn from the strictly personal kind of poetry to a more public form of expression, and to large scale dramatic works in particular, where there would be scope for all his versatility, for his gifts of humour and characterisation as well as his genius for poetry.(p.v.)

He had the technique and dramatic ability, he could write lively, true to life conversation and he possessed a unique literary style.

Thomas' first major dramatic work was The Doctor and the Devils, a screen play based on a story line by Donald Taylor, about the murders of Burke and Hare, the Scottish body snatchers.(44) A screenplay, or scenario, consists of two parts: dialogue and "shooting directions", the latter assuming far greater importance than the "stage directions" in a stage play. The film has more freedom of movement through time and space, it is tied to none of the restrictive theatrical unities and it is constructed from a large number of brief, visual impressions, many of which may go to make up only one small scene. A scenario writer must, therefore, have a strong visual dramatic sense and a consistency of vision in his approach to the subject if he is to combine the many parts into a single unified whole.

In The Doctor and the Devils, Thomas evokes his scene -- the twisting, grimy, poverty-stricken hovels of Edinburgh and its poor, miserable, vicious inhabitants -- with pictorial clarity

in a brilliant series of penetrating visual images. Worked into, and contrasted with the squalor of the lower orders, is the proud, harsh and aristocratic figure of Dr. Rock, surrounded by adulating students or moving with intellectual detachment among the rich, comfortable surroundings of his class. The dialogue is of secondary importance, serving only to illustrate the imagery. The characterisation of Rock, the central figure, which must be conveyed primarily by the dialogue, is adept but lacks psychological depth. It is with the minor characters, mostly caricatures, that Thomas excels — Fallon and Broome, Jenny the prostitute and all the subsidiary figures whose appearance is short, but memorable. They are revealed with precision and luminosity through the sharpness of Thomas' camera directions. He describes Broome as "... cracking his way through the crowd, jumping and finger snapping, a long damp leer stuck on the side of his face."

<u>The Doctor and the Devils</u> is a unique script. Every detail, every object, image and nuance is visualised so completely, that a film director could desire little more. This screen play also shows the potentialities of the form as the basis for a visual literature, just as <u>Under Milk Wood</u> is the perfect justification for radio drama to possess its own purely aural literature. Yet in neither work does Thomas require anything outside the scope of the camera's eye nor the microphone's ear. In the one, he thinks in terms of a series of pictures, illustrated by and combining with dialogue; in the other he thinks in terms of pure sound, and meaning perceived not from

the words alone, but from how they would sound when transmitted through the medium of radio.

Under Milk Wood was not completed until a month before the poet's death, although he had worked on the play intermittently for ten years. In a Preface to the play, Daniel Jones says that a tentative performance of the incomplete script was read during Thomas' third visit to America in 1953. When he returned to Britain, the BBC urged him to complete the play, so he got to work on it and submitted a finished version in October, 1953, but the text was not finally revised, nor did the poet have the opportunity to guide it through rehearsal. Thomas died in America in March, 1954. The BBC had scheduled a recording of his most brilliant radio talk, "A visit to America", for broadcast on March 30, 1954, a date which turned out to be the day of his funeral at Laugharne. The first broadcast of Under Milk Wood was produced by Douglas Cleverton with a distinguished all-Welsh cast on January 25, 1954, with a repeat two days later.

Under Milk Wood is not a "drama" in the text-book sense of the word. It has no plot, no hero, and no overall conflict, mental or physical, except for the clashing of some characters within their own particular, unrelated situations. The characters make no psychological progress towards self understanding; the bad ones remain bad and the good, good. In fact all the characters are exactly the same at the end of the play as they are at the beginning -- Polly Garter is still wanton, Mr. Pugh still hates his wife and Mog Edwards is no closer to his beloved Myfanwy Price. Instead of postulating a conflict and

leading it to a resolution in a natural time sequence of cause and effect, Under Milk Wood describes a complete day in the lives of the inhabitants of a little Welsh fishing village called Llaregyb. The shape of the play is cyclic, its progress static. Beginning at night it follows through dawn, morning, afternoon and ends as night falls again, with no change in the mental, physical or emotional equilibrium of the town.

The play does contain incidents, situations and minature dramas, but there is no logical connection between them. It is episodic rather than dramatic, descriptive rather than narrative; a series of dreams, actions, thoughts and memories, which reveal the frustrations, the delights, the lecheries, the foibles, the strengths and the weakness/es of some typical characters in a fictional town. Everything happens but nothing is accomplished. All the brief, concise and vividly dramatised episodes are woven into the fabric of a two-voice narration which carries through the normal time sequence of a broadcast talk.

What remain in the memory are not the incidents but the characters, not what happens but the people who make things happen; and not just one or two, but seemingly the whole population of the town, so skilfully has Thomas chosen his representative figures. They come magnificently alive as they reveal themselves through the irrepressible frankness of their own confessions: Mae Rose Cottage, "seventeen and never been kissed in the grass ho ho," — "I'm fast. I'm a bad lot. God will strike me dead. I'm seventeen. I'll go to hell... You just wait, I'll sin till I blow up." "Me, Miss Price in my pretty print housecoat,

deft at the clothes line, natty as a jenny wren, then pit pat back to my egg in its cosy, my crisp toast fingers, my home-made plum and butterpat;" Lazy useless Nogood Boyo -- "I want to be good Boyo, but nobody'll let me." Gossamer Beymon, the village schoolteacher who secretly longs for Sinbad Sailors -- "Oh what can I do? I'll never be refined if I twitch... I don't care if he is common... I want to gobble him up. I don't care if he does drop his aitches... so long as he's all cucumber and hooves."

The characters are wonderfully real, despite the fact that few are allowed more than a hundred words with which to create their unforgettable effects. The most formidable of all, the disenchanted Pughs, stew in their mutual hatred at the dining table. Mr. Pugh reads from Lives of the Great Poisoners -- with a brown paper cover:

PIRST VOICE

Alone in the hissing laboratory of his wishes, Mr.Pugh mimes among bad vats and jeraboams, tiptoes through spinneys of murdering herbs, agony dancing in his crucibles, and mixes especially for Mrs. Pugh a venomous porridge unknown to toxicologists which will scald and viper through her until her ears drop off like figs, her toes grow big and black as balloons, and steam comes screaming out of her navel.

MR PUGH

You know best, dear.

PIRST VOICE

says Mr. Pugh, and quick as a flash he ducks her in rat soup.

MRS PUGH

What's that book by your trough, Mr. Pugh?

MR PUGH

It's a theological work, my dear. Lives of the Great Saints.

FIRST VOICE

Mrs. Pugh smiles. An icicle forms in the cold air of the dining-vault.

MRS PUGH

I saw you talking to a saint this morning. Saint Polly Garter. She was martyred again last night. Mrs Organ Morgan saw her with Mr Waldo.

From their dream thoughts, day dreams, songs and memories, a host of scandalous but preposterously real characters emerge: Lord Cutglass, who lives a life at seige with sixty-six clocks -- "one for each year of his loony age"; Cherry Owen, two different people when he's drunk or sober, and Mrs. Cherry Owen, who considers herself lucky because she loves them both; Willy Nilly the Postman, who describes the contents of a letter before delivering it, and Mrs. Willy Nilly who keeps a kettle on the boil always ready to steam open the mail; Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard, who dreams of her two husbands in spotless Bayview -- "And before you let the sun in mind it wipes its shoes"; Mog Edwards, the draper mad with love; Dai Bread the baker, with two wives, "one for the daytime, one for the night"; lecherous Mr. Waldo, "rabbit catcher, barber, herbalist, cat doctor, quack"; the Reverent Eli Jenkins, who "visits the sick with jelly and poems"; Blind Captain Cat, retired sea captain, who communes in thought with Rosie Probert, "lazy early Rosie with the flaxen thatch, whom he shared with Tom -- Fred the donkeyman... the one love of his sea life that was sardined with women"; and Polly Garter,

the village doxy, with "body like a wardrobe"; who sings of her six foot lovers and of Little Willie Wee who lies six feet deep.

The characters are sketched with a broad, good-natured, good-humoured, tolerant generosity. They are accepted and immortalised by Thomas not for what they have been or might become, but simply for what they are, and he persuades us to accept them in exactly the same way. There are good ones, and bad, puritanical and lecherous, narrow and generous, but there is never any question of passing an ethical judgment on their behaviour. Ethics does not enter into it; goodness and badness are simply attributes of character like any other physical or psychological traits. As Richard Church wrote -- "Weaving their harmonised destinies, these Welsh folk raise their voices, and old Satan seems to be lingering in the hills behind the town, goatlike, sneering at the fundamental innocence which no amount of sin or indulgence can wholly dissipate."(45) These people simply exist in all their full blooded vitality, inviting us to regard them as they regard themselves:

> We are not wholly bad or good
> Who live our lives Under Milk Wood,
> And Thou, I know, wilt be the first
> To see our best side, not our worst.

Thomas has been accused of a lack of seriousness in his approach to the affairs of the world. "To say that flowers wither and the seasons change, that the respectable are lecherous and young girls eager, is hardly a sufficient philosophy for a great poet."(46) Chaucer has been criticised

on exactly the same score, but few would now deny that he is a great poet. There are many similarities between his view of life in The Canterbury Tales, and Thomas' in Under Milk Wood. Both poets depict a complete, self-contained world whose inhabitants pursue a legitimate end in happiness; they both share the same toleration of man's weaknesses and delight in his goodness; the same rollicking, bawdy, irrepressible sense of humour; the same unique and penetrating observation; the same delight in all natural beauty, and exuberance in their mastery of language and narration. Each possessed a new, completely original view of life which found expression in describing the lives of ordinary men and women. One of the tasks confronting the poet is to reveal unsuspected beauty, to give us a new way of looking at things that will make the familiar exciting and the ordinary extraordinary. This is what Thomas does. Like Chaucer, he is not concerned with morality; good nature, tolerance and joy in all mankind are his standpoints. There is no place for morality in a town "Mad over bells in love".

Thomas' poetic vision is predominantly humorous, but that is not to say it entirely excludes the serious, or displays no emotional or psychological depth. The prevailing light-hearted, comic tone of Under Milk Wood is offset by many passages which show Thomas' understanding, as well as his general acceptance, of life. The deepest things in the play are the songs. In the haunting melody and beautifully simple lyrics of Polly Garter's song — first sung complete then evoked in

nostalgic snatches -- we find the reason behind her wanton behaviour: the death of her first lover:

> But I always think as we tumble into bed
> Of little Willie Wee who is dead, dead, dead.

The same revelation of motive is found in Waldo's song, unfortunately cut in the broadcast version. In it he sings of his boyhood:

> In Pembroke City when I was young
> I lived by the Castle Quay
> Sixpence a week was my wages
> For working for the chimbley sweep.
> Six cold pennies he gave me
> Not a farthing more or less
> And all the fare I could afford
> Was parsnip gin and watercress.

Befriended by a kind young woman, he decided to make the most of a fortunate situation, until now he is a happy-go-lucky sensualist with "fat pink hands" and "lips red lips".

In a humorously intimate soliloquy, Lily Wells, Mrs. Arthur Beynon's "treasure", whispers her secrets to the kitchen mirror:

> Where you got that nose from, Lily?
> Got it from my father, silly.
> You've got it on upside down!
> Oh there's a conk!

Hard worked and constantly nagged at, Lily finds compensation for her unlovelinesa with Moggod Bogo in the washhouse.

The Reverent Eli Jenkins, village pastor and bard, sincere, kindly and mediocre, "remembers his own verses and tells them softly to Coronation Street". His first lyric shows Thomas' deep love of Wales, and especially small seaside villages. In a cumulative series of unsophisticated images, and a ringing catalogue of Welsh name places, the poem expresses a sincere

love of his countryside and its people, a genuine, heart-felt patriotism. The Reverend Ward often speaks for Thomas himself.

Captain Cat communes in memory with his lost love, Rosie Probert, in a lyrical dialogue of deeply emotional pathos:

> ROSIE PROBERT
> Remember her.
> She is forgetting.
> The earth which filled her mouth
> Is vanishing from her.
> Remember me.
> I have forgotten you.
> I am going into the darkness of the darkness for ever.
> I have forgotten that I was ever born.

In the familiar nautical and sexual imagery of the poem, and in its haunting rhythms which recall the easy swell of the sea, Thomas recaptures the hopeless yearning, the impotent desire and regret of an old man whose youthful preference for variety had led him to ignore his one true love.

The finest piece in the play is the Song-game of the children. It is uncertain whether the game is traditionally Welsh or invented by Thomas, but in it he evokes the ruthless, cruel, innocence of children, as they claim their revenge on the forfeiting boy — and the sequence ends with a piece of narration which describes their pursuit in a gushing torrent of words and images:

> FIRST VOICE
>
> And the shrill girls giggle and master around him and squeal as they clutch and thrash, and he blubbers away downhill with his patched pants falling, and his tear-splashed blush burns all the way as the triumphant bird-like sisters scream with buttons in their claws and the bully brothers hoot after him his little nick-name and his mother's shame and his father's wickedness with the loose wild barefoot women of the hovels of the

> hills. It all means nothing at all, and, howling for his milky mum, for her cawl and buttermilk and cow-breath and welshcakes and the fat birth-smelling bed and moonlit kitchen of her arms, he'll never forget as he paddles blind home through the weeping end of the world.

The central thread of narration, which dominates the script but not the play, holds the brief dramatic sequences together, effects all the transitions and sets the poetic atmosphere. Many of these passages, descriptive of character, atmosphere or action, are lyrical in tone, racy, evocative and packed full of vivid, illuminating imagery. Their distinguishing characteristic, as opposed to some of Thomas' poetry, is immediate intelligibility. The literary style, completely the poet's own, but displaying the influence of Gerard Manley Hopkins more than any other, is seen at its best in the opening narration:

FIRST VOICE (Very Softly)

> To begin at the beginning.
> It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched courtend-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine tonight in the snouting, velvet dingles)...
> And the anthracite statues of the horses sleep in the fields, and the cows in the byres, and the dogs in the wetnosed yards, and the cats nap in the slant corners or lope sly, streaking and needling, on the one cloud of the roofs...

Thomas achieves his effect by the use of normal literary devices, poetic association and the exact though unexpected word. In the above passages, can be seen his fondness for long trains of adjectives — "the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishing-

boat-bobbing"; transferred epithets -- "the cobblestreets", "the blind houses", young girls "bridesmaided" and the boys "dreaming wicked"; the association of images -- "the wet-nosed yards" where the dogs are, the "snouting dingles" where the moles burrow at night; "the organ playing wood" of the lovers and "the slant corners" where the cats nap; the exact, unexpected word which conjures up an image or idea with mathematical precision -- "the bible black night", "quiet as a domino", night "meddying among the snuggeries of babies", "the anthracite statues", "the webfoot cocklewomen" and the "tidy wives"; portmanteau words -- jollyrodgered, dewgrazed, dabfilled, dicky-bird-watching. Thomas' favourite device is the catalogue, a vivid, rich, accumulating procession of words strung together by sense and sound:

> ... gobstoppers big as wens, that rainbow as you suck, brandy balls, winegums, hundreds and thousands, liquorice sweet as sick, nougat to tug and ribbon like another red rubbery tongue, gum to glue in girls' curls, crimson cough drops to spit blood, icecream cornets, dandelion and burdock, raspberry and cherryade, pop goes the weasel and the wind.

Thomas' wild intoxication with words, particularly long lists of adjectives and nouns, never lapses into exaggeration or irrelevancy. Each word, each image, is carefully weighed then carefully placed into a deliberate pattern, and each plays an equally important part in a total effect that is the work of a craftsman, not of a casual, haphazard composer.

Thomas delights in performing every kind of conjuring trick with words -- puns, bawdy jokes, conceits, gay or gruesome fancies, startling turns of phrase and rhetorical devices propel

the listener's attention on a gushing steam of inspired poetry. The obscure introspective images of his lyric poetry have given way to the common, colloquial, swift speech of the characters, which provides a counterpoint to the more literary, but none the less enchanting, narration. Thomas' style ranges in tone from the rhapsodic and exultant to the frivolous and mischievous. He is creating a wide interest in poetry, Richard Church wrote, "... in bringing his rhapsodic contribution... as an experiment in the art of verse applicable to sound-broadcasting. His poetry has always been stuff to hear rather than to read; and that is all to the good since poetry is for performance, being partly sensuous and shaped on a framework of time, like all music."(47)

The lyrical evocation of Llaregyb, its topography and changing atmosphere from dawn to dusk, is beautifully conveyed in the tone rhythm and imagery of the narration:

> Time passes. Listen. Time passes.
> Come closer now.
> Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent, black bandaged night.

Slowly the dawn "inches up" and the townspeople begin their early morning tasks. A cock crows, we hear Organ Morgan playing the organ and the spring day comes gloriously to life:

> There's the clip clop of horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of the humming streets, hammering of horse shoes, gobble quack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird owned boughs, braying on Donkey Down. Bread is baking, pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk-churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing. Oh, the Spring whinny and morning moo from the clog dancing farms...

The town lazes in Spring sunshine as "The sunny slow lulling

afternoon yawns and moons through the dozy town." All is contentment, as the early morning exuberance of the play settles into a subdued but joyful mellowness. Captain Cat dreams of Rosie Probert, Mae Rose Cottage lies deep in luxurious clover and Utah Watkins drives home his cows. Then it is dusk — "Llaregyb is the capital of dusk" and "the thin night darkens"; but the life of the town is transferred to Milk Wood: Jack Black's Gomorrah, Mary Ann Sailor's Garden of Eden and Eli Jenkins "greenleaved sermon on the innocence of men."

As Richard Church says, Under Milk Wood "... almost creates the very colours, the smells, the caresses of air passing over the town under the invisible propulsion of the hours. This is quite magical and will surely establish this poem as a masterpiece in its own kind."(48)

Because the tone of Under Milk Wood is consistently poetic, it must not be thought that the play is literary or bookish, the work of an author, as distinct from a dramatist. On the contrary. As one critic said "It exploded on the air like a bomb — but a life giving bomb."(49) Over a period of ten years Thomas had ample opportunity to learn the technique of radio writing and he achieved a reputation as a brilliant broadcaster and a brilliant writer of radio scripts. In Under Milk Wood he exploits the medium to its fullest extent; Richard Church, in his illuminating review of the play, calls it "Pure Radio Art". Thomas' sub-title, A Play for Voices, indicates that he conceived it in terms of sound and meaning; and his

masterly use of radio technique is evident throughout. The manner of presentation is strongly stylised and elevated to a super realism, but is, at the same time, capable of many variations. Captain Cat's memories are caught as they range over time and space in a dream sequence with his dead shipmates:

FIRST DROWNED
Remember me, Captain?

CAPTAIN CAT
You're Dancing Williams!

FIRST DROWNED
I lost my step in Nantucket.

SECOND DROWNED
Do you see me, Captain? the white bone talking? I'm Tom-Fred, the donkeyman... we shared the same girl once... her name was Mrs. Probert.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Rosie Probert, thirty-three Duck Lane. Come on up, boys, I'm dead.

Perhaps the most dexterous use of radio technique occurs when the dreams of Mr. Waldo are cunningly evoked between a chorus of censorious neighbours commenting on his scandalous childhood, then on his adult weaknesses. In a maze of time switches, of dreams and reality, Thomas never confuses the listener nor loses the thread of meaning:

ANOTHER MOTHER (Screaming)
Waldo, Wal-do! what you doing with our Matti?

LITTLE BOY
Give us a kiss, Matti Richards.

LITTLE GIRL
Give us a penny then.

MR WALDO
I only got a halfpenny.

FIRST WOMAN
Lips is a penny.

The acid hatred of Mr. and Mrs. Pugh is superbly conveyed by shifting the focus between the narrators' voices and the characters' savage but forcibly polite conversation at table:

> MRS PUGH
> Persons with manners,
>
> SECOND VOICE
> snaps Mrs cold Pugh,
>
> MRS PUGH
> do not nod at table.
>
> FIRST VOICE
> Mr Pugh cringes awake. He puts on a soft-soaping smile: it is sad and grey under his nicotine-eggyellow weeping walrus Victorian moustache worn thick and long in memory of Doctor Crippen.
>
> MRS PUGH
> You should wait until you retire to your sty,
>
> SECOND VOICE
>
> says Mrs Pugh, sweet as a razor. His fawning measly quarter-smile freezes. Sly and silent, he foxes into his chemist's den and there, in a hiss and prussic circle of cauldrons and phials brimful with pox and the Black Death, cooks up a fricassee of deadly night-shade, nicotine, hot frog, cyanide and bat-spit for his needling stalactite hag and bedmag of a pokerbacked nutcracker wife.
>
> MR PUGH
> I beg your pardon, my dear,
>
> SECOND VOICE
> He murmurs with a wheedle.

Thomas is a master of dramatic irony.

Technically the script does have its faults, but they all stem from the fact that the poet died before he was able to finally revise the play. The town is awakened from its dreams by a long, comically prosaic guide book to its main features. The idea is basically sound, but it fails to come off and only succeeds in slowing down the course of the play. The long

blind sequence with Captain Cat has a similar effect on the listener. His commentary on the passers-by is just a trifle wearying and takes something away from the atmosphere of haste and bustle Thomas tries to create as the morning gets under way. It is difficult to understand why Captain Cat should be blind. According to Daniel Jones' Preface he is intended to act as "...a natural bridge between eye and ear for the radio listener"(p.vi.), but the precise nature of his function here is even more uncertain than that of the blind beggar in The Voyage of Magellan, because the listener does not identify himself with Captain Cat. The only clue to the problem is found in his name which suggests he can see in the dark, and supposedly he is intended to induce the listener to do likewise. Fortunately his blindness is not emphasised. These imperfections, slight by comparison with the general quality, would certainly have been amended had Thomas lived to hear the play during rehearsal.

Even in his comic style, Thomas is an assured radio technician. Unbounded by any conventions of literature or the stage, ranging at will through time and space, his technique closely resembles that of "ITMA", which is essentially based on the character of its medium, radio.

FIRST VOICE
A Mogul catches Lily Smalls in the washhouse.

LILY SMALLS
Ooh, you old mogul!

It is a brand of humour completely exclusive of the visual element, and a brand which could never be fully appreciated as

literature. The narration prepares us for Mog Edwards by describing him as a passionate, hot-blooded lover, barnacle-breasted with eyes like blowlamps; but instead the high-pitched, nasal voice of Mog intones:

> I am a draper mad with love. I love you more than all the flannelette and calico, candlewick, dimity, crash and merino, tussore, cretonne, crepon, muslin, poplin, ticking and twill in the whole Cloth Hall of the world.

The whole play is pervaded by Thomas' rollicking, bawdy, frivolous, witty, tender but controlled sense of humour. The poet is essentially a comedian; the vague, metaphysical obsession with death and sex of his early verse is replaced by a robust and extrovert love of life. He looks at the mundane and ordinary, the little things forgotten, overlooked or ignored, in everyday life, with cunning perceptiveness and a large, sympathetic, good-natured understanding — and he makes out of it all a permanent monument to the idiosyncrasy of his little Welsh townful of people. And colouring the entire play is a comic vision "... earthy and ripe, as primitive as that in the Medieval secular plays, as roseate as that in Chaucer's verse."(50)

In the Preface to <u>Under Milk Wood</u>, Daniel Jones said that the poet intended large scale dramatic works which would give scope to his gifts of humour and characterisation. Unfortunately this beautiful but static survey was all he had time for before he died. In a lucid exposition of the poet's work, Derek Stanford concluded:

> In this work, Thomas found the Chosen Land which every

> artist looks for: release from one's own private obsessions and complete absorption in the outside world. Here, for the first time on such a scale, our most private of private poets speaks out largely, for all to hear, with a resounding intelligible voice.
>
> No more than The Doctor and the Devils can this play be considered as high drama. Unlike the former, though, Under Milk Wood clearly had no pretensions in that direction. What it intended, it achieved; and that achievement (though not properly dramatic) was as new and vital and excellent in itself as anything written for literary broadcasting during the last twenty-five years.(51)

If Dylan Thomas had lived longer, it would almost certainly have meant a substantial contribution, and therefore improvement of quality, in the popular entertainment forms of radio, the film, the theatre and perhaps television. He was willing to use as his medium two forms, one of which has suffered at the hands of commercialism, the other characterised by mediocrity. The Doctor and the Devils and Under Milk Wood not only show Thomas' genius as a poet and craftsman, but his remarkable versatility in being able to conceive two dramatic works in terms so radically opposed without losing his individuality as a poet.

Under Milk Wood is by far the most completely original and enchanting radio play yet written, and is unquestionably an enduring contribution to literature. The printed text suggests, but does not entirely capture the perfection of the beautifully produced and acted broadcast version. Glorious, uproarious and compassionate, it has immortalised the people and places so dear to Dylan Thomas' heart; and "... in its proudly irresponsible gaiety, its knowingness and tenderness and rich

rhetoric, this play for voices is a fitting epitaph for a man who played in such a masterly way with words."(52)

IX

THE TRANSIENT ART.

Since D.G. Bridson paved the way in 1936 with his music-feature, The March of the '45, the British Broadcasting Corporation's record of original poetic drama is as distinguished in quality as the number of adaptations of the best plays from all countries, broadcast in the regular dramatic programmes, is distinguished in quantity. Greek and Elizabethan drama have achieved a renaissance through broadcast presentation, principally because they depend so much upon words and the way they are spoken for their scenery, continuity and characterisation. The past thirty years, the period that spans radio's existence, has also seen a tremendous increase in the popularity of poetic drama in the theatre. Whether this popularity is at all due to radio drama is difficult to ascertain (1), but it would seem that the BBC's most valuable contribution to poetic drama in both media has been the creation of a large and appreciative audience for it. Radio has led many groups of people who normally would dislike poetry to enjoy it without being conscious that they are listening to it, at the same time leading them to a fuller consciousness of the form of their own speech.

Writing in New Directions 1937, Ruth Lechlitner saw in radio drama the main hope of restoring poetry to its proper place as a popular, rather than esoteric, art, which derives its inspir-

ation, themes, phrasing, imagery, symbols and word meanings from the people:

> If poetry is to become once more a functional art, if there is to occur that talked of renaissance of poetry, it will be when poets learn once again to appeal to the ear of the people. The radio can, and should be, a most effective instrument in the hands of the modern minstrel...
>
> The poet must not be so naive as to think that he must popularise or write down if he is to be appreciated by his listeners. Persons of average intelligence (though they have had no formal technical training in the recognition of poetry as such), will react intuitively to the rhythms of good oral verse, and grasp figures of speech, even representation through symbol, with complete understanding. What the radio audience will demand of its poets -- or its ear will be turned away -- are the resources of verbal conviction, emotional impact, simplicity of action and motivation, vital and exact symbols. And these, indeed, are not "pulp - popularity" standards, but axioms by which the world's greatest verse - drama has survived through all time.(2)

Since 1937 these statements have proved to be correct. Louis MacNeice, Edward Sackville-West, Laurie Lee, Henry Reed, Dylan Thomas and many other contemporary authors have proved that an audience does exist which can appreciate the best work they have to offer. But with the exception of Louis MacNeice, the poets have made only sporadic attempts at the medium. Only since the beginning of the last war have a few "serious" writers turned to radio, although many have written commissioned film scripts. The BBC has not produced a dramatist who has won his reputation through this medium alone; an author like the American, Norman Corwin, whose ability increased and expanded as his grasp on the technique of radio drama became surer through constant practise. Radio drama has given us very few "works of art" -- plays which have provided an experience that could

not have been brought about through any other medium. The quantity of such plays hardly bears comparison with equivalent work written for the stage over the same period.

Many critics have put down this state of affairs to the BBC, which they have accused of being more concerned with its audience than the art it serves. This is true only in so far as the BBC has been obliged to rely upon authors who regard radio drama as a craft more than an art, in supplying a vast audience with a type of entertainment likely to appeal to it. This audience in itself by no means constitutes a barrier to art. Before examining the reasons behind the small quantity of serious radio drama, it is well to bear in mind what Richard Hughes stated in 1934:

> It is hard to believe it is only 10 years (since the first radio play in the world was written)... For the technical advance of the "blind art" during that time has been such as the historian is accustomed to allow several centuries for. There is as wide a time-gap between that first play of mine and the plays in this volume, as between Everyman (shall we say) and the plays of Congreve.(3)

Only another twenty years elapsed from 1934 to Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood, which rather expands the time gap to that between Everyman and the plays of Shaw. Radio and television have arrived and changed so quickly that technical developments have outstripped man's complete understanding of their use. There is still much unknown about both media and still room for experiment.

There are five major reasons for the comparatively small number of high standard radio plays produced in Great Britain: the BBC's scale of payments has not been over-generous, there

has been an overall lack of serious criticism of radio drama, and many authors still regard the medium as slightly *infra dig*. But more important: the transitory nature of the radio play, together with the threat of television superseding radio drama since 1936, have led authors to regard the one-dimensional form as yet another twentieth century phenomenon which will soon be redundant as new and more exciting developments take place.

In 1947, the British Society of Authors, whose membership includes practically all the active writers in the country, approached the BBC in a Press Conference concerning the payment of authors for broadcast scripts. Their chief complaints were the poverty of fees paid, the unreasonably wide rights claimed by the BBC, and the high-handedness of the BBC's contract and fee-paying department in their negotiations with authors.

Although the authors regarded the BBC as a most trustworthy and artistically well integrated broadcasting organisation, their main source of annoyance was its curiously inconsistent policy. As the largest, single buyer of British writing, and as a formidable monopoly in the purchase of broadcast material, they demanded some stability in the market. "It is essential", John Pudney wrote, "that an enlightened State shall set out to use the vast powers of patronage in an orderly and responsible manner."(4) If the BBC rejects a script it becomes worthless, because there is no alternative market. To men who live by their writing this is a serious matter. Edward Sackville-West

criticised the position of the author in relation to other artists employed by the BBC:

> But even if his script is accepted, the writer may end by feeling he has wasted his time, since the scale of payment which obtains at present is very far from exuberant. If the BBC wants writers in general to become more radio-conscious — and it would be madness not to desire this — the anomalous practise of paying fantastic sums to "star" broadcasters, and even to people "of consequence" who know nothing of the medium... must give way to a fairer and more enlightened system based on the quality of the script and the amount of trouble it is likely to have caused its author. In the last six years the BBC ... has adopted a policy of payment indefensibly glum, minatory and take-it-or-leave-it, which is most destructive of goodwill and most embarrassing to those whose business it is to commission scripts. Like everything else worth having, good broadcasting must be expensive.(5)

After the 1947 conference the BBC did assuage the author's wrath by increasing its fees for plays and other literary material, but it nevertheless remains unable to pay the great man to produce great work. Unlike the film industry, it cannot offer reputable authors such as Aldous Huxley, Terence Rattigan, Graham Greene or Christopher Isherwood, large sums of money for commissioned scripts. Nor can the BBC rival the financial inducement of a long season which the theatre offers to the successful play. This seems to have troubled radio drama almost throughout the entire history of its development. As early as 1928, Edward Liveing wrote "It has been no easy matter to persuade well known dramatists to write plays for the wireless or to have their plays adapted to this medium..."(6) mainly because it was not so financially rewarding. As long as the theatre and film are in a healthy position they will be preferred, in most cases, to radio drama for one good reason —

they can offer the dramatist more money. It is significant that during the depth of Germany's economic depression in the early nineteen-thirties, radio drama flourished in that country as never before and never since, owing to the lack of ordinary means of production in the theatre and of publication in literature. Also, in Australia, where the market for Australian stage-plays is almost non-existent, most dramatists have been drawn to radio drama, despite the meagreness of the fees paid for their scripts, with the result that this form is of a reasonably high standard in quantity and quality. If the BBC is to interest the best contemporary writers in radio drama as a unique opportunity for imaginative expression, instead of relying upon countless adaptations for its programmes, increased financial inducement must be the first step.

There still remains an attitude prevalent amongst serious writers today that to write broadcasts, be it plays, talks or semi-dramatised features, is somewhat infra dig, in the sense which serious composers often regard film music as infra dig. Because radio is a public service and radio drama a popular art form, these writers hold fast to the idea that an author must debase his standards by writing down to the huge, heterogeneous, radio audience. They charge the salaried script-writer of doing "hack-work" in a large over-administered public Corporation which must, by its very nature, play for safety and to its audience. Again the preponderance of adapted stage plays in BBC programmes, which inevitably lose something in their transformation to suit the requirements of a completely different

medium, has probably discouraged many writers. Although Louis MacNeice, a salaried script-writer himself, and the poets who have written radio dramas since the beginning of the last war, have disproved such contentions, they are still made, probably because radio to the serious writer, has behind it an unfortunate tradition of poor quality work due to economic conditions and the huge demand for material of all kinds.

Radio, like other popular art forms, suffers from the lack of responsible creative criticism. Radio drama is in a more unfortunate position than the film, for instance, because the critique of a radio play, published after its first performance, has little or no effect on its prospective audiences. A successful play can rarely expect more than two repeats, and the criterion will be audience appeal and not favourable criticism. Edward Sackville-West, who conducted "Radio Notes" in The New Statesman and Nation from January, 1945, to August, 1947, said in one of his early articles that particular criticism of radio plays is hardly worth making, because people do not want to read about something they may not have heard and probably will not have another chance of hearing.(7) Apart from regular columns in a few weekly papers, which are read up to six days after the event, very little is written on radio drama. Only a small proportion of radio plays reach publication, and when they do, they are but occasionally performed again.

John Pudney summed up the unique position of radio drama in Great Britain, when he wrote:

> The broadcast playwright is a mortal, without certain knowledge, without a great tradition; but with a diverse

> audience, a censor and the conviction that there is more financial stability in almost any other field that he cares to conquer. Here, moreover, is a field of writing with an enormous public which does not know what it wants, and yet lacks the guidance and direction of any active professional criticism. It is no wonder that the successful radio author is as rare as a dodo, and probably as ill-provided with the necessities for a happy working life in a complex civilisation.(8)

Radio writing is a specialised craft which requires the undivided attention of practitioners who must realise that they are dealing with a new and immensely powerful medium. Whether the conditions could ever exist to attract the best dramatists to specialise in radio drama is largely a matter of conjecture, because it would seem that nothing can compensate for the ephemerality of every kind of radio programme.

The most discouraging factor to the radio dramatist is the transience of his work. Radio drama lacks the permanence of the film, the novel and even the stage-play. It is a constantly changing art in which the old is soon forgotten in the new. Hours of research and creative activity may pass in seventy minutes, never to be heard again, and all the advantages of the medium -- its flexibility, intimacy and subtlety -- can never compensate for this one, major disadvantage. The "classic" radio dramas of the nineteen-thirties are very infrequently resurrected, there are no "return seasons", few plays ever reach the attention of the critics, only a handful occupy a place in libraries and those that do can never be read by prospective amateur producers because there are none. Neither critic nor public has a real chance of digesting or appreciating a play which may only be heard once or twice.

Radio drama, even more than the stage drama and film, is an impermanent art. When the performance is over, it exists only in the memory of those who heard it, and it dies with them. The art, the improvements in technique, the discoveries remain. The individuals who pioneered it, who wrote the masterpieces, are forgotten when they cease to be performed. It is almost as though a writer's books or a painter's canvases were to be destroyed upon his death, or when he decided not to write or paint any more.

The ephemerality of radio drama, heartbreaking to the writer and annoying to the listener, may be partly offset by recorded repeat performances and publication. Recording alone will preserve a play but will not keep it alive without an audience to hear it. As the most fugitive of the arts, radio drama requires a great deal of repetition, but prior to 1945, when the demand for plays increased and the facilities for their production decreased, there was a prejudice at the BBC against recorded repeats of any kind of programme. During and after the war, the most important plays began to be rebroadcast, and the position today is slightly happier, although a repeat performance must depend upon audience appeal rather than the intrinsic quality of a play. It is not therefore surprising that so little original work of more durable quality has been written for radio.

Two things keep a modern stage play alive, publication and amateur performance. Obviously a radio play cannot be performed by amateurs, despite Richard Hughes' naive direction in 1924, that Danger could be readily performed in a darkened room with

the characters speaking into boxes. Over the last thirty years only a few radio plays have been published. L. du Garde Peach, Tyrone Guthrie, Lance Sieveking and Philip Wade published collected editions during the nineteen-thirties; more recent publications have been the plays of authors widely known for their work in other media — Clemence Dane, Eric Linklater, Dorothy Sayers and the poets. The foundation of a good library of radio drama has been established and should be encouraged: for the sake of writers — as a guide to technique; for listeners -- who will have inevitably missed a lot during the first production and for whom the second will be all the better after having read the text; and for readers — because drama for the radio can be made more readable than a stage play as so much depends upon words and it dispenses so readily with scene and actor. In fact a radio play ought to have more claim to permanent existence in printed form than any other type of drama.

Recently, in Great Britain and Australia, a commercial market has been created for gramophone records of serious drama by some of Britain's finest companies, of poetry read by experienced actors and of radio drama performed by the BBC. Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood is the one radio play whose permanence is assured in a set of records of such beautiful quality, that they may provide some inspiration for other contemporary poets and dramatists to attempt radio plays.(9) The publication and recording of a large and diverse body of radio drama available for consultation by dramatists, would have an important effect in dispelling the aloofness and patronising attitude in some literary

circles to this popular art form. Until that time, radio drama will continue to be ignored by many of those authors whose talents would indicate their ability to use it with considerable success.

An even more formidable barrier to the attraction of radio drama manifested itself only one year after Richard Hughes had written the first radio play in the world. In April, 1925, John Logie Baird demonstrated that moving images could be transmitted from one point to another. Nine months after, he proved conclusively the practicability of television, and within the next two years people began to think of it as a medium of entertainment. In 1929, the BBC took Baird and his experiments under its wing and September of that year saw the inauguration of an experimental television service. The world's first regular, high definition television programme was launched on August 26,1936, but to many people, the death knell of radio drama had already sounded six years before. In July, 1930, the first attempt was made to televise a short play -- Pirandello's The Man with a Flower in his Mouth. It was produced by a man who had, in the previous two or three years, been doing so much to explore the techniques and possibilities of the radio play -- Lance Sieveking. Ironically, Val Gielgud, who has ever since remained head of the BBC radio drama department, was to have taken part, but fell ill at the last moment.

A description of this production is set out in John Swift's history of the first twenty-five years of television, Adventures in Vision.(10) He tells how the play was chosen for its suit-

ability in view of the limited resources at the producer's disposal and how some crude attempts were made to combine the techniques of radio and film, without much success, in its presentation. Swift concludes that "It was impressionistic rather than realistic. Nevertheless it was the first step towards television's maturity as an art medium."(pp.43-47.)

The following year we find the first misgivings aired about the future of radio drama. In the B.B.C. Year Book, 1931, Tyrone Guthrie, another man who had helped realise the possibilities of this form, predicted its death: "For my part, I feel convinced that the future lies along the lines of television, of co-ordination with other arts -- a vista of ever growing elaboration, mechanisation, centralisation, most depressing to contemplate but quite inevitable. In this fusion with the visual arts I believe the broadcast drama will lose most of its individuality and its virtue, but will only then, for the first time come into its own in popular esteem." Four years later he added "... the moment television becomes established as a satisfactory means of communication, the technique of radio drama will become obsolete."(11) Time has proved him wrong, but Guthrie's sentiments have been continually repeated by other radio dramatists and writers up to the present day.

L.du Garde Peach regarded radio drama as an art form without a tradition behind it and without a future in front of it -- "... a sort of brief, isolated phenomenon". He thought the inducement to write radio plays would disappear before the perfect one had been produced, and added "I shall probably continue to

experiment until I am confronted with the first successful broadcast of a television play. Then I shall breathe a deep sigh of relief and begin to experiment all over again."(12) In 1934, Rudolf Arnheim, perhaps the greatest champion of radio drama, went one step further and predicted television's complete obliteration of radio as a means of communication. Although he refused to prophesy how long the two would develop side by side, he believed people would prefer the spectacle of television to the thought and feeling of sound broadcasting.(13)

Thirteen years later, Val Gielgud maintained that the future of radio drama would disappear with the perfecting of television. He conjectured whether there would be time for the broadcast play to prove itself as an art form before the postwar T.V. service was brought to a high level of efficiency and delivered the coup de grace.(14) Since that time critics are still prophesying the death of radio drama, but the form continues to thrive.(15) What effect, then, has television really had upon radio drama in the past, and what effect could it have in the future?

The main reason behind the earliest of these prophesies was the analogy drawn from the silent film. The moment the extra dimension of sound was added, people refused to look at another silent film, and not all the genuine artistry of the form could save it from extinction. "Add the sound track to the camera", wrote Val Gielgud, "and the silent film becomes merely a museum piece. Add viewing to the microphone, and the radio play must follow the same road into Limbo."(16) Few predicted that

television would entirely supersede sound radio, and had Rudolf Arnheim paused a moment to reconsider his opinion, he would have seen its folly. Television demands the complete, or almost complete, attention of the viewer. Radio, on the other hand, is often heard as background listening, and many programmes are designed to this end, especially during the day, when a person cannot be expected to drop everything else, sit down and listen. The experience of the last nine years in Great Britain and the United States of America would indicate that both radio and television fulfil entirely different functions as mass communication media, and may therefore co-exist quite happily.

Now most people prefer to see rather than hear, because sight is far more powerful than sound for the communication of ideas, and requires far less effort from the viewer than hearing alone does from the listener. Better still, people like to see and hear at the same time. The early radio dramatists, realised this, and even as they struggled to develop the technique of a new form, to discover an aesthetic for it, and to persuade a blind audience to see with its mind's eye, the fate which overtook the silent film was an example of what might overtake their own art as soon as science added a visible scene to the microphone. To many authors, radio drama must have seemed an extremely temporary form which could enjoy only a brief period of survival before it was replaced by a more powerful medium. This fact, together with the transience of each individual radio play, was an important influence in their refusal to take radio drama seriously as an art form.

The BBC's post war television service began in 1946, and since then, there have been great advances both in programmes and technical facilities, as more and more of the country has had television made available to it. In September, 1955, the BBC's monopoly ended, and Commercial television offered it competition for the first time in the history of British broadcasting. What effect the combined attraction of alternative services will have on radio programmes over the next few years is almost impossible to predict.

Up to the present time, it would seem that radio has had to be constantly on the look out for new and exciting ideas to combat the potency of sight and sound, although the position of radio drama has remained unchanged, both in the number of popular plays broadcast and the quality of serious writing done for the Home Service and the Third Programme. In his Introduction to The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts, Louis MacNeice voiced the sentiments of many authors and listeners in an expression of hope for the survival of radio:

> It would be a great pity if television were ever completely to supersede sound broadcasting as the talkies superseded the silent films. The cinema revolution was inevitable but through it we lost the unique pleasure of watching a story told visually, dispensing with people's voices. But sound alone is for most people more potent, more pregnant, more subtle, than pictures alone and for that reason -- regardless of the material pros and cons of television -- I hope that sound broadcasting will survive, dispensing with people's faces. (p.12.)

Sound broadcasting will undoubtedly survive, but in what kind of programmes it is difficult to say. Whether it will continue to support the popular art forms which have developed within the medium -- the variety show, the feature and radio drama -- is,

to venture a prophecy, unlikely, because the people who support these forms are not the people for whom MacNeice considers sound to be "more potent, more pregnant, more subtle than pictures." He was wrong in suggesting that "most people" prefer sound to sight, probably because he was thinking of a small, intelligent and sensitive minority of the radio audience, the minority which supports the Third Programme. And here I think lies the future of radio drama. The "popular" audience, and this is not meant in any derogatory sense, will prefer the addition of sight to sound for their entertainment and will come to regard radio as something to be listened to with one ear only, or simply as a medium for the conveyance of straight, unadorned information. But with the Third Programme there exists and will continue to exist a demand for specially designed aural works of art which will provide an experience unattainable in any other medium.

As yet radio drama remains a popular, not an esoteric art form, and the television play is still in a very embryonic stage of development. In an age of such rapid developments in the entertainment industry, anything could happen over the next few years; from a resurrection of the arts through these popular communication media, to the serious ramifications of a social problem now in the process of creation — that is, the replacement by television, film and radio of all leisure occupations requiring personal initiative. The potentialities of the popular art forms to lead men in the opposite direction, towards a richer and fuller existence, have been realised by those contempor-

ary poets who found in radio a desirable and satisfactory means of expression. They restored the human voice to literature, showed what could be done on a very high level with the simple and popular, and proved that the taste of ordinary people can be as easily conditioned to admire the beautiful and emotionally true, as American radio has conditioned them in the opposite direction.

The future must look to contemporary writers like Dylan Thomas — a poet who was able to write equally well within two popular art forms. If more dramatists could be induced to use the radio, film and television — media readily accepted as standard forms of entertainment by the many and as art by the few — there would be a chance of placing these forms on a more intelligent, more artistic, less commercial and less standardised basis. It is not a question of giving art to the people, because audiences cannot be forced into the acceptance of more artistic things; change or improvement in mass audience tastes is a slow, evolutionary process. Nor does it imply a lowering of artistic standards to meet the requirements of "the man in the street"; but it does imply a facing up to the inescapable fact that the literary arts are being left behind in favour of those dynamic arts whose living appeal to the ear and eye give the writer access to a far wider audience. Radio and television are the only two dramatic media which can fulfil the first function of a National Theatre by making their productions available to the whole nation.

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NOTES.

Abbreviations:	N.S. and N.	The New Statesman and Nation.
	T.L.S.	The Times Literary Supplement.
	T.A.M.	Theatre Arts Monthly.
	Anon.rev.	Anonymous review.

I THE CANONS : FORM.

1. THOMAS, D. Quite Early One Morning: Broadcasts. London, Dent, 1954.

2. Only a few Greek tragedies required a change of scene. e.g. Aeschylus' Eumenides and Ajax.

3. NICOLL, A. The Development of the Theatre: A Study of the Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day. London, Harrap, 1937, p.121.

4. MANVELL, R. On the Air : A Study of Broadcasting in Sound and Vision. London, Deutch, 1953, p.160.

5. MACNEICE, L. Christopher Columbus, A Radio Play. London, Faber and Faber, 1944, Introduction, pp.8-9.

6. LIVEING, E. Stageless Drama and Pageless Literature, Discovery IX-87, January, 1928, pp.26-8.

7. The most striking use of narration yet heard in a radio play, occurred in Orson Welles' adaptation of H.G.Wells' novel The War of the Worlds. Welles capitalised on the familiarity of listeners with the radio commentary, and the results were so startlingly real that he terrified almost half the population of the United States. See:

   CANTRIL, H. The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic; With the Complete Script of the Famous Orson Welles Broadcast. Princetown University Press, 1940.

8. GIELGUD, V. The Right Way to Radio Playwriting. London, Elliott, 1948, pp.42-9.

MACKEY, D. Drama on the Air. New York, Prentice-Hall, 1951, pp. 35-9.

9. GIELGUD, V. The Right Way to Radio Playwriting. p.48.

10. GIELGUD, V. The Right Way to Radio Playwriting. pp.38-41.
MACKEY, D. Drama on the Air. pp.50-2.

II THE CANONS : CONTENT.

1. HUNT, H. The Director in the Theatre. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, Contemporary Shakespeare Production, p.96.

2. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. The Rescue. A Melodrama for Broadcasting based on Homer's Odyssey. London, Secker and Warburg, 1945, Preamble, p.14.

3. PRITCHETT, V. Listening in the Dark, N.S. and N., XXX-757, August 25,1945, pp.131-2.

4. Great Britain, Broadcasting Committee, Report. (Lord Beveridge, chairman.) London, H.M.S.O., 1949, pt. III, Secondary Questions, ch.7, Audience Research, p.59.

5. MACNEICE, L. Christopher Columbus. Introduction.
The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts. London, Faber and Faber, 1947, General Introduction.

6. MACKEY, D. Drama on the Air. p.4.

7. WEAVER, L. The Technique of Radio Writing. New York, Prentice-Hall, 1949, p.86.

8. The BBC's monopoly only applies to sound broadcasting. In 1952, the Conservative Government introduced legislation allowing the Postmaster-General to issue commercial television licences, and in September, 1955, the first British commercial T.V. stations began transmission.

9. Great Britain, Broadcasting Committee, Report. (Lord Beveridge, chairman.) London, H.M.S.O., 1949, Appendix H, Memoranda submitted to the Committee, paper 95, Memorandum of Evidence by the Radiowriters' Association, p.490.

10. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.53.

11. MACNEICE, L. The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts. General Introduction, p.10.

12. "LISTENER". On Dramatic Broadcasting, The National Review, V.120, May, 1943, pp.396-9.

13. ARNHEIM, R. Radio. Trans. M. Ludwig and H. Read. London, Faber and Faber, 1936, pp.153-4.

14. GUTHRIE, T. Squirrel's Cage and Two Other Microphone Plays. London, Cobden-Sanderson, , 1931, Introduction. This volume was unavailable. The quotation is reproduced in:
SIEVEKING, L. The Stuff of Radio. London, Cassell, 1934, pp.51-2.

15. DENISON, M. The Broadcast Play, T.A.M., XV-12, December, 1931, pp.1008-11.

III THE FIVE PERIODS.

1. GIELGUD, V. Sidelights on the Broadcast Play, T.A.M., XV-6, June, 1931, pp.479-84.

IV THE FIRST PERIOD : 1922-1926.

1. Before Eckersley's broadcast, some people in London subscribed to the "theatrephone" or "electrophone", and had their homes connected by telephone wires to selected West End Theatres so they could listen to as much of the play being performed as crude microphones could pick up.

2. This is sometimes done even today. Its justification lies in the possibility of taking the stage performance of a famous company or actor to a great many people in country areas and other places who would be unable to attend the theatre.

3. GIELGUD, V. Years of the Locust. London, Nicholson and Watson, 1947, p.78.

4. Discussing the early years of broadcasting, Maurice Gorham writes "On the programme side the dominant figure was Cecil Lewis, a dynamic young man who joined the Company on its formation and remained the chief influence on its programmes until he left in 1936." GORHAM, M. Broadcasting and Television since 1900. London, Dakers, 1952, p.45.

5. HUGHES, R. Plays. London, Chatto and Windus, 1924.

6. LEA, G. Radio Drama and How to Write it. London, Allen and Unwin, 1926.

7. LIVEING, R. Stageless Drama and Pageless Literature, Discovery, IX-97, January, 1928, pp.26-28.

8. GIELGUD, V. Years of the Locust. p.75.

9. GORHAM, M. Broadcasting and Television since 1900. p.42.

V THE SECOND PERIOD : 1926 - 1930.

1. Similar discoveries were being made at this time in Germany and America.

2. GIELGUD, V. Sidelights on the Broadcast Play, T.A.M., XV-6, June, 1931, pp.479-84.

3. SIEVEKING, L. The Stuff of Radio. London, Cassell, 1934, p.100.

4. GORHAM, M. Sound and Fury, Twenty-One Years in the BBC. London, Marshall, 1949, p.83.

5. SIEVEKING, L. The Stuff of Radio. p.233.

6. IBID., p.349.

7. Anon. Development in Drama, B.B.C. Year Book 1933, p.171.

8. SIEVEKING, L. The Stuff of Radio. p.147.

9. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.155.

10. "CONDOR". Broadcasting, The Saturday Review, 148-3866, November 30, 1929, p.640.

11. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.155.

12. Sieveking was also responsible for a shortlived project -- the "Programme Research Section". The business of its members, Val Gielgud wrote in Years of the Locust, "... was to be free to use their imaginations to preserve the sensitivity proper to the creative and artistic mind, and ultimately to contribute results in broadcast form."(p.73.) The activities of this experimental group came to a sudden end, because they had to be tested no only with equipment and actors, but with an audience as well, and there was a limit both on finance, and the amount of experimental broadcasting BBC listeners could take. These people eventually formed the nucleus of the "Features" section of the BBC.

13. PRAGA, L. Radio Plays. London, Nennes, 1932, Introduction.

14. Ibid., p.11.

15. LIVEING, E. Stageless Drama and Pageless Literature, Discovery, IX-97, January, 1928, pp.26-8.

VI THE THIRD PERIOD : 1930 - 1939.

1. Anon. Lessons from the Year's Plays, B.B.C. Year Book, 1931.

2. GORHAM, M. Broadcasting and Television since 1900, p.84.

3. MATHESON, H. Broadcasting. London, Thorton and Butterworth, 1933, p.113

4. WILSON, C. Writing for Broadcasting. London, Black, 1935.

5. GUTHRIE, T. Squirrel's Cage. A.B.C. Productions Dept., Sydney, unnumbered script.
The Flowers are not for You to Pick. A.B.C. Productions Dept., Sydney, No. 14.

These two plays and one other, Matrimonial News, are published in Squirrel's Cage, and Two Other Microphone Plays, together with an excellent Introduction by Guthrie. This volume was unavailable.

6. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.157.

7. See II, note 14.

8. HAMILTON, P. To the Public Danger. A.B.C. Productions Dept., Sydney, No.14.

9. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.159

10. HAMILTON, P. Money with Menaces. A.B.C. Productions Dept., Sydney. No.20.

11. DENISON, M. The Broadcast Play, T.A.M., XV-12, December, 1931, pp.1008-11.

VII THE FOURTH PERIOD : 1939 - 1946.

1. LINKLATER, E. The Cornerstones. A Conversation in Elysium. London, Macmillan, 1941.
The Raft and Socrates Asks Why. Two Conversations. London, Macmillan, 1943.
Rabelais Replies and The Great Ship. Two Conversations. London, Macmillan, 1944.

2. Anon. rev. N.S. and N., XXIII-568, January 10, 1942, p.31.

3. The Raft and Socrates Asks Why.

4. SAYERS, D. The Man Born to be King. A Play-Cycle on the Life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. London, Gollancz, 1943, Foreword by Dr. J.W. Welsh, p.9.

5. SAYERS, D. The Man Born to be King. Introduction, p.23.

6. STONIER, G. Miss Sayers' Christian Drama, N.S. and N., XXVI - 648, July 10, 1943, p.28.

7. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.166.

8. Anon. Review of the Year's Broadcasting (Religious Broadcasting), B.B.C. Year Book 1943, p.60.

9. DANE, C. The Saviours, Seven Plays on One Theme. London, Heinemann, 1942.

10. Anon. rev. Plays for Broadcasting, T.L.S., 2112, July 25, 1942, p.368.

11. Ibid.

12. Great Britain, Broadcasting Committee, Report. (Lord Beveridge, chairman.) London, H.M.S.O., 1949, pt.IV, Proposals, ch.21, Safeguards against the Dangers of Monopoly, pp.163-4.

13. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.98

14. Maurice Gorham said that when E.A.Harding became Programme Director of The BBC's North Region, he discovered D.G. Bridson "... and before long the North Region became the stronghold of the feature programme which brought out the potentialities of radio on quite a new side." (Radio and Television since 1900, p.97.)

15. Anon. Drama Notes, B.B.C. Year Book 1932, p.183.

16. SIDEWKING, L. The Stuff of Radio. p.26.

17. GIELGUD, V. Years of the Locust. p.74.

18. MACNEICE, L. Sunbeams in His Hat, in The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts.

19. GILLIAM, L. Editor. B.B.C. Features. London, Evans, 1950, Introduction, p.9.

20. SALTER, W. Radio Notes, N.S.and N. XXXVI - 920, October 23, 1948, p.345.

21. GILLIAM, L. B.B.C. Features. Introduction, p.9.

22. see VII, note 19.

23. MCGIVERN, C. Junction X. BBC Copyright Dept., production script.
The Harbour Called Mulberry, in Five Radio Plays. (A. Phillips, editor.) Melbourne, Longmans, 1949.

24. WILLMETT, H. Reflections on the Radio Feature, B.B.C. Quarterly, VI -3, Autumn, 1951, pp.157 - 61.

25. MANVELL, R. On the Air. pp.171-2.

26. Ibid., p.152.

27. GORHAM, M. Broadcasting and Television since 1900. p.216.

28. GIELGUD, V. Editor. Radio Theatre, Plays Specially written for Broadcasting. London, MacDonald, 1946, Foreword to Authors, p.viii.

29. MACLATCHY, J. A Symposium, Education on the Air, Thirteenth Yearbook of the Institution for Education by Radio, Columbus, Ohio State University, 1942, p.101.

30. See VII, Note 23.

31. GORHAM, M. Broadcasting and Television since 1900. p.213.

VIII THE FIFTH PERIOD : 1946 - 1954.

1. GORHAM, M. Sound and Fury. p.161. The competitive policy was abandoned in 1947, when the three programmes were put under the control of one person.

2. STOKES, L. The BBC Third Programme Presents ..., T.A.M., XXXI-2, February, 1947, pp. 49-51.

3. No script of this play was available. The comments are based on a B.B.C. Transcription, produced by D.C.Davidson and Gordon Gildrard, with music by David Stephen and the B.B.C. Scottish Orchestra and Singers. It was broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Tasmanian State programme, on November 16, 1954, from 9.15 to 10.45 p.m.

4. MACNEICE, L. India at First Sight, in B.B.C. Features. (L. Gilliam, editor.)

5. GILLIAM, L. B.B.C. Features. Introduction, p.60.

6. MACNEICE, L. The March Hare Saga, in The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts.

7. MACNEICE, L. Christopher Columbus. A Radio Play. London, Faber and Faber, 1942.
The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts. London, Faber and Faber, 1947.

8. MACNEICE, L. The Dark Tower and Other Radio Scripts. General Introduction, p.10.

9. MACNEICE, L. Christopher Columbus. Introduction, p.9.

10. Ibid., p.11.

11. Ibid., p.15.

12. Anon. rev. News and Notes, T.L.S., 2124, October 17, 1942, p.505.

13. PRITCHETT, V. Listening in the Dark, N.S. and N., XXX - 757, August 25, 1945, pp.131-2.

14. MACNEICE, L. Christopher Columbus. Appendix, p.89.

15. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. The Invisible Art, N.S. and N., XXXIV-861, September 6, 1947, p.196.

16. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXI - 780, February 2, 1946, p.84.

17. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.164.

18. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXI - 780, February 2, 1946, p.84.

19. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S and N., XXXI - 788, March 30, 1946, p.228.

20. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. The Invisible Art, N.S. and N., XXXIV-861, September 6, 1947, p.196.

21. Anon. Radio Personalities of 1948, B.B.C. Year Book 1949, p.62.

22. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. The Rescue. A Melodrama for Broadcasting Based on Homer's Odyssey. London, Secker and Warburg, 1945.

23. "...radio, as an art, aspires to the condition of opera. To grasp this is, in my view, a necessary prerequisite for transferring stage shows to the air..."
SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXII-826, December 21, 1946, p.461.

24. PRITCHETT, V. Listening in the Dark, N.S. and N., XXX-757, August 25, 1945, pp.131-2.

25. SALTER, W. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXV-888, March 13,1948, pp. 212-3.

26. MANVELL, R. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXVI-667, December 4, 1943, pp.367-8.

27. PRITCHETT, V. Listening in the Dark, N.S. and N., XXX-757, August 25, 1945, pp.131-2.

28. SALTER, W. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXV-888, March 13,1948, pp. 212-3.

29. LEE, L. The Voyage of Magellan, A Dramatic Chronicle for Radio. London, Lehmann, 1948.

30. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXII-817, October 19, 1946, p.282.

31. REED, H. Moby Dick, A Play for Radio from Herman Melville's Novel. London, Cape, 1947.

32. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXIII-833, February 8, 1947, p.112.

33. HOPE-WALLACE, P. Critic on the Hearth, Sound Broadcasting, Drama, The Listener, XLVII-4, January 30, 1947.

34. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXXIII-833, February 8, 1947, p.112.

35. MANVELL, R. On the Air. p.162.

36. HOPE-WALLACE, P. Critic on the Hearth, The Listener, XLVII-4, January 30, 1947.

37. THOMAS, D. Under Milk Wood, A Play for Voices. London. Dent, 1954.

38. THOMAS, D. The Map of Love, Verse and Prose. London, Dent, 1939.

39. THOMAS, D. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog. London, Dent, 1940.

40. MACNEICE, L. (contrib.) Dylan Thomas: Memories and Appreciations, Encounter 4, II - 1, January, 1954, pp.12-13.

41. ADIX, M. Ibid., pp.13-16.

42. THOMAS, D. Quite Early One Morning: Broadcasts. London, Dent, 1954.

43. SACKVILLE-WEST, E. Radio Notes, N.S. and N., XXIV-852, July 5, 1947, p.9.

44. THOMAS, D. The Doctor and the Devils. From the Story by Donald Taylor. London, Dent, 1953.

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IX THE TRANSIENT ART.

1. Two plays written specifically for the stage very obviously betray the influence of radio drama in their technique. Christopher Fry's poetic drama, The Boy with a Cart (London, Muller, 1945.), requires effects, which, to the reader, seem impossible to produce in a theatre, yet could be perfectly represented on the radio. J.B.Priestley's experimental play, The Dragon's Mouth (London, Heinemann, 1952.), written in collaboration with Jaquetta Hawkes, was, according to its authors, considerably influenced by radio techniques. It is composed almost entirely of words, with little or no stage action, and intended for performance with an absolute minimum of scenery. All four characters speak directly to the audience through microphones.

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