THE ART OF RADIO

by Donald Mc-Whinnie

World Radio History

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Donald McWhinnie

One of the major problems which our present society has to solve is the function of the great mass-media of communication and entertainment. Has art a place there? Could it or should it have? Mr. McWhinnie is convinced that sound radio, at least, has established its claim to be regarded as a distinctive, twentieth century art-form, a unique medium of creative expression which has already brought forth masterpieces of its own and which demands attention as an integral strand in the cultural pattern of the community as a whole.

This book examines in detail the nature of the new art-form and the way in which the raw materials of word, sound and silence can be moulded to convey a special kind of experience. The author illustrates his point of view by analysis of some outstanding radio 'creations' (such as Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* and Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*) and discusses the place of radio in relation to other contemporary modes of expression.

Donald McWhinnie, one of the most experienced and most distinguished of the younger BBC producers, regards television not as a threat but as a challenge–a challenge which could result in sound radio's most exciting and most enduring achievements.

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DONALD McWHINNIE

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World Radio History

Contents

Preface *page* 11

Part One

THE NATURE OF THE MEDIUM 21
The Experience 21
The Raw Materials: Word 44
The Raw Materials: Sound 64
(a) Music 64
(b) Natural Sounds 77
(c) *Musique Concrète* and radiophonic effects 85
The Raw Materials: Silence 88
The Synthesis 93

Part Two

THE PARTICIPANTS 103

Part Three

THE ART AS IT EXISTS 152

Conclusion 183

Index 187

World Radio History

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World Radio History

World Radio History

Preface

The most devastating summing-up of Sound Radio I have come across was uttered by a woman who, herself a devotee of the 'telly', referred to the elder brother as the 'silent'. Such is the power of the spoken word in the middle of the twentieth century. And yet the definition is not so far off the mark—not merely because thousands of radio sets have been switched off permanently in the past few years, but because paradoxically there is silence at the heart of the radio experience: an intimate, it might almost be unspoken, communication between writer and listener, far removed from the rhetoric of the amphitheatre or the noisy dazzle of pictures moving on a screen. Radio at its best is a private experience; the problem in the modern world is whether there is any continuing place for it. I assume—but do not predict—that there is, just as I believe that some people will always want to read books and poetry at some time or other, whatever alternative excitements they may be offered. I may well be wrong, in which case this book will be of strictly archaeological interest.

There are three kinds of radio experience. Its first, and fundamental, level is that of simple communication: to convey news, information, facts. Secondly, it acts as a substitute, bringing the listener to participate by proxy in an event which he cannot attend in the flesh—a football match, a symphony concert. The fact that a programme may be specially mounted in a studio does not necessarily exclude it from this category; a studio per-

World Radio History

formance by an orchestra is a substitute for attending the actual performance; certain light entertainment programmes are substitutes for the music-hall, they use the same techniques, the same 'gags'; broadcasts of stage plays and even certain so-called 'radio plays' are substitutes for a visit to the theatre and are conceived in terms of theatre. In this book I am not concerned with these two functions of Sound Broadcasting—they are equally functions of the visual media, of the cinema and Television—and I therefore exclude any direct consideration of outside broadcasts, concerts, talks, journalistic documentary programmes, discussions, except in so far as they transcend their basic aim and achieve some kind of artistic synthesis. For all these types of programme there is a continuing future, if they are properly handled; indeed there is no doubt in my mind that the function of communication pure and simple—the major function of Sound Radio in the past—will remain indispensable, as will the function of providing agreeable background sound for those who need it. However, the purpose of this book is to consider the third kind of radio experience, the particular quality of Sound Radio as a means of artistic expression; to re-investigate the principles and practice of an art-form which has often, and unjustly, been regarded as too ephemeral to merit serious consideration; to analyse the aesthetic of Sound Radio as a creative art. It is addressed to those listeners and writers throughout the world who find in Sound Radio the possibility of a unique kind of artistic fulfilment, a special way of liberating the imagination. It is not an easy guide; it does not attempt to provide rules of thumb, for there are none. And it is written in the belief that Sound Radio must perfect its own imaginative and creative forms—forms for which there is no equivalent or substitute—if it is to hold its proper place in the future.

There is a problem of terminology. Most creative radio-writing falls, broadly speaking, into the field of drama and poetry. However, the definitions are far from accurate; there is little affinity with drama-in-the-theatre or poetry-on-the-page. Indeed the use of terms such as 'radio play', 'feature', 'adaptation', dramatization', has in the past led to considerable

World Radio History

misunderstanding of the scope and particular quality of the medium. The situation has not been improved by the lack of an informed and penetrating critical literature; it is a long time since Sound Radio had any commercial news value, and the space which even responsible newspapers devote to radio criticism is pathetically inadequate, room for only the most perfunctory of comments. I have no illusions that this state of affairs is likely to change, but I hope that the present volume may do something to correct some of the misapprehensions which exist fairly widely and to supply information which in an ideal world would be common currency. In other words that it may define, however loosely, *the art of radio*.

Sound Radio was a millionaire before it was thirty; by the end of the Second World War, thanks to years of blackout and the disappearance of most alternative forms of entertainment, it commanded a larger audience for one performance than any impresario had ever dreamed of. It was an artificial situation, created by an artificial state of society, but it was easy enough at the time to interpret as permanent what was only transitory, to grasp eagerly at the deduction that to command an audience of twenty million listeners for one performance must be a great virtue in itself. Most of the millions have now changed their allegiance, but one still finds in certain quarters that the size of the audience is applied as a test of value and not the quality of the individuals who compose it, an attitude which can only be artistically negative, and indeed destructive, in the long run. For the phenomenon is not simply a war-time one. For most of our lifetime *civil* war has been raging in the world of art and entertainment. One dictator has replaced another, captured the unquestioning devotion of the masses, then himself been replaced and left to work out his own salvation. Moving pictures, gramophone records, Sound Radio, talking pictures, 'paperbacks': each has developed into a mammoth industry, each, intoxicated by mass adoration, has been tempted to undervalue and neglect its potential as a medium of artistic expression, each, sooner or later, is faced with the choice of living on past glory or looking into its own heart and that of its friends and

World Radio History

making the painful decision to do what it is best qualified to do, and that only. The choice has still to be made; even some men of the theatre (where the problem has been a familiar one for many years) want to have their cake and eat it. All-star productions of trivial plays and films, bigger and better advertising, increasing sensationalism in the choice of subjects and in their presentation—these may keep the income-tax collector at bay for a while, but they are somewhat questionable as a long-term investment. The public is notoriously fickle and usually ends by being indifferent to what it once wanted.

The new giant is Television, and no neutral observer would deny it its triumph, though he might deplore the waste and bloodshed involved in achieving it. Family feuds are even more futile than civil war, and Television and Sound Radio have fought it out in the same room, with the neighbours egging them on; a stupid and unnecessary quarrel, and the neighbours were not entirely to blame. The newcomer won on points—not quite a knock-out; the old sweat retired to a dark corner to lick his wounds and plan a new career, consoling himself with the thought that no one can be champion for ever. He is now eligible to join his right-thinking colleagues in Theatre and Cinema who have also learned that no medium of artistic expression can have an indefinite monopoly, and that it is only after the ballyhoo and the box-office have ceased to operate that one can get down to the real business in hand: to do what one's medium *can* do and do it uniquely. Perspective is re-established, society is recognized as an infinitely various and constantly changing organism which may, as a mass, sometimes worship false gods but which also contains individuals and groups who know the best when they see it, and who want the best, from every medium. Television has its own successes and its own integrity ahead of it, but no one who understands Sound Radio and cares for it need regret that its audience is not as vast as it once was. In fact, Sound Radio as an art-form—like painting, music, sculpture, and indeed theatre—has long ago reconciled itself to being a minority taste. A minority of millions, as it happens, and it is likely to remain a considerable minority for a

World Radio History

long time to come; how considerable may well depend on how radio practitioners acquit themselves in the next few years. Even if it were no greater than that for, say, Chinese poetry, it would not be negligible. It seems that the future relationship between the two media in terms of artistic endeavour—at any rate as far as one can see—may well be similar to that between the mass circulation newspapers and the serious minority press; an admirable arrangement, and far more likely to be ultimately productive than the desperate, foredoomed attempt to beat the other fellow at his own game. It is even possible that at last we may attain a kind of broadcasting Nirvana; that Television and Sound Radio may discover their true functions as branches of one medium, complementary and interdependent, united by the unique quality of the relationship between listener/viewer and performer which is at the core of both. And how neat and tidy if all the entertainment piped into one's home were ideally suited for expression in whichever medium instead of anarchically, almost arbitrarily, chosen in many cases in order to keep the wheels turning. Every programme finding its most fitting mode of realization: illusory hope; when both media are still bound and influenced by techniques of writing, performance and presentation specially suited to theatre, music-hall, cinema, debating platform, how may one hope that they will make the finer distinction between their own private techniques? Yet one does hope, and interested workers in both media drive an occasional nail into the rickety structure; it may never be solid enough to walk about on, but perhaps one may from time to time be able to take an invigorating breather by leaning against it. The difficulty is that the nails cannot be driven in frequently enough; there are too many inquisitive spectators who want to know what is going on, and work has to be suspended while they look at the view. In other words, in spite of the current limitation on the hours of Television broadcasting, both Sound Radio and Television are required to spend far more time than is good for their artistic health in providing some form of diversion for anyone who feels inclined to have it. The general assumption on the part of the public seems to be that both

World Radio History

should provide entertainment day and night, and of course the public must be served. But why should one count on a radio set giving forth intelligible sounds or a television set displaying coherent pictures simply because one switches them on? Presumably because they are our property and therefore must obey us, must gratify our most casual need in time of boredom. After all, one would not expect to be admitted to the National Gallery at three o'clock in the morning simply by virtue of knocking on the door. Or perhaps one would. Chimpanzees have now taken to painting pictures, so who can say.

Whatever the future, there is no doubt that at the moment Sound Radio has a remarkable opportunity, and in the face of it one is tempted to gloss over the difficulties. We are not out of the wood yet; we must reinvestigate our techniques, reassess our themes, and unless we are prepared single-mindedly to develop the uniqueness of the medium it is a waste of time even to begin. The sad fact is that in the past the sheer size of Sound Broadcasting, the range of possible programmes and wavelengths, has meant that the listener has put up with a great deal of second-rate material; the currency has been devalued. Put Van Gogh on every parlour wall and he becomes invisible; how can you take seriously something which is part of the furniture? Once you become an industry it is difficult to win recognition as an art, and Sound Radio was crippled long ago by its very accessibility and prodigality—and by producing what the customer wanted on such a scale that eventually he wanted it no longer. We have come a long way in forty years, from the phonograph and the 'cat's-whisker' to the perfection of magnetic tape and V.H.F. transmission; stereophony is on the horizon; there is probably more enthusiasm and creative interest among radio practitioners than at any time since the early days. What then is the problem? It seems to me that for the next few years the major battle is going to be the battle not to maintain an audience but to win an audience, to give evidence to the discriminating listener, who may at the moment be a non-listener, that Sound Radio is a form of expression worth his attention. The extraordinary amount of critical attention paid to such works as

World Radio History

Under Milk Wood (because it happened to be written by Dylan Thomas) or *All That Fall* (because it happened to be written by Samuel Beckett) only emphasizes the way in which Sound Radio has squandered its good-will; many discerning people simply do not listen, because they have learned by trial and error that most of what they hear is not worth their serious consideration. A good many examples of exciting and stimulating new writing are broadcast every year (deeply embedded in a texture of good *old* writing and old and new mediocrity); a good many listeners who would welcome the opportunity of hearing them do so, if at all, often by accident, as I once heard a broadcast of *Sweeney Agonistes* and suddenly realized the power of imaginatively handled sound to interpret a non-theatrical drama. The only way for radio practitioners to win the confidence of their potential allies is for them to understand the nature of their medium and to try to realize it ruthlessly and without compromise. Unfortunately, compromise and the entertainment industry are inseparable companions, and old habits die hard.

There are already signs in the theatre and in the cinema that a new pattern is forming. 'Box-office' will always be an irresistible attraction to many people, and many will fall on their way towards it. But it is not always possible to predict what constitutes box-office; a given mind does not necessarily respond in a fixed way to given stimuli, though all the great media have given extra credence to the belief that it does by their indulgence in conveyor-belt techniques, by reposing their confidence in the cross-section, the 'average' response of the 'average' citizen, who indisputably knows what he likes. The public in the mass can be, and often is, uncritical and undemanding; it can applaud hysterically the most arrant nonsense, and it may not move a muscle in the cause of art: indeed why should it, when it is fashionable to suppose that contempt for culture is thoroughly respectable. But it is a great mistake to underrate this public, and if one plays to the lowest common denominator one does precisely that. Given the chance, the individuals who compose it have shown that they are capable of playing a creative part in the stimulation of good work. In the mass they show no concern

World Radio History

when outstanding work by some of the leading writers of the day—Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Samuel Beckett, Julian Green—is banned from the public stage for reasons which are arguable, to say the least; individually, they move imperceptibly but surely to the rescue. It has already become apparent in the United States that you can no longer fool most of the people most of the time by techniques of mass packaging, particularly in the sphere of 'art'. I would hesitate to deduce possible patterns of behaviour in this country from American precedent, but it has long been apparent in the United Kingdom that although people in the mass may have prolonged moments of aberration they tend to find their own two feet in the long run. And an error less criminal than sheer contempt for the people one serves but surely more foolish is the pretence that one can embrace all extremes: give the public 'what it wants' while professing concern with high artistic standards. The public is likely to see through this kind of confidence trick in due course, and its reaction, though not violent, is usually positive: simple loss of interest. Yet the auguries are good. The energy and enthusiasm now being poured into theatrical ventures in Oxford, Liverpool, Bristol and Sloane Square, the growing influence of the 'art' cinema, the demand, more vocal every year, for adult treatment of contemporary themes, the adventurousness of some of the Television networks in mounting frequent prestige and experimental productions—all these symptoms indicate the growing influence of minority groups and, incidentally, add to the unprecedented range and variety of artistic riches to which twentieth-century man has access if he so wishes. Sound Radio is simply one ingredient; it never has been, it never can be, more than that. To switch on a radio set, not out of boredom, but because of a positive wish to enjoy a special kind of experience—as one plays tennis, or goes to a concert of chamber music, or chooses a particularly good cigar, or saves up to buy a painting—this is the attitude which Sound Radio demands from its listeners if they are to gain lasting satisfaction from it. It is difficult to win confidence from a wilting bank balance, particularly if one has been in the habit of paying for things

World Radio History

which one does not need; it is impossible to exist unless one has confidence in one's ability to do something, however trivial, better than the next man. Few people would join a movement to liquidate music, painting, rose-growing, hairdressing—all dispensable, if sometimes profitable, adjuncts to civilization; seen in perspective, anything which enriches existence has earned its place in existence. The mistake is to assume that human beings are only capable of devoting themselves to one thing at a time. The skilled motor-mechanic who is an equally skilled artist, the gifted novelist whose ability at trout-fishing has to be seen to be believed; the contemporary assumption is that these are exceptions. Far from it. The only possible attitude for anyone who works in any art-form is that he has access to only a fragment of the truth; the total reality can only be revealed to those who are prepared to take the trouble to look for it, in all media of expression. Which is to say that not only must the public work, if it hopes to gain any lasting insight, but that the artist must recognize and accept the limitations of his own medium.

It is only just to say that this book does not set out to be either comprehensive or systematic. A great many works of considerable interest to the radio specialist, and a number of distinguished practitioners in the medium, are not even mentioned; this is not a handbook, and there would be no point in a mere catalogue. Indeed I must ask indulgence for drawing most of my examples from works which I have myself produced or adapted; it has seemed to me that my first-hand experience and intimate working knowledge of particular programmes are likely to throw out more cogent suggestions than would my second-hand analysis of programmes with which I have had no working connection. I include a ration of the latter, if only because one's perception as a listener is very much more ephemeral and illusory than one's detailed realization after working closely on a production. But the listener is familiar with his own reactions; it may be of more profit to him to make a fleeting acquaintance with the kind of calculation which takes place before words are spoken into a microphone; I imagine

World Radio History

that he does not particularly wish to listen to the random reflections of yet another listener. I am only sorry that I cannot do more justice to a number of fine practitioners who have never come within shouting distance of justice; but then, they were always more concerned about their medium than about themselves. I hope it outlives them.

World Radio History

PART ONE

The Nature of the Medium

THE EXPERIENCE

Listening is a difficult business, more difficult every year in a world which is geared to the quickest and easiest communication possible. The spoken word is hard to catch, it is gone as soon as it is formed; you hear it, but can you capture it? The contemporary trend is towards easily assimilated symbols. I think not particularly of Television; indeed, it would be wrong to associate Television permanently with this tendency, in spite of its hypnotic potential. In the long run, Television must give full value to the word as well as to the picture if it is to survive on any but the most trivial level; this is not to undervalue the importance of a sensitively composed image, nor of silence as an incentive to *look*, to see what is happening, nor of a rhythmic succession of visual points of view; it is simply to say that Television will not begin to know its own artistic potency until it forgets about cinema and theatre and devotes itself to doing what *it* can do and *they* cannot. I am more disturbed by popular journalism, advertising, modern educational techniques. The least painful way of communication is the visual way: every picture tells a story! But it is one thing to grope your way, as a child, towards apprehension by means of visual images; it is another to be satisfied by them for the rest of your life and to ignore any more complex or demanding communication. One of the more alarming social phenomena of recent

World Radio History

years has been the rapid increase in pictorial, strip-cartoon journalism, the incitement to 'read' a story without bothering to deal with actual words; to such a point, indeed, that some people are reputed to find it too much of an effort even to decipher the shorthand explanation in the 'balloons'. It is surely somewhat disturbing that at a period in history which is remarkable for its technological and philosophical awareness so many civilized men should be engaged in the business of not merely perpetuating but positively encouraging the most primitive reactions in their fellow-citizens. The answer is that it is profitable; many of us are only too pleased to pay for the privilege of taking the line of least resistance, for being allowed to remain divorced from the real business of living. Even conversation has died; we like talking, but how we hate listening! Indeed, we can hardly meet socially without having as a background a record-player discreetly voicing the latest popular tunes, or as a foreground the television set. But the illusion of a rich, full life is good, and we do not have to remember words *or* music. Or perhaps we are not social creatures; we bury ourselves in the Sunday newspaper and simultaneously believe that we are listening to the band playing in the bandstand. We delude ourselves, and very pleasant it is too.

In fact, for most of us hearing is an extraordinarily misleading faculty. We like to look at the person who is talking to us; we get help and stimulus from his facial movements, his gestures. Listening is too highly specialized a technique; to all intents and purposes we have abjured the use of our ears, simply because the experience, if any, transmitted through them to the mind has proved inadequate, or the effort demanded too exacting. Many people cannot even listen to serious music without at the same time involving themselves in some kind of visual activity. And yet it would be difficult to find a more unreliable sense than sight, as any conjurer will tell you, and as Picasso demonstrated in the film of his work. Could it be that the more distractions the physical world offers the less we are able to concentrate our attention on any one of them?

The blind man does not have this problem; he *has* to listen,

World Radio History

and he has to understand what he hears, otherwise the world is a nightmare. There are no hypnotic flickers of light to shield him from the knives of reality; he must apprehend reality, interpret it and react to it in a split second, and by a hypersensitive ability to create the whole out of a part. The blind man lives surrounded by a complex of unorganized sound, the noises of the real world about him. He learns to listen selectively to these noises, he clothes them with meaning, organizes them mentally into patterns, discovers how to interpret subtleties and fine shades of significance. He creates within his own mind his own vision of a world of dimension, perspective, movement, which may or may not bear any resemblance to the actual physical structure of that world but which for him has substance and practical validity. His vision of the world he cannot see might well be alarming to the sighted because it is necessarily so penetrating, so little influenced by embellishment or distraction. He cannot afford superficial judgments—such as that all Eton men speak in the same way or that a Welshman is like a West Indian—he cannot afford the 'snap' assessment which the eye is prone to as it skims over the surface of things, seeking a convenient and soothing resting-place. Which is why he can be so disturbing to the rest of us. One of the most vivid of my younger memories is of Blind Pugh in *Treasure Island*; surely, I thought, the most omniscient, omnipotent, and thoroughly upsetting character in fiction; the very tap of his stick implied an awareness and knowledge which the rest of us could not begin to match. But there is nothing supernatural or magical about Blind Pugh; it is simply that his perception of certain phenomena is much more acute and sensitive than that of most of us.

Sit in a dark room and talk, and listen. Even if you are not vitally interested in words, the words suddenly acquire a compulsion of meaning they did not have before; they develop a richness of texture through being isolated, and you focus your sensibility and imagination on them as you rarely do in daylight. Now play Blind Man's Buff. Which voices are coming from which direction? How many feet away? Can this really be an armchair? What is the position of each player related to the

World Radio History

next? What is the shape of the well-known, but now hidden, world? Suddenly it is a nightmare because your rule of thumb does not apply any more; if you could only see you would be safe, but this is surrealism: a giggle, a rustle, the creak of a board, a cough—these are sounds without context, without definition; there is no shape or substance—you grope blindly in the dark, building a picture in your mind, a picture which is proved false as soon as the blindfold is taken off. Your interpretation was wide of the mark; you were lost without your eyes. And you would have to practise for a long time and get to know the sounds of the world a great deal better than you think you do before you could be really safe.

Now take the experiment a stage further. Go to the theatre and close your eyes. You are closer to the radio experience now because you are hearing an artistically contrived unity. But how ineffective without visual help, and how confusing! What is the scene, why did the door shut—has someone gone out?—why is no one speaking, why did the audience laugh at that line—it didn't *sound* funny—*what is happening?* You must have missed something. In the cinema it is even more difficult. A question is asked, 'Will you have a cup of tea?' Silence for one minute, two, three, broken only by the tinkle of crockery, the hiss of the sound-track; someone speaks: 'Never do that again!' A full symphony orchestra attacks a dramatic theme, and—*what does it mean?* Open your eyes—now you understand; all is clear and you are safe back in the world of vision. Listen to a radio performance of an adapted version of the same play or film. Confusion should be gone. The performance should be adjusted to the requirements of the 'blind' listener, purely visual business explained and clarified by new lines of dialogue, the pauses meaningful, the timing and organization of the performance completely different. For although the experience of the radio listener is similar to that of the blind man, there is this important difference: the sound-complex the listener hears has been carefully calculated in advance and designed to achieve a certain emotional and physical effect; it is not just a random collection of noises but a prefabricated pattern. The confusion of Blind

World Radio History

Man's Buff will not be in question because the hazards and accidents of the real world have been eliminated; sounds have been organized in order that the artistic experience may have the sharpest possible impact on the ear. For example, most of us find it much more difficult to recognize voices than faces; how often have we been deceived on the telephone, unable to identify the voice of someone we know quite well? A medium which deals solely in sound cannot afford this kind of error, and would make impossible demands unless it accepted the limitation and took steps to compensate for it. In fact, Sound Radio is listening made easy (in the purely physical sense). The sheerly physical ingredients—voices, sounds, acoustics—are labelled and identified in order that, however elusive the emotional or intellectual content of the programme, at least the listener does not have the additional burden of trying to locate and recognize the speakers and sounds he hears. Naturally this does not preclude him from making his own effort of interpretation, and indeed the subtleties of definition will be different for each individual. Everyone, as Tyrone Guthrie has pointed out, will provide 'his own particular brand of moonshine', because every individual must translate the sound-pattern he hears into his own mental language; he must apply his imagination to it and transform it—if he is the kind of person who thinks in 'pictures'—into visual images; or—if he inclines more to abstract processes—into a mental sequence of ideas, tones, and emotion. In either case he must make the experience his own, relate it in his head to his own terms of reference. The blind man, when he hears a voice, may put a picture to it; the picture will almost certainly not correspond to the physical appearance of the real person, but will simply be a convenient or irresistible image conjured by the voice. If the man has been blind from birth his image will bear no relation to the physical actuality and will be even more particularly his own. When we speak to a stranger on the telephone most of us quickly build a mental image of the person, usually by relating his voice to the kind of physique and character which we, in our experience, have come to associate with his particular voice characteristics. The image is invariably shattered by the

World Radio History

appearance of the real person; which simply shows how sketchy and undiscerning we have become in the use of our ears, and how quickly we jump to conclusions. The radio listener—if his mind works in this particular way—will clothe the sounds he hears with flesh and blood; and since he has to find his images in his own experience and imagination they will be images which belong to him in a special way; in fact he will *create* them on the basis of the aural stimulus offered. If he is not the kind of person whose mental equipment deals in visual images his reaction will naturally be different in kind; it is likely that for him the vivid moments of radio will be abstract, intellectual or tonal. Sir Herbert Read has reminded us that there are certain people who simply *do not use their eyes;* these too will find it difficult to comprehend the listener who is stimulated by Sound Radio to create a vivid and unforgettable mental image. The most fortunate man—that is to say the man who will be capable of receiving the richest enlightenment from Sound Radio—is the man who reacts to some extent on both levels; his response is most likely to extract the completest truth from the work in question. (This in itself presupposes that the ideal audience will inevitably be a minority one.) Yet it is important to realize that the mental image the ideal listener creates—if he does so—is more likely to approximate to artistic reality (not to the actual physical appearance of the actor or the shape of the broadcasting studio) than the image he constructs from a real experience will approximate to reality, because in an imaginative radio programme each sound has been designed to evoke a particular kind of response; the detail and definition will be the listener's own, and each listener will construe it individually and subjectively. In fact, the listener will be positively involved in the creative act; he will be closer to the truth than when guessing what the stranger at the other end of the telephone looks like, because his potential reactions will already have been taken into account, as far as they can be, at the transmitting end.

It may seem paradoxical to suggest that the invisible experience of Sound Radio can be richer in vivid pictorial quality than the most elaborate settings in the patently visual media—and I

World Radio History

do not for a moment wish to denigrate the imaginative genius of our best scene-designers: they work wonders. But the truth is that the 'set' is the designer's conception of what the author had in mind, and although it may stimulate your imagination up to a certain point it will also end by fixing it, simply because it is a rigid assembly of solid shapes; ultimately 'a piece of scenery'. Designers are only too aware of this restriction and are constantly experimenting with methods of overcoming it—new materials, more plastic shapes, a reversion to primitive, and evocative, simplicity. But unfortunately scenery does not grow; it remains, however mobile in construction, confined by four walls and severe practical limitations. The best designers know that scenery which simply depicts will remain in the end cardboard, whereas scenery which evokes and suggests may claim a place in the imagination of the audience. This may seem a simple fact, but it is astonishing how many producers in all media still insist that everything must be *shown*; if the medium is visual, everything which can be seen must be seen. I cannot believe that the virtue which Sound Radio makes out of necessity is not also an integral part of all dramatic illusion; nothing is duller than to make the imagination redundant—as the best film directors at least have understood. Louis MacNeice once said that the pleasure given him by a running commentary on a sporting event was quite distinct from that of seeing the game or the race. In fact, the excitement lay in not seeing, in words which provoked an inner vision, an exhilaration in which the imagination of the listener played a creative part. A simple dramatic illustration is the 'suspense' play, in which the monster behind the curtain is the more horrible because never seen; the Invisible Man was more disturbing than King Kong for just this reason. The converse may be found in the plays of Tchekov, which rarely come to full life when broadcast because the words alone are only one element; they need the counterpoint of unexpected vision to give them depth and reality. How would a visual medium interpret the moment in *All That Fall* when Mrs. Rooney pauses as she catches sight of the laburnum? Not by a loving close-shot of the laburnum. The only possible way of

World Radio History

achieving the emotive effect is by *not* depicting the main agent in this scene—that is to say by leaving the laburnum to the imagination and relying on the words and the actress to create it in the mind of the audience. How does one represent visually Jay Gatsby's 'blue gardens, with the guests coming and going like moths, among the whispering and the champagne and the stars'? To attempt it representationally is to reduce it; as my favourite character in fiction would say, 'It's all in the mind.'

In a way, there is a close affinity between the imaginative potential of radio and that of film, although the specific techniques are so different. Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, for example, was superbly exciting because it dealt with what was not seen, only glimpsed across the courtyard, behind the curtains; the main location of the action was a perfectly conventional, if slightly eccentric, domestic interior. The wittiest films of René Clair demonstrate an unexpectedness, a sense of fluidity, a brilliance of cutting which any imaginative radio-writer takes for granted, although it is perhaps true to say that the radio audience *en masse* is rather less sophisticated than the film audience and slower to respond to an unconventional assault on its imagination. Alas, the radio set has indeed become part of the furniture and the mass of the audience expects that the sounds which come out of it will be as conventional, indeed as old-fashioned, as the furniture itself. Writers who feel an irresistible urge to explore the medium to its limits, writers such as Lance Sieveking, Giles Cooper, E. J. King Bull, D. G. Bridson, Padraic Fallon, Francis Dillon, must reconcile themselves before the start to a basic resistance in the majority of their listeners; Sound Radio has gained the reputation of thoroughgoing respectability and dullness, in spite of the fact that the practitioners who have cared most about it, contributed most to it, and regarded it most seriously, have been men of lively, unconventional and highly original talent. If only one had not tried the impossible reconciliation between the demands of 'the public' and the demands of a vast number of minority groups within the same 'public', Sound Radio might by now have been regarded as a 'U' institution instead of something rather *passé*

World Radio History

and, indeed, common. Yet perhaps it is as well that we are not 'U', if you will forgive the flippancy. How tedious to have to live up to a snob reputation—and how difficult, as the cinema is now finding out; past glory is really not enough. But it is even more difficult to stake a claim for any kind of creative worth within a tradition of essentially functional activity. The theatre is fortunate in having hundreds of years of experience and tradition behind it; many of its manifestations have been ephemeral and ultimately worthless, yet it has had time in which to cultivate an aura of artistic respectability. Sound Radio, Television, and Cinema are still children: Cinema has developed its own legend and even its most worthless products are liable to be considered seriously by addicts; Television has acquired for the time being the greatest number of newspaper columns, for what that is worth, and is being lulled into a false sense of security; and Sound Radio, old before it is young, operates into the void, usually taken seriously only if there happens to be some extraneous factor involved in a particular programme. My own concern is with aesthetic value, not with commercial motivation, and for me it is a matter for regret that in the modern 'industrialized' media aesthetic considerations should be allowed so little play; too frequently they are ignored or misapplied. A practitioner in these media is fortunate indeed if his own preoccupation with artistic values is reflected in a critical response of equal seriousness; even if it is, he stands a good chance of being misrepresented. It is simple enough to guess at the intention of an Orson Welles, an Elia Kazan, a Sean O'Casey or a Samuel Beckett, difficult to dig under the surface and find out what they are really trying to do. The wildest nonsense has been written, in the guise of 'criticism', about all four; they are four of many. There really isn't time to stop and stare; let us rely on wishful thinking or inspired guesswork, and let us impose our 'hunch' on defenceless public and author alike; after all, they haven't much time either. It is a subjective century and a work of art is important in so far as one devotes one's attention to it.

Before pursuing this analysis it is essential to compare the

World Radio History

relationship between audience and creative act in the various dramatic media. In the theatre a great many theories have been woven through the years about the ideal relationship and a good deal of experiment has been carried out by rebels and reformers. The conventional modern view of theatre is of a group of people looking at other people creating a dramatic illusion on a picture-frame stage; actors and audience are cut off from each other, and though there is naturally an exchange of emotions across the footlights the relationship is a formal one. Whatever kind of theatre we prefer individually this has always been true; indeed most attempts to break away from this formal relationship (in particular from the proscenium arch) by dragging the audience into the performance or sending the actors out into the stalls have eventually qualified as mere 'stunts', however intriguing they may have been at the time. 'Live' drama after all has its roots in religious experience and ritual, and the preservation of formality in its presentation continues to have real value. It was exciting to see Mr. Orson Welles as Captain Ahab move out into the middle of the auditorium in quest of the whale (*and* in a green spotlight), but is it therefore necessarily reactionary to leave Sir John Gielgud firmly planted on the other side of the footlights for the whole performance of *King Lear*? And when one shatters the proscenium arch is one doing anything that fundamentally alters the relationship between actor and audience? I doubt it. Whatever the outward forms of theatre its essence remains the same.

The first highly developed form of theatre known to us is that of Ancient Greece, in which the utmost value was placed on ritual and formality: the very setting—an amphitheatre almost surrounding a stage or, it might be, altar—the actors wearing masks and *cothurnae*, the chanted choruses, the completely stylized convention which the audience expected and accepted in order to transcend it, a convention which it is almost impossible to realize accurately nowadays because of the new factors which have intervened in the dramatic experience and because of our limited knowledge of the conditions of actual performance in Ancient Greece. Our own Elizabethan theatre is

World Radio History

less obviously religious in origin, more obviously concerned with 'entertainment' as we understand it today; nevertheless, as Mr. T. S. Eliot has said, the audience was prepared to put up with a great deal of poetry, whatever else it expected, and the very structure of the playhouses—to say nothing of the plays—indicated a strong formal element. As in the Greek theatre there was only the most stylized attempt at any kind of physical realism, although this by no means precluded a penetrating exploration of contemporary attitudes and values. The plays of Shakespeare certainly did not get—did they need?—detailed scenic backgrounds in order to create the dramatic illusion. The most simplified convention was immediately comprehensible; the audience itself supplied the detail on the basis of powerful descriptive or evocative signposts in the dialogue. In the last century theatre has become a specifically social act and dramatic writers have modified their subjects more and more to the taste of the audiences of their day, relying less and less on a traditional and semi-religious feeling in the audience to sustain any uncomfortable home-truths. This is necessarily a sweeping statement and leaves out of account the greatest dramatists of the last hundred years—Ibsen, Strindberg, O'Casey, O'Neill, etc.—but it approximates to the total condition of the theatre today. Yet even theatre at its tawdriest is something of an occasion; people go there to share in a communal experience, as they have always done; hundreds of spectators sit together in joint anticipation, the excitement of each communicates itself to the other, the lights dim, the overture strikes up, a solemn ceremony is about to begin. The players perform, the audience reacts; if it is a comedy the laughter mounts, not necessarily because the play gets funnier but because the audience, sharing the experience, can be a creative entity; if a tragedy, mass catharsis sets in; if an entertainment, we may rely on the contemporary audience to enjoy its evening out.

One of the most maligned men of the theatre in recent years was Bertolt Brecht; indeed he has been positively accused of sabotage against the theatre. But Brecht had no illusions about the *nature* of theatre; his work is difficult to assess on the printed

World Radio History

page, but his method was to draw strength from the potentialities and limitations of the medium as a practical art. In fact he did what all true men of the theatre have always done and still do, namely he spoke directly to the audience in the most uncompromising terms: you are now in a theatre, we are about to create an illusion for you, look, this is how we set about it; this is a revolving stage, this piece of painted cardboard represents a tree, the spotlight poised at the side of the dress circle is the sun, and so on. And so strong is our imagination, so quickly does it respond to the merest touch, that this supremely artificial lack of artifice forces it irresistibly into action; the cardboard becomes a tree, the stage revolves and Mother Courage tramps through mud, filth and carnage. Brecht took his devices where he found them, from circus, film, Elizabethan stage, pantomime; his sophisticated mind reimagined and synthesized the most rudimentary stage tricks into an exciting new unity; in fact he understood theatre and its essence. Ionesco has the same faultless apprehension of what is theatrical, as has Cocteau. It does not matter whether the technique involved is that of proscenium-arch, theatre-in-the-round, Greek amphitheatre or circus, the essence is a shared experience in which actors communicate, by means of speech, movement, music, a dramatic illusion to an assembly of people, and in which the response of the assembly in turn influences the performance of the actors. It is an occasion stemming from religious ritual and still preserving some signs of it, whatever the content of the play. Even in the most naturalistic of pieces, staged in a picture-frame with the most lavish and accurate wealth of trivia on the mantelpiece, the artistic experience is a deliberate illusion. To commend the 'realism', as we often do, is not to say that the performance is real. It is an attack upon the imagination, upon people who want to believe, and it succeeds in so far as it makes them believe. As for what it makes them believe *in*. . . .

Komisarjevsky wrote in his book on *The Theatre* that the art of the theatre is essentially an art of actors and directors, not of writers, and that though intellectuals might consider the unliterary theatre an inferior form it is nevertheless the only

World Radio History

genuine form of theatrical art. One sees the point, but it remains true that words spoken are the vital element in theatrical art, even though their value, when converted into print, may often be miscalculated by *littérateurs*. Komisarjevsky's comment certainly applies to the cinema. Here again, people assemble to share a joint experience, but this time there are no 'live' performances. The work has been created in advance; actors have played their parts, the director has cut and calculated the performance in the light of what, from experience and expertise, he assumes will be the reaction of the mass audience. In comedy, for instance, the theatre actor knows that what amuses the audience one night is deadly dull the next and he adjusts his performance according to the feeling of the house; the cinema actor cannot do this, he cannot time his lines to fit a new situation. The director must; he has to weigh the odds. Better a good line of dialogue drowned in audience laughter than a long wait for laughter which never comes. To pursue the analogy, the lights are dimmed, the music strikes up; but even assuming a well-organized cinema in which spectators do not wander in and out as they choose, buy ice-cream if they feel like it, we are now at a remove from the experience of theatre. It is still an occasion and the experience, it is true, is shared; but because the audience is not a creative assembly—because it cannot by its reactions influence or control the performance, short of having it stopped—it is rather a collection of individuals reacting in an individual way, except in so far as laughter is infectious. The experience is to some extent more private than that of theatre. And the illusion which the director creates is vastly larger than life; a close-up of a face becomes a panorama. The method of film, though poetic in its juxtaposition of images, its 'montage', and though capable of elaborate visual deceptions by virtue of its power of selection, has strong roots in reality. Indeed one of the great strengths of the cinema is that it has brought the actual reality of the outside world into the artistic experience by focusing its cameras on the plains of Texas or the streets of London. In addition to the illusion of reality, therefore, the cinema can conjure poetry and drama from reality itself, using no actors, no

World Radio History

backcloth save the real world microscopically explored. And because of its capacity for rapid transitions and cutting, its unlimited fluidity of range and form, it has an almost inexhaustible visual potential. Inevitably, therefore, words become subsidiary, mere pointers and emphases for the visual picture. Finally, since the performance has been refined and polished to the last detail, it remains fixed and immutable; whatever the audience reaction it is as good as the director and his technicians have been able to make it.

Film and Radio share certain technical advantages: they both have magnifying instruments of great power (camera and microphone), both can select their point of focus at any given moment, and as a natural corollary can switch that point with remarkable speed and accuracy; and both have almost unlimited flexibility and range, film because of its cutting and editing techniques, radio because of its unique appeal to the imagination. Yet with Sound Radio and Television we find yet another relationship between audience and performer. And although Television is often watched by sizeable groups of people it is in its essence of the same kind as Sound Radio, indeed an extension of it. Suddenly the performance comes to *you*, privately and personally, in your own room. It is designed specifically for you, it is an individual communication from writer to listener. The total audience may be larger than any theatre could possibly accommodate, but it is an audience of individuals or small groups, whose reflexes are individual, not collective. The illusion is magnified, not in physical size, but in subtlety and depth of focus, so that the writer can speak literally into the ear of his listener; his vision has not to be projected magnified on to a screen nor bathed in floodlight in an arena; he is free to deal in fine shades of meaning and feeling, in nuances of expression. There are certain practical disadvantages, inevitably. The listener is in his own room, surrounded by whatever distractions his daily domestic life may offer; he is not paying hard cash for his seat; his sense of occasion, if it exists at all, is likely to be a flimsy one and largely self-induced. Unless he is at his wits' end, therefore, and appalled by the thought of any alternative acti-

World Radio History

vity, he is likely to be an exacting audience; after all, if he dislikes what he hears he has only to switch off. Indeed it will be surprising if he is not a good deal more critical than he would be having paid for his seat and being intent on getting maximum enjoyment from his evening out, and infected by the excitement and enthusiasm surrounding him in the theatre; even in the cinema he will find it easier to suspend fine nuances of reservation. In his own room he is master of the situation; he is indubitably the public and the wooden box in the corner is assuredly his servant. And yet he is in the privileged position of having a performance mounted specially for him; it does not matter whether anyone else in the world is even aware that the performance is taking place, he may hear it, uniquely, alone. In a way the experience will be similar to that of reading to himself, a novel or a poem. In this kind of private reading he inhabits a still, closed world—the book, the words, the work of his own personality and imagination fired by the mind of the writer and the projection of his vision. In the radio or television performance he is, of course, at a remove from this; the experience is still a private one, but the writer's vision has already been interpreted for him; the actors have put flesh on to it, the producer has pointed to significant features. An illusion has been created for his inner eye—in radio with sound alone, in television with the help of closely-focused pictures. It may seem implausible at this particular moment of time to continue to bracket the two media together as aspects of one kind of experience—such is the power of *pictures* in the modern world. And inevitably Television still has echoes of the other, public, media; inevitably, because a considerable act of imagination is necessary to exclude memories of cinema when talking of moving pictures and memories of theatre when watching a continuous visual performance. The great travail of Television is going to be the fight to rid itself of practices and theories which are basically foreign to it (although common to the cinema and the theatre) and to discover its own horizons. Sound Radio has had, and still has, similar battles, but it also has the advantage of being more patently a world in its own right.

World Radio History

As in the cinema, the performance in the two younger media is prefabricated and the audience cannot influence it (not that the stimulus of audience reaction is necessarily beneficial to the actor; it can be hysterical, misleading as a guide to true interpretation). The distinction between them lies in the intimacy of the relationship between actor and audience. The cinema achieves an *illusion* of intimacy, thanks to its ability to magnify the smallest anatomical quirk, but the radio actor can literally whisper into his listener's ear. Sound Radio at its best brings the performance into the listener's mind, it dispenses completely with the convention that actor and audience exist on different levels, that the actor is someone who performs and the audience is something which stands outside and watches. It does not, as theatre and cinema do, draw the spectator across visible barriers into the dramatic illusion; it invades the listener's own solitude, re-creates the illusion inside his own head. And so much the better: the listener has a double perspective, a fresh depth of emotional values, personal, immediate. Each word which comes out of the loudspeaker is spoken personally to each listener; there are no visual emphases or decorations to put it in perspective, no audience reactions to give him a 'line' when in doubt (and we know that audiences will often react to a given dramatic situation in the way they think is expected of them). Every single word has significance and impact and must be assessed personally, as must the pictures on a television screen when Television is not masquerading as a home cinema. Words are undeniably important equipment in the visual media; vision—that is to say, imaginative vision—is integral to the 'blind' medium of Sound Radio. And the total experience is even less 'reality' than in the cinema, certainly less than in the theatre. It is a calculated illusion, whose impact is in direct proportion to the genius of its creators and the hypersensitive awareness of its listeners.

James Forsyth's radio play, *The Pier*, may underline the point. Perhaps I may sum it up, inadequately, as a sort of *Brighton Rock* of the mid-nineteen-fifties: a coast town, adolescent sin and redemption. The radio play was highly exciting visually—

World Radio History

the *picture* of the pier, the vast, deserted ballroom, the echoing world underneath, just above water-level, the expanse of beach stretched under the moon. All these images could also be caught excitingly on film—on television, too, by skilful suggestion—but to depict them too closely would be to reduce the pier to a strictly real construction or, alternatively, to a surrealist décor; in the mind, and as conceived by the author, they have imaginative and symbolic overtones which defy concrete realization. The final sequence of the same writer's *Lisel* has the same quality—a play for the theatre of the mind and imagination; its evocation of a tottering, crumbling cliff of a bombed-out building in Germany is powerful and plausible to the extent we have to erect it ourselves, as is the procession of land-crabs in his *Christophe*, the pig's head in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and the tooth-shaped rock of Golding's *Pincher Martin*. All these images can be handled effectively enough in visual terms, but not simply by showing them to us; in Sound Radio, detailed *description* would put the same check on the imagination. For the world of visual detail which the listener creates is a world of limitless dimension; the images may be vivid, but they have no specific proportions; they exist in a world which is largely *dream*. The radio performance works on the mind in the same way as poetry does; it liberates and evokes. It does not act as a stimulus to direct scenic representation; that would be narrow and fruitless. It makes possible a universe of shape, detail, emotion and idea, which is bound by no inhibiting limitations of space or capacity. In a way it is a bridge between poetry or music and reality; a means of apprehending what is artistically incalculable with one's feet several inches off the ground. Perhaps, in terms which submit to some kind of analysis, poetry is the closest analogy: that which, within a strict creative discipline, sets one most free to cross undreamed-of depths of experience. Which means that the range of possibilities, visual and aural, in the 'blind' medium is restricted only by the writer's own inventiveness and by his poetic insight. Film is every bit as fluid and flexible, because of its techniques of prefabrication and editing, but the very nature of Sound Radio offers the writer a

World Radio History

horizon as broad as his own imagination. From a practical standpoint, there are no physical problems of, say, scenery, lighting, sight-lines, transport; aesthetically, its dimensions are incalculable and uncapturable. The underlying principle is brilliantly expressed in a passage from Louis MacNeice's radio play, *The Dark Tower*:

SOAK: All right, all right;
If you won't come to the Tavern, the Tavern must come to you.
Ho there, music!
(*The orchestra strikes up raggedly, continuing while he speaks.*)
That's the idea. Music does wonders, young man.
Music can build a palace, let alone a pub.
Come on, you masons of the Muses, swing it,
Fling me up four walls. Now, now, don't drop your tempo;
Easy with those hods. All right; four walls.
Now benches—tables—No! No doors or windows.
What drunk wants daylight? But you've left out the bar.
Come on—'Cellos! Percussion! All of you! A bar!
That's right. Dismiss!
(*The music ends.*)
Barmaid.

BARMAID: Yes, sir?

SOAK: Give us whatever you have and make it triple.

On the page this passage has only a fraction of the depth and persuasiveness it acquires in performance; in the first place one has only the vaguest conception of the creative interaction of words and music, and, more important, the operative colouring and phrasing which the voice contributes has to be guessed at or ignored. I know, as a listener, that in performance this sequence is unforgettably three-dimensional; on the page it can at least illustrate that in Sound Radio we may go where we wish when we wish—all we have to do is to say so. I heard recently of a child who, having been allowed to listen for the first time to radio, expressed appreciation of what he assumed to be a television performance; when advised by his parents that 'in television you see a picture', he replied disarmingly, 'But I

World Radio History

saw a picture.' A similar point of view was expressed by a gifted radio producer who also happens to be a painter; for him there was great satisfaction in producing for the theatre because in the theatre he could realize each dramatic moment physically, in front of his eyes, yet he could find an equivalent reward in producing for radio: with sound he could paint a lasting brush-stroke on the mind. And I believe that generally speaking it is true to say that an image which we have made for ourselves with the help of our imagination will stay with us longer than something merely seen, if only because it is part of us. Words spoken into the ear, highlighted by vocal and musical emphases, live and breathe, vibrate in the mind for years. Which is not to suggest that we need not use our imagination creatively when we take part in a visual experience, but simply to say that we are often encouraged not to do so—to assume that what can be seen is sufficient in itself.

I have mentioned music in passing. It demands closer consideration, because the sound complex of radio works on the emotions in the same way as music; aside from its total *meaning* it, too, exists in time, not space, it has its own rhythmic and melodic patterns, its musical shape. The dullest music eventually is that which preserves a rigid time-pattern; 'strict dance tempo' is admirable for dancers but not very interesting as music. Music demands variety in unity, and rhythm is its essence: a set time-sequence within which the pattern constantly flows, develops, contradicts itself, grows. One can also draw a musical analogy in the visual media; any art form which exists to some extent in time must take account of musical form. In the theatre we tend to be conscious of it, if at all, only fragmentarily and more often than not melodically. The plays of Ibsen have a carefully wrought-out musical texture, but in this they are something of a rarity; the dramatist can afford to dispense to a large extent with musical structure and precision simply because his medium is three-dimensional, and to stress the time-sequence at the expense of other operative factors would be to risk evoking a distorted emphasis. Film, in spite of '3-D', has two actual dimensions, and the musical analogy is correspondingly

World Radio History

more important for it; it moves very obviously in *time*, and its rhythmic structure must therefore be planned accordingly. Rhythm is the key word—and I hope I may not be thought pedantic for insisting on it; my excuse is that there is a widespread tendency to equate music with *tune*, and sheer melody has little or nothing to do with this particular argument. Naturally there is plenty of melody in any medium which utilizes the human voice—although in the cinema the vast amplification to which it is subjected tends to rob it of real sensitivity—and it is an ingredient which we must not neglect; but it is music as an architectural conception which relates to the present context. When I speak of the musical construction of a play I do not mean the purity of tone and melodic beauty which Sir John Gielgud brings to a Shakespearian soliloquy but the rhythm and counterpoint of speeches and scenes, the infinite improvisations and variations within the set frame of that soliloquy. The same considerations apply to film—the sequence of 'shots', their relative proportions, the balance and mass of the whole. In Sound Radio, since we are dealing with sound alone, we may apply almost the same tests as those which concern us when listening to pure music. A Beethoven sonata follows certain rules of construction, it breaks others; and in the creative breaking of rules lies its originality. The fixed shape to which, outwardly at least, it adheres is a shape which can be comprehended by the ear alone, and the ear has its own laws; if it is to be satisfied it must have an aural pattern which, however diverse within itself, can be apprehended as a whole, as Mozart could 'see' a piece of music, almost as if it were a picture—and not by looking at the score. Sir Donald Tovey is interesting on this point (I quote from his article on 'Sonata Forms' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*):

'Why do the classical sonatas maintain this scheme of self-centred movements with no community of theme? The answer to this lies in the relation between their time-scale and their emotional content. In its early forms the sonata is a new kind of suite, complete in its contrasts. In its later developments the individual movements, while complete as designs, raise emo-

World Radio History

tional issues which each movement is unable to satisfy without the others.'

The thought is well worth any radio-writer's time. For though the restriction imposed by the time-sequence may seem a rigid one, of course it is not—otherwise how account for the complete individuality of the same form, sonata, in the hands of such different composers as Scarlatti, Chopin, Aaron Copland? Musical form is an aural equivalent of visual pattern and design. In his introduction to his own radio 'melodrama', *The Rescue*, Edward Sackville-West writes: 'The word *artist* means *joiner*, and the artist in radio composition is . . . one who joins things together—words, music, all manner of sounds. But whatever is joined must make a ring, not a straight ribbon.' Which is to say that the most satisfactory musical form for the unprofessional listener is 'circular'.

It may seem pretentious to insist on this analogy in relation to a medium which, after all, uses words. If meaning is communicated, why should we bother ourselves with extraneous factors? The argument is hardly serious: the ear cannot bear simply to listen to words conveying information; the lecturer is dull unless he varies the dynamics of his delivery. Sheer speech quickly becomes tedious and, shortly afterwards, meaningless, because words without rhythm, variety of tempo, shape of phrase, words unmodulated by the musical perception of the man who speaks them, soon drop like lead into the mind—just *words*. The old storytellers learned this quickly enough, the bards and the ballad-singers; indeed the ballad form grew partly out of the demand of the ear to be satisfied, whether or not the mind should be won over. To do both involves artistry, conscious or not; it was no accident that the seemingly simple ballad contrived, by complex means and using a strict form to reinforce its invisible impact, to convey a profound and lasting emotional experience. The radio script which does not possess the same combination of forces, over and above its explicit meaning, will never win us over. Which is to say that it must exist on two levels—like a poem, whether or not it is 'poetry'.

There is one qualification. Although Sound Radio exists in

World Radio History

only one dimension, time, it is able to create the illusion of another, space. The actors in the studio exist in space; their position in relation to the microphone can be varied, their voices can be placed in different perspectives. In fact, when stereophonic techniques are perfected they will also be able to create the illusion of width, though I doubt whether this has any artistic relevance. The fact is that the final sound comes out of a flat box, out of the air, but the illusion of depth—and ultimately of width—exists. This does not affect the basic principle, but it has in the past misled many practitioners into a false assumption that Sound Radio and the theatre have in common a spatial existence. When radio producers stress this element at the expense of the time-factor, bad radio inevitably results. It is more profitable artistically to compare the technique of the medium with that of the bards; like them it has to win the listener's ear, charm it with words, melody, rhythm, pattern; it has to communicate a complex inner vision in what appear to be the simplest, most inevitable terms. It takes skill to charm a listener with a simple story, with no extraneous devices; it also presupposes a live and alert consciousness in the listener—the clear, inquisitive, searching mind of a child, who does not want to be soothed by a story but stimulated. If one approaches Sound Radio as a possible narcotic one will give nothing to it and get little out of it; it is an exacting medium both for creator and audience. It can be an art; it sometimes is; but it is a demanding one.

Too demanding perhaps? It is almost impossible without training to hear more than one thing at the same time. To appreciate radio, as to appreciate music, it is necessary to be able to hear several different things simultaneously; to appreciate an imaginative radio production is not so very different from appreciating a fugue, although the good radio producer will always simplify his sound-texture, knowing that he can rely on the listener's ear to weld together successive sounds into a simultaneous entity; in other words he will introduce the themes of his fugue clearly and precisely, leaving it to the listener to fit them together. It has often been said that unless a radio programme makes its point clearly and completely at one hearing

World Radio History

it has failed. This view has some validity, but if extended logically implies either that Sound Radio is a primitive black-and-white medium with no capacity for communicating subtle levels of meaning, or that the listener is superhumanly perceptive. It is understandable that the view should be held—after all, there is great reluctance nowadays to believe that there can be any value in anything which cannot be held in the hand; even a book, which permits of turning back the page, hovering over a difficult passage, can quickly earn the label of 'obscure' unless its message is crystal-clear—and a work of art which has no message hardly qualifies as a work of art, does it? There is evidence that some listeners regard any repeat broadcast as an insult to their intelligence; I dare not think of the fate that would meet any of their acquaintances who felt inclined to see *The Cherry Orchard* twice. In Sound Radio there is certainly no turning back; the performance is ephemeral, it dissolves as soon as it is heard; if the script has any quality at all, particularly with a good producer guiding your mind's eye towards unexpected subtlety, it demands a positive act of attention and concentration. I do not equate complexity with quality—far from it; but I do believe that any artistic experience worth having can only be enriched by a second acquaintance, and the more profound the content the more closely you need to study it, as you come back again and again to a painting or a piece of music to discover new perspectives, new shades of meaning. The pity is that so much broadcasting is 'easy' that a false scale of values has grown up; listeners have assumed that unless radio is easy it must be obscure, pretentious, pointless. It often is, but as in any medium the best of its creations demand conscious attention, not blank-minded acceptance.

Briefly, then, an imaginative work of art in radio (and, ideally, in television) evokes rather than depicts; it cannot offer the sheer physical release, the social experience of the theatre. What it does offer is far closer to what happens in the most imaginative kind of reading to oneself: a personal experience, lived through by an inner self, seen by an inner eye. How often it succeeds in achieving this is another matter. . . . Its range is

World Radio History

limitless; to quote Edward Sackville-West again: 'Radio is in fact susceptible of carrying far more *degrees* of dramatization than the stage or the screen, because of the extreme flexibility of the medium and its wide powers of imaginative suggestion. Even the "straight" talk has an element of drama in it, conferred by the listener's focus on the personality of the unseen speaker, and by the shape of the talk itself, which has to be designed to grip and hold attention from first to last.' However, it is a minority art and it is not, strictly speaking, necessary. Other art-forms which have proved unnecessary to the majority have managed to survive; it will be interesting to see whether Sound Radio proves equally necessary to *someone*. Meanwhile, it is understandable, if presumptuous, for practitioners to believe that it will.

THE RAW MATERIALS: WORD

At the heart of the radio experience is the spoken word. 'Literature' has come to mean something quite divorced from the voice—something which exists on a page—and it is easy to forget that much of the great imaginative literature of the world was conceived in the very opposite spirit: something to be spoken. Molière positively advised people not to read his plays, but to see them performed—simple advice and astonishingly difficult to put into practice. It would be rash for even an enthusiastic amateur to offer a musical judgment on the strength of reading a score; the exact significance of most words is as hard to define as that of any isolated crotchet or quaver but unfortunately every word, *any* word, can be read and invested with some sort of meaning, since words are common currency and can be *defined*. I have not conducted any statistical survey, but my casual observations have been enough to inspire some alarm at the number of people (alas, I count myself among them) who, when confronted by an unfamiliar word in the course of their reading, are tempted to guess at its meaning rather than to unearth it. One of the doubtful advantages of

World Radio History

education is to make us think that we are cleverer than we are. I often horrify myself by my capacity for making sweeping generalizations about a subject on which I am excruciatingly ill-informed; I am equally horrified, in my own small sphere of activity, by sensible people who believe that they can extract the essence from a play simply by pondering over the text. If the text has any value, something will happen to it when interpreted which will transform it, breathe life and meaning into it; even to attempt to assess its value simply by studying it on the page can only lead to one-dimensional judgment; it is as flat and bewildering as a musical score without marks of expression: the meaning is *between* the lines. It is probably easier to make a mental compensation in the case of a stage play, if only because one is consciously aware of missing dimensions—though it is by no means easy unless you practise very hard. I submit that when dealing with a radio script it is almost impossible to judge it accurately without intensive study, if only because the phrasing and tone which a human voice will eventually give to a line of speech is as variable a factor as you can hope to find; phrasing, tone, timing, emotional awareness, intellectual understanding, degree of projection, all in close focus: a violinist is concerned with these too, but he is not concerned with precise words and their overtones; he is less likely to be misunderstood. This is the final sequence from Robert Bolt's *The Last of the Wine:*

LUCY: There's a divine moon.
RUPERT: Yes, look at the green.
VIOLET: Make your wine with the dandelions, perhaps.
RUPERT: All right, Granny?
VIOLET: Yes; go away.
RUPERT: Lucy.
LUCY: What about granny?
VIOLET: I'm all right. Go away.
RUPERT: All right. Good night.
LUCY: Good night, Granny.
(*Pause. The door closes.*)
VIOLET: Bitter!

This is not 'literature'; it does not even seem to make much

World Radio History

sense. I hope that you will take my word for it: in performance it is alive, moving, to the point, subtle—indeed one could not have wished for a more telling resolution. The difficulty is that a great deal of theatrical drama can be partly apprehended as literature—notoriously, Shakespeare. It is a pity that his plays can be read with so much enjoyment; it is a greater pity that there has grown up a whole industry of Shakespearian criticism which has focused attention primarily on the text, on the page. The study of Shakespeare in schools has effectively ensured that many people will never want to hear his name again for the rest of their lives, because it was a study of something academic and lifeless. In recent years a more enlightened attitude has developed amongst teachers and, thanks to the efforts of the Old Vic and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon in particular, a new generation has discovered that literary and theatrical values cannot be interchanged arbitrarily. Nevertheless, there are still people who cannot bear the thought that Shakespeare should be *performed*, and who certainly could not bring themselves to witness such sacrilege.

One of the far-reaching results of the misguided school of Shakespearian study has been to perpetuate the myth that what is really important in Shakespeare is the poetry—a simple ingredient, after all. Other good poets have written plays, and very interesting they are academically, though I doubt whether anyone would claim that, for instance, Tennyson's plays contain his best verse, much less that they lend themselves to effective performance. Browning, as much as any poet, was conscious of the dramatic power of the spoken word; his best dramatic writing is not in his plays but in his poems. It happens that Shakespeare achieved a special kind of synthesis; in order to realize it he needed actors, people who could use their voices and their bodies expressively, who would subordinate their own personality in order to interpret his. There is a vast difference between, say, *Finnegans Wake* read to oneself and read aloud, spoken by a virtuoso performer; the words, suddenly interpreted, come to life; on the page they may have been puzzling and, indeed, incomprehensible. Many people have said

World Radio History

that when they heard Patrick Magee's superb renderings of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* they found that they had unexpectedly acquired a key to works which on the printed page seemed full of obscurities and difficulties, works whose convention was so unfamiliar as to be meaningless. Conversely, what is currently accepted as 'good writing' is not necessarily effective when spoken. The modern convention is to think of literature as print and to assume that any work which lends itself to speaking or performance is inevitably of inferior quality.

The great orators have always recognized the power of the spoken word (let us disregard for the moment its subtlety). Power to move, excite, subdue an audience to an extent which print could never achieve; for print is cold and private, the voice is warm, living, capable of making a direct assault on the emotions and therefore of misleading them. Politicians have usually abused its power—indeed, what politician could resist? You may not understand a word of German, but if you study recordings of Hitler's speeches you cannot fail to respond to the drama and excitement which his voice generates, whatever your rational self may think of the principles underlying this use of it. Sir Winston Churchill's wartime exhortations would have been a good deal less effective if they had been simply *reported*; Mr. Billy Graham would have a smaller following if he had to rely on distributing pamphlets in order to get his message across. In the words of Hazlitt, 'The thunder-and-lightning mixture of the orator turns out a mere drab-coloured suit in the person of the prose-writer. We wonder at the change, and think there must be some mistake. . . .' As for that modern abomination, the radio or television 'personality', whose view on anything under the sun is supposed to be valuable and interesting, the basic secret of his success is his glibness, his skill in using words to enhance the impression of his own originality or knowledge. Hazlitt again: 'The orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of the voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude . . . without these he is nothing;—his "fire and air" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the God of eloquence and of our idolatry

World Radio History

sinks into a common mortal.' And yet, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the example of these experts in mass-hypnotism, the spoken word has never been at a lower premium. Voices assail us from all sides—urging us to buy soap-flakes or cigarettes, crooning the latest morale-building song, telling us of the latest earnest item of news—sheer sound pounds our ears (if we allow it) day and night. There are so many voices in the air that it becomes increasingly difficult to discriminate between them—as difficult to hear as it is to see.

I digress. We are not concerned with the spoken word used as a technique of commercial or political persuasion (though this has its relevance) but with its power as an artistic instrument. The great poets and dramatists have never forgotten this. In our own time O'Casey, O'Neill, Joyce, Beckett, Dylan Thomas, among others, are supreme speakers. Is the Celtic predominance significant? Almost certainly. English hardly exists any longer as a spoken language except in certain regional forms; its literature is more often than not divorced from its life, and therefore emasculated. O'Neill is particularly illuminating in this context. On the page his work often seems to be neither literature nor drama and he is often underrated for this reason; the style appears clotted and contrived, undisciplined, repetitive, mawkish, there are too many words saying too little, not enough balance or proportion. In performance the work is transformed (as the recent production of *The Iceman Cometh* at the Arts Theatre, London, has demonstrated), and we find ourselves in the hands of one of the most powerful and accomplished dramatists of the age. The words on the page are simply his blue-print. It is unfortunately not enough to be able to read and write, though few talents are so productive of delusions of intellectual grandeur; only a poet can capture the mysterious relationship between spoken and written word. To be able to understand the language is not enough either; the process is truly a mystery.

In radio, the spoken word is in close focus. Devalued elsewhere, it can attain here a new impact and subtlety (though, ironically, nothing has done more to cheapen the power of the

World Radio History

word than Sound Radio itself; mass production does not in the end confer prestige). And if we are to have a real understanding of Sound Radio we must first understand the power and potentiality of the spoken word. In his introduction to his own radio play, *Christopher Columbus*, Louis MacNeice wrote: 'This subordination in radio of words to words-as-they-are-spoken has for the writer both its regrets and its rewards . . . he can count on his words regaining those literary virtues which literature itself has lost since it has been divorced from the voice.'

What, then, can the spoken word do?

In the first place it can communicate facts and ideas—but only at a limited rate, and it is a long way behind the written word in its power to communicate abstractions. The man who is reading a book sets his own tempo of concentration and absorption; he knows his own powers of assimilation, and his eye and his mind combine to avoid confusion or deception. When the *speaker* sets the pace, he has to face immediate and stringent limitations. If his listeners cannot keep up with him his message will evaporate; there is no turning-back the page, and few listeners will make notes. At the basic level of news-reading we find ourselves confronted with a sequence of disconnected pieces of information from which we select those which interest us; once the sequence is connected and has its own interior development, listening becomes more difficult, and the more complex the thought-process of the speaker the more alert we must be if we are to catch his meaning. The most successful radio 'talkers' have soon realized that it is only possible to convey a glimpse of their deepest level of mental activity in the time at their disposal and that the same number of words in print would carry far more meaning—though they would have to be different words. In fact, the art of talking on Sound Radio is the art of conveying information painlessly and in small doses. If you have ever listened to someone reading aloud a closely-reasoned intellectual argument, you will realize that in order to follow every step you need the most stringent mental training. The following passage from John Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*), intelligible enough on the

World Radio History

page, would be ineffective as part of a broadcast talk; I suspect that even specialists might have some difficulty if they were hearing it for the first time:

'Now each abstract idea being distinct, so that of any two the one can never be the other, the mind will, by its intuitive knowledge, perceive their difference, and therefore in propositions no two whole ideas can ever be affirmed one of another. This we see in the common use of language, which permits not any two abstract words, or names of abstract ideas, to be affirmed one of another. For how certain soever it is that man is an animal, or rational, or white, yet everyone at first hearing perceives the falsehood of these propositions: humanity is animality, or rationality, or whiteness. All our affirmations, then, are only in concrete, which is the affirming, not one abstract idea to be another, but one abstract idea to be joined to another.'

Sound Radio is a crude medium for expressing complex abstract and intellectual processes, since the only way in which it can communicate them successfully is by making them palatable, that is to say, by cheapening them to some extent. It is often said that the play of ideas broadcasts well—but surely the playwright of ideas is himself a contradiction in terms. Shaw is the most patent example: in his plays he has disposed his ideas in an attractive framework; interesting characters give voice to them, emotional tensions give us a pivot from which to view them, light relief gives us a chance to digest them. And the ideas themselves are rationed out at the psychologically favourable moment, when the writer believes that his audience will be ready to receive them. His Prefaces are full of the ideas which he could not successfully cram into his plays, and bear witness to his realization of the limitations of speech as a means of communicating ideas; they are *full* of ideas which, if they had been incorporated in the plays, would have rocked the boat and swamped the audience with a surfeit. The broadcast talks of Alistair Cooke exemplify the same principle; they are models of how to keep the listener interested without giving him mental indigestion. We may object that many talks are both broadcast and printed (and the function of *The Listener* as a more perma-

World Radio History

nent record of a broadcast talk can be misleading). This does not necessarily mean that they have achieved a satisfactory expression in either medium—indeed the more suitable an 'ideas' talk is for broadcasting the more elementary and superficial it is likely to seem in print.

It is when imagination and emotion begin to colour the spoken word that it in turn begins to have power. It has often been said that sound is the most effective means of exciting or expressing emotion, particularly among civilized creatures, and it is as an instrument of emotion and imagination that the spoken word gains its maximum force. In this field it need feel in no way inferior to its literary cousin. A voice speaks, quietly, intimately, the one word, 'night'. Dr. I. A. Richards has pointed out (in *Principles of Literary Criticism*) that this single word 'will raise almost as many different thoughts and feelings as there are persons who hear it'. It will to some extent be modified or intensified in its effect by the kind of voice which speaks it and the inflexion with which it is spoken, but its impact will be immediate and apparent. Dr. Richards goes on: ' . . . put it into a sentence and the variation is narrowed'; continue the process of definition and you may eventually achieve a certainty and clarity of meaning which will be more or less consistent, whoever hears the word. In fact you may achieve what an artist must try always to achieve, to communicate his inner vision while leaving as little room as possible for our subjective and probably irrelevant first reactions, and to try to ensure that our imagination will work on this vision and be stimulated by it in a basically precise and creative way, though the extent and variations of our imaginative apprehension is limitless. In radio, as in poetry, we attain definition by concentrated intuitive shortcuts, not by a mass of elaboration and detail. For example, the magnificent descriptive passages in the novels of Conrad: incorporate them, unmodified, in a radio performance and you will end by choking the listener's imagination with the wealth of detail. The eye can dwell on detail at its leisure, extract pattern and meaning from it; the ear is more impatient, and demands the significant evocative characteristic which the imagination

World Radio History

may catch in flight. Every word which comes out of a loudspeaker is apprehended, as it were, under a microscope; reinforced by the speaker's vocal characteristics and by his emotional attitude, it *appears* to be significant in itself; our attention is firmly on it, it does not need to be underlined, repeated, hammered home. The corollary is that description in radio demands the utmost discipline from the writer. He will need to be at once more economical and imaginative than he would be on the page, he will have to learn how to express levels and depths of perception in the space of seconds. There is a brilliant example of highly selective, indirect description in Giles Cooper's *Without the Grail*. In a few sentences Cooper establishes an atmosphere of heat and exhaustion, paints vividly the locale where most of the action of the play is to take place, carries his plot a stage forward, gives a new insight into his leading character—and at the same time diverts us with humour and suspense. The writing is pared to the bone; when performed, it is rich in overtones:

(*Fade in Car running: it slows and stops.*)
(*Pause.*)

INNES: What's the matter?
INDIAN DRIVER: Stop to cool engine.
INNES: Okay, you're the driver. (*Pause.*) So this is the jungle.
DRIVER: Yes, all jungle here.
INNES: H'm. . . . Very dusty looking.
DRIVER: The road is making it dusty. Inside is green.
(*Pause.*)
INNES: There's a railway line over there. Where does it go?
DRIVER: No place. Into the jungle, stop.
INNES: Eh? . . . Why?
DRIVER: Military reasons. Now abandoned.
INNES: Wartime?
DRIVER: Yes, wartime. In Assam there were armies all the time. Now in the jungle here live all things.
INNES: Er—animals, you mean?
DRIVER: No, *things*. Wheels and chains gone rusting. Old guns and tanks not moving. In one place were fifty thousand teeth-brush, abandoned. All abandoned.
(*Pause.*)
(*Car starts and moves off. Fade out.*)

World Radio History

Again, Robert Bolt's description of the ship seen from the shore in *The Drunken Sailor* may seem flat on the page:

MARY: (*pleased with herself*) The sea looks just like silk, Toby.
TOBY: Yes, it does.
MARY: Like covered with a great piece of silk.
TOBY: (*intimate*) Oh, you've too much sensibility, you have, Mary.
MARY: (*dreamy*) And the sails look just like . . . like . . .
TOBY: Feathers?
MARY: Yes, like feathers.

These lines become memorable and vivid to the inner ear once they are clothed with the actors' personalities, their rhythms modified by the interpretation and by the necessities of what precedes and follows. So much so that Bolt is able to use them again at the end of the play, where they now appear charged with irony, conjuring a picture of brutality and hardship:

TOBY: . . . It's a man-o'-war. Looks as though she's come out of Exmouth.
MARY: It's . . . lovely.
TOBY: Yes. Looks as though she's floating in the sky.
MARY: Yes. Like feathers.

Almost the same words, but between the two visions both we and the characters have suffered and grown.

The simplicity evident in these examples is deceptive, and conceals a complex creative mechanism. The exact word, filtered through the writer's mind, evokes in the listener an impression both precise and detailed. The concentrated evocative phrase is more telling, when spoken, than the most richly wrought-out description, and—paradoxically, because of the power of the human voice—a line from the telephone directory can be more immediately compelling than a paragraph from Edgar Allan Poe. The spoken word is supremely persuasive. Already, in the theatre, we suspend our disbelief: the actor, shrouded in darkness, cries from the centre of his spotlight:

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold

and we take watch with Hamlet on the battlements, only too glad to lend ourselves to the dramatic illusion. In radio, we ask

World Radio History

the listener quite simply to believe in the word, to surrender to its magic. From the darkness a voice whispers:

Who's that? Standing behind my chair. . . . Take your hand away from my neck! Take your . . .

and we accept the world in which the writer wishes us to move, simply and directly. This quality of simplicity, evoking in the listener the direct response of a child, is characteristic of the best radio writing, where it is usually allied to a sensitivity and subtlety of feeling which is only perceptible *between* the lines. In comparison, the theatre is wasteful of words; indeed, in the richest dramatic medium of all, with its countless and continuous assaults on the eye and ear, words tend to be scattered in profusion, on the assumption that a great many of them will not even be heard because the attention of the audience will be otherwise occupied. In any Shakespearian production, how many words do you actually hear, much more assimilate? The technique of our best Shakespearian actors takes full account of this primitive fact (and of the fact that much Shakespearian drama is essentially literary, not rooted in a spoken tradition), and includes complete mastery of the 'throw-away'—the ability to know when the words are less important than the visual action, or when the audience is incapable of absorbing them; not *gabbling*—the music will remain, but no one need worry about sense, except in the most general way. At these moments the words become an adjunct to the main business of the play, and the fact that you cannot grasp their logical connection by ear alone does not matter. The theatre writer, indeed, has to allow for all kinds of obstacles to perfect vocal communication: the size of the theatre and its acoustics, the difficulty of hearing anything in certain parts of the auditorium, the restlessness and noisiness of the audience itself, which may well smother a key line if it is only spoken once. The best dramatists never make a crucial point once only; the variation which they deploy in their repetitions is one of the tests of their technique. In the last section of *Romeo and Juliet*, every character who enters the scene also paints it. Shakespeare was clearly anxious that the graveyard should be firmly imprinted on the mind of his audience.

World Radio History

Yet each new reference is unforced and fully in character, and the picture will grow in conviction and detail for this very reason; we do not feel that we are being cut off from the excitement while someone describes the scene for us. First, Paris to his page, nervously:

> Under yon yew-trees lay thee all along,
> Holding thine ear close to the hollow ground;
> So shall no foot upon the churchyard tread,
> Being loose, unfirm with digging up of graves,
> But thou shalt hear it;

Romeo is driven by more compelling forces:

> Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
> Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth:
> Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open.

The Friar is doing his best:

> Saint Francis be my speed! How oft tonight
> Have my old feet stumbled at graves!

Too late, the Watch arrive:

> The ground is bloody, search about the churchyard.

And Montague, in distress, reproaches his son:

> O thou untaught! What manners is in this,
> To press before thy father to a grave?

Even Ibsen, who is by comparison an economical writer and has at his disposal all the scenic realism of the picture-frame theatre, knows that his words must provide the essential clues. Every character in *Hedda Gabler* refers, directly or not, to the comfortable, stuffy domestic interior, and thus underlines Hedda's own situation. However, sheer scene-location makes comparatively elementary demands on a writer's ingenuity; far more important that he should convey vividly and unmistakably his ideas and attitude. When the actors themselves invent the dialogue—when, as in music-hall or *commedia dell'arte*, they work out the detail on the basis of a bare sketch of the action—you may be sure that their improvisation will be largely effective, because they are in immediate contact with the audience and know at once whether or not any particular point is

World Radio History

'getting across'. In some ways, therefore, this form of theatre is the most refined, the purest, though not necessarily the most profound, because only the most inspired improvisation can compete with the combination of imaginative insight and leisured mathematical calculation of the writer—indeed possesses the combination to some extent. This is not the place to explore the principles underlying Action Painting, nor to consider whether they have any ultimate relevance in dramatic art, but perhaps it is worth recalling Komisarjevsky's praise of the unliterary theatre. For in its essence the theatre is not the subtlest of arts; it is capable of subtleties, but its effects must always be broad, however sensitively we as individuals may interpret its total richness. And the subtlest faculty of the dramatist is the ability to conceive effects which will contain possibilities of nuance within the crude frame of theatrical impact. In Sound Radio there is no room for hiatus—or rather there is nothing to occupy the attention during it. Every word must tell. And if the words are not of the kind that tell, if they are simply repetitive—an accompaniment, an elaboration for the sake of emphasis—boredom will soon set in. Radio must of its nature use words in the most compressed, condensed way. The word cannot be subsidiary, it must earn its place. A fair example of the compression of thought and imagery which a successful radio-writer must master is provided by the passage quoted above from *The Drunken Sailor*. 'Like feathers,' says the landlubber of the sails of the ship in the distance; 'Like bloody iron,' says the sailor, working on the canvas—and in two sentences and five seconds the writer establishes two separate worlds; the 'feathers' image will never be quite the same again, and the writer's comment is all the more persuasive for not having been stated explicitly. In the same play, Bolt achieves a remarkably moving 'curtain' with the utmost economy: the old sea-captain comes to announce to the landowner the death at sea of the landowner's son; he feels to some extent responsible, he could be charged with the guilt; he feels the guilt, yet knows that he acted correctly; he feels for the landowner, yet is riddled with resentment and class-consciousness—being himself no property-

World Radio History

owner he is at a disadvantage. Even this description of the situation is a simplification; the actual treatment in the radio script is simpler—Bolt succeeds in conveying perspectives of light and shade by the tersest imaginative expression. At the climax of the play, the captain comes silently up the driveway to the door and is greeted by the anxious Sir Richard. He is silent; then he speaks:

> Good day. (*He hawks softly.*) Sir; your son's dead.
> Drowned at sea.

And there is a long, long silence. Giles Cooper shows the same appreciation of the essential situation in *Without the Grail*, when the hard-bitten, self-centred hero suddenly becomes involved with forces whose existence he had never suspected. He opens a door and finds his host brutally murdered, and his reaction is basic: 'No head . . . no head. . . .' In fact, everything is left to the creative imagination of the listener, which takes flight readily if given the appropriate prod. These examples are certainly no more inspired than Webster's:

> Cover her face, mine eyes dazzle; she died young.

On the face of it, indeed, they are a good deal less effective, but just as carefully calculated to the requirements of the medium, and in context they could hardly be bettered. They are not *poetically* memorable, but as dramatic speech they do their job forcefully and well.

Perhaps the most potent quality of the word spoken in close focus—not projected artificially to several hundred people—is its power to communicate secret states of mind, the inner world and private vision of the speaker. To some extent this kind of communication can be managed in any dramatic or poetic medium, but the very intimacy of radio, the fact that we are only as far from the speaker as he is from the microphone—in other words that he is speaking secretly into our ear—means that we may have acutely the sense of sharing his thoughts and experience as though they are our own. The close focus gives us the impression that we are hearing an unspoken thought, as does the momentary flicker of a muscle in a film close-up. And the

World Radio History

impression is more direct than it can ever be in the theatre, simply because of the distance between performer and audience. The 'aside' in Victorian melodrama is the obvious theatrical equivalent: the character takes you into his confidence, shares with you his real feelings. The Shakespearian soliloquy is a less crude device, because more integrated poetically with the total action, less obtrusive; for this reason it has often been quoted as the kind of theatrical writing which broadcasts effectively, and it is true that properly performed—*thought* rather than *acted*—it can take on a new lease of life, a fact which Sir Laurence Olivier put to good use in his film of *Hamlet*. In Sound Radio it is often only during the soliloquies that Shakespeare comes to life—this in spite of the fact that he was writing for a theatre which depended vitally on words; the difference is in the degree of projection involved, the audience-performer relationship. The radio listener is not inhibited by his awareness of the rest of the audience; there are no barriers; he is in direct contact with the actor's mind. A contemporary writer who perceived this simple fact is L. R. Adrian, whose short radio-script, *The Passionate Thinker*, dealt almost entirely with thoughts which are not, in fact *cannot* be, spoken; there are only half a dozen sentences in it which are actually voiced. The situation is that of a middle-aged married couple, who have lost contact with each other, lying awake, pretending to be asleep, privately thinking their own thoughts. The thought-patterns approach each other, weave, blend, cross, separate; they are strangely similar, yet ultimately private—and they could never be voiced. This is not a devastatingly original conception for anyone who has studied the basic ingredients of Sound Radio, any more than was that of Richard Hughes when he decided to set *Danger*, the first radio play, in pitch darkness at the bottom of a coal-mine, where every character would be as blind as the listeners. Alas, it seems that the simplest conceptions are often the most difficult to arrive at, much more to execute. It is true that *The Passionate Thinker* could be effective in a visual medium; one would see the isolated couple, the bedside table, the crumpled pillows; one would hear the thoughts though the actors would not open their

World Radio History

mouths. But I suspect that the picture might eventually get in the way of the meaning—except perhaps in television—if only because it is a picture which is not meant to be looked at, but something to be pored over personally, inside the head. As it stands, the piece is pure radio, the words whispered in the minds of the actors, the whole an expression in voices of something which cannot be exteriorized. The only words which are actually spoken are trivial in the extreme: 'Are you asleep?' And all the more poignant for that.

I fear that the laws of rhetoric do not offer us much help, even though we are concerned with dramatic speech; the practice in Sound Radio is distinct from that in any other medium, although one is often misled by the fluidity and lack of physical restriction inherent in the medium. I remember, when working on a radio production of *Coriolanus*, that my constant wish was to have film cameras or a stage at my disposal. We achieved some splendid subtleties of interpretation, but the play as a whole would simply not yield to microscopic handling. It was impossible, without vision—and given the existing text—to give to the crowd (the vital performer) the individuality and character which the play demands. I do not suggest that Sound Radio must restrict itself to miniatures, to the intimate detail of *The Passionate Thinker*. On the other hand, 'Once more unto the breach' demands a very special sort of interpretation if it is to be at all effective on the air; it may even have to be spoken under the breath; if you shout it, you will certainly destroy it, it will become 'stagey', it will lose its meaning. Sound Radio, like Theatre, traffics in words, but its most effective method is understatement; overt statement is valuable for purposes of contrast. In close focus, the word possesses the intimacy of the whisper in the middle of the night, the uninhibited expression of what the heart and the body feel.

In a medium which depends so crucially on the spoken word it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceal insincerity or false motivation. When the ear alone is in play, nothing is more patent than falsehood, nothing more exasperating than prolixity —try listening to a film or television 'commercial' without

World Radio History

watching the picture. The ear is intolerant, the ear can be discerning. Even 'soap-opera' must apply certain disciplines, unless the audience is positively moronic. And the stylistic moral is that some degree of art will be more exciting than strict realism. Realism, in fact, will be a wasteful method, just as real conversation is wasteful of words and only tolerable because we ourselves are indulging in it. But all kinds of stylistic experiments will be possible, as long as they are truthfully based. To continue Louis MacNeice's remarks on radio-writing, 'He (the writer) can for example write the same line five times to achieve five different effects. Or he can write deliberately flat, understate, with the knowledge that this understatement will be heightened as required by the voice. The voice too will help him to squeeze from a cliché that expressiveness which many clichés still retain. . . . With a literature as old as ours and a contemporary diction so vulgarized, precise and emotive writing comes to depend more and more upon twists—twists of the obvious statement or the hackneyed image. . . . In radio, without sacrificing simplicity or lucidity, you can often leave the twisting to the voice.' MacNeice does this himself in *The Dark Tower* among other works. His ticket-collector is clearly a ticket-collector, yet he is a completely stylized creation:

> Ticket? Thank you . . . Ticket? Thank you . . .
> Ticket? Thank you . . . Ticket? Thank you . .

And the steward's recurring motif of

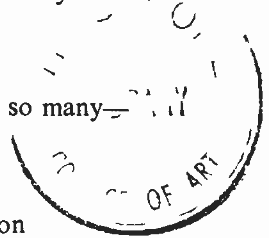
> Golden days, sir, golden days

has a cumulative emotional effect which could not be suspected from merely seeing the words.

This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the field in which Sound Radio is unrivalled is that of imagination pure and simple, a field which is probably least acceptable to most people. Yet what could be simpler? The creation of a world which has no exact equivalent in reality, a world which states its own terms. The cartoon film can do it, a poet of film such as Cocteau can do it, a theatrical genius at his height—Shakespeare in *The Tempest* or Ibsen in *Peer Gynt*—can do it; the radio writer can

World Radio History

do it more easily than he can do anything else. In his modern radio morality, *The Masque of Falsehood*, Peter Gurney makes no bones about it. He begins:



> It is doubtful whether you will recognize me
> Because of the mask I am wearing; but then I wear so many—
> I am the spokesman with the official denial,
> The prosecutor with the false confession,
> The newspaper with the startling revelation,
> The soldier who provoked the unprovoked aggression
> . . . . . .
> . . . My name is Falsehood.

The convention is immediately established and accepted, as it was by medieval writers and their audience. It is hardly surprising that the early mystery and morality plays were so successful when broadcast in the Third Programme series, *The First Stage*. The combination of extreme, almost primitive, simplicity with direct imaginative appeal—as to a child—broke down sophisticated barriers and drew us unprotesting into a different world. *The Masque of Falsehood* is by no means a copy of the old moralities—indeed it could hardly be more modern in attitude and feeling—but the author has absorbed the lesson of the early masters, not least their ability to tell a story. And radio is supremely a storyteller's medium, as one would expect: the voice coming out of the dark, in the firelight. Not that a story is necessary in order to make good radio—*Under Milk Wood* has scarcely any story, rather a series of impressions, an evocation—but a good story stands a good chance of being good radio. Some of the most successful dramatic broadcasts in the past ten years have been versions of arresting stories: *Rogue Male*, *The Cross and the Arrow*, *The Milk of Paradise*, *Man at Night*, *The Great Gatsby*, etc. Whatever other qualities they possess, they are supremely good stories, well told. And whatever the degree of success in translating them to the new medium this essential quality came through. A story exists in time and in the imagination, and it can only keep us listening by its manipulation of words; listening to Sound Radio, we find ourselves back in the chimney-corner, listening to the minstrel; every syllable is im-

World Radio History

portant, provided it has been exactly calculated to fulfil its purpose; given this, we *must know* what will happen next and how, since we are in the dark, cannot see ahead. And the more unexpected the words, the more arresting they will be. It is a secret art, unpredictable; our complacency can be shattered by a vocal inflexion, as in *The Masque of Falsehood* when Falsehood, an elegant young thug, says, to our consternation:

> The price that I ask
> To save you from dying
> Is your grave grey eyes.

In *All That Fall* there is an equally unexpected moment, this time of comedy, when Dan yearns for his 'long, ice-cold fillet of hake'. An unpredictable word, 'hake', if ever there was one. Much of the early success of a variety programme such as 'Take It From Here', was due to Frank Muir's and Denis Norden's inventive understanding of the flexibility of simple words and phrases—not least, the power of the pun, to which they gave a new lease of life. Perhaps I should emphasize that this particular quality of unexpectedness disappears entirely when one reads a radio script on the page. Our eyes are trained to look ahead when reading; 'your grave grey eyes' does not shatter us emotionally in print because we know it is coming, we know in advance what 'the price' will be. In performance, emotional impact and sheer shock coincide; we have to *wait* for them, therefore their edge is not blurred.

The radio writer may deploy his words musically, surrealistically, impressionistically, intellectually—what you will. If he uses his materials successfully the sound complex which he creates will not have any easy equivalent; it will have to be accepted on its own terms. And here I feel obliged to challenge again the current illusion already mentioned—namely, that in order to be of value an article must be capable of being held in the hand. How often does one hear: 'What did it mean?' 'The ending was disappointing' (because it was unhappy or unexpected or true). 'It was so pointless.' We have become accustomed, in life and in literature, to hearing words as a superficial means

World Radio History

of contact, and we find it increasingly difficult to progress imaginatively beyond them, increasingly easy to acquire from them a smooth consolation, a quick and superficial assessment of any given situation. Our inclination is to forget that words, like music, can express what seems inexpressible; we find it curious that Flaubert should have suffered such agony in choosing between them. I hesitate to generalize; on the other hand I cannot escape the feeling that most modern literature—and, after all, there is a very great deal of it—expresses what is expressed every day, in some routine form or other: a confirmation of common experience. It is hard lines on the poet, on the novelist such as William Faulkner, who is readily dismissed because he is difficult to read, because the words he uses are not as convenient as indigestion tablets, and because his perception of reality includes factors beyond our own limited experience. It is a pity, in view of its unique capability for handling words, that Sound Radio has had to surrender to a considerable extent to the contemporary fallacy. If it were ever compelled, under pressure, to refuse to present 'difficult' programmes, it would deserve the oblivion into which it would ultimately droop, unmourned, along with ninety-nine out of every hundred words which are currently printed every day. It would have been pointless to ask Dylan Thomas exactly what he meant when he wrote:

> Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
>   Time held me green and dying
> Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

His reply might have been stimulating, but hardly more illuminating than the lines themselves.

Those who put a high premium on the creative and poetic quality of the spoken word—who do not require every question to carry with it its own answer nor every work of art to have its message written underneath in indelible ink—these will work hardest at radio, or for that matter at any art form, and will ultimately get the most out of it.

World Radio History

THE RAW MATERIALS: SOUND

(*a*) *Music*

It is possible to achieve an exciting and satisfying artistic synthesis simply by the use of voices speaking words, as L. R. Adrian has proved (in *The Passionate Thinker*), to say nothing of the many writers who have elaborated the *genre* of the Imaginary Conversation. However, although words are invariably the most important single element in a radio composition, they are more often than not only one element in a total sound structure; they cry for reinforcement. I do not propose to examine opera in this context, since opera is essentially a musical conception: the words are subservient, the laws are basically musical. 'Melodrama' is more apparently within our terms of reference. *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition is, 'a play, usually romantic and sensational in plot and incident, in which songs are interspersed and in which the action is accompanied by orchestral music appropriate to the situations.' The classic example, composed for radio, is Edward Sackville-West's treatment of the Odyssey—*The Rescue*—with music by Benjamin Britten; a vast, compelling canvas on which speech and music are uniquely integrated. Francis Dillon and H. A. L. Craig have done a good deal of pioneering work in this field, more particularly in applying ballad forms or folk-tunes as an integral component of the dramatic texture. Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin have explored similar techniques in their treatment of contemporary themes in terms of folk-song and ballad, and Raymond Raikes has applied a like principle to his radio productions of Greek comedy and tragedy—with the result that many listeners have been able to rediscover Greek drama as entertainment and art, not simply as examples of noble thinking or elementary pornography. Before we can contemplate using these more elaborate techniques it is necessary to look at the simpler permutations.

Music is inevitably the most potent artistic adjunct to speech, emotionally at least, because of its own emotional power, and

World Radio History

because it too exists in time and depends largely on rhythm for its effect. (It can be argued that vision, movement, plastic imagery, are even more potent because of their lack of affinity —sheer contrast—and there is much to be said for this point of view. Indeed, the combination of all three can be irresistible.) But immediately we are up against a limitation: the *fortissimo* attainable on a radio receiver is restricted, and a single human voice in close focus can appear to be as loud as a full symphony orchestra. It is possible to achieve the subtlest variation, the finest nuance, when one is working microscopically—that is to say, focusing one's effects rather than projecting them—but it is not possible to reproduce the dynamic range of the concert hall. One can create an impression of loudness, but it is relative. If we wish to convey the effect of an earth-shattering explosion the only way we can do it is by calculating the maximum dynamic contrast with the immediately preceding sounds. If the actors are speaking normally, the loudest *tutti* of the largest orchestra will appear no louder than they; if, on the other hand, they have been whispering, a single note on the harmonica could sound like the crack of doom. This basic technical fact is of the utmost importance to radio producers, and radio composers neglect it at their peril—an Albert Hall full of inspired instrumentalists might as well be so many peas in a colander.

'Incidental' music is by now an accepted ingredient of dramatic art; it always was a vital ingredient—as one would expect in a form so closely connected with ritual—but its abuses have tended to overshadow its use. The old piano beating a sympathetic accompaniment to the silent film may have been a delicious subject for parody, but how effective it once was—even though its origins may have been rooted not in artistic necessity but simply in the need to drown the irritating noise of the projector. It was artistically valid simply because it was a percussive and melodic instrument which was capable of underlining and counterpointing the visual situation; it not only matched the mood of a particular scene, but by contributing its own pattern of aural excitement or nostalgia or gaiety or doom it reinforced the visible action, thereby making a double assault on the emo-

World Radio History

tions. Kurt London pointed out, in his perceptive book on *Film Music*, that it is essential to appreciate 'the rhythm of the film as an art of movement. We are not accustomed to apprehend movement as an artistic form without accompanying sounds, or at least audible rhythms. Every film that deserves the name must possess its individual rhythm which determines its form. . . it was the task of the musical accompaniment to give it auditory accentuation and profundity'. It was often a crude technique, though its best practitioners were gifted and sympathetic artists —in recent years Arthur Dulay has demonstrated at the National Film Theatre how sensitive an art it can be—and it is a matter for regret that when it became possible for the creative mind behind a film to co-ordinate both sound and vision on the same piece of celluloid the artistic possibilities should have been so frequently neglected. We all know how bad 'film music' can be, whatever its potentialities; in fact, used as a general term, not specifically, the words are positively abusive. The celestial choir, the 'hurry' music, the knife-chord at the moment of suspense, the romantic theme which makes us feel at once regretful and cosy and which has no artistic justification of any kind—these add nothing to the content of the film; they accentuate what is already sufficiently obvious. Many fine musicians have written good film music; many more musicians have given in to the pressure of what soon became an industry. More often than not you could take the musical score from any given film and apply it, almost without modification, to another; it is as easy to produce music from a conveyor-belt as it is tins of furniture polish. On the other hand, a good film score—that is to say, music used only when it is demanded by the text—can be devastating in its counterpointing of the visual images as, for example, Prokofiev's score for *Ivan the Terrible*, Auric's for the Cocteau films. The audience should hear film music as it should hear all incidental music—almost unconsciously; the score should not obtrude, it should simply support the dramatic action in rhythm, in thought and in structure. 'Background' music which is simply mixed into a scene without any specific motive or connection, except the most obviously sentimental, is

World Radio History

a detestable abuse of a form of expression which is capable of conveying sophisticated and subtle shades of dramatic meaning. Why drag it in if the effect desired can be realized without it?

The theatre has had to be more selective in its use of incidental music, if only because a pit orchestra is a luxury and recorded music has—until quite recently—always had an inhuman, mechanical flavour when amplified. As a result we have, by and large, been spared incidental music in the theatre unless it has been desperately necessary; I say 'spared', because nothing intrudes more obviously or destroys the dramatic illusion more swiftly than the contrast between actors pretending to behave spontaneously and musicians following a score (or a prefabricated gramophone record). The latest developments in high-fidelity recording and tape-reproduction have lessened this hazard and made it possible for both music and sound effects to be used plausibly as integral parts of a theatrical illusion; even so, there is still no point in 'background music', in the theatre or in any medium. Either the words are interesting, in which case we do not hear the music; or they are not, when it becomes irritating; or we long for the action to stop so that we may listen to the music in comfort.

There are inevitably many points of resemblance between the function of incidental music in Sound Radio and its use in the visual media, although the practice cannot be equated. In all dramatic media its prime use is to heighten or resolve the immediate tension, by underlining, by contrast, or by completing a cadence; in Sound Radio, while performing this function, it is subject to the same laws as is the spoken word—laws dictated by the nature of the medium. Each instrument is, or can be, in close focus. The power of the solo instrument is therefore suddenly far greater than it can be in the concert hall; the most delicately plucked string, the most elusive harmonic, are under the microscope and can be as vivid and electrifying as massed brass. Indeed, the radio composer's main concern is to avoid at all costs any feeling of the concert platform; once we associate sound patterns with rows of dinner-jacketed instrumentalists we are faced with the same clash of conventions which often

World Radio History

faces us in the theatre. Similarly with acoustic discrepancies. When we listen to a broadcast of a Sibelius concert we suspend our awareness of the invisible barrier between ourselves and the musicians and listen to the music; when the music is one element in a sound structure which has as its basis the human voice in intimate focus, we are quick to perceive any lack of artistic unity. Music which points and accompanies words must not only have its own special texture, so that it does not obscure the vocal tones and harmonics, it must also be related in sheer size to the vocal interpretation. The subtler the actor's performance, the more finely graduated the music; otherwise the illusion is shattered by the intrusion of obvious artifice. To orchestrate for a radio programme as one would for a symphony would not only be wasteful, it would be ineffective. The best radio composers go to the other extreme. Their main preoccupation is to explore new, more sensitive, tones and timbres. And the most dramatic way of producing a fresh and unpredictable effect may be the most patent—witness Carol Reed's handling of the zither music in *The Third Man*: a more exciting 'score', if you can call it that, than any symphony orchestra could have provided. His choice of a single, unfamiliar instrument, simple but unfamiliar rhythms, an elementary but haunting tune, commenting ironically or cutting across the apparent dramatic intention of the action, was inspired, as was his decision to magnify the sound of this instrument to such a point that it became a major character in the film. It is a question of relative, not actual, size and importance. As Edward Sackville-West said of Benjamin Britten's score for *The Rescue*: '. . . a large ensemble seemed necessary, if only because a small one is invariably more obtrusive: it is, paradoxically, impossible to produce an overall orchestral *pianissimo* without using a considerable body of instruments, whereas a double *forte* requires only the minimum.' This is true, and immediately qualifies my point about relativity; what is required of the radio composer is understanding of the special qualities of the microphone rather than impeccable musical perfection. A string quartet will always sound like a string quartet, and there would be no virtue in using it to provide incidental

World Radio History

music unless you specifically wished to evoke the presence of four instrumentalists. On the other hand, the combination of mouth-organ, two mandolins, tuba, 'cello, and bass, used by John Beckett in his score for *Malone Dies*, has no previous associations; the instrumentation has been conceived entirely in terms of what is effective for the microphone and for the focus of the work in hand, and each instrument speaks individually, as if it were a voice, contributing its particular emphasis. Humphrey Searle's brilliant score for the radio performance (by Paul Scofield) of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* was a splendid example of a specifically *radio* score; a combination consisting of violin, 'cello, clarinet, tenor trombone, Spanish guitar and percussion was perfectly adjusted to H. B. Fortuin's conception of the work and therefore gave it an extra dimension. Yet we still hear radio scores which, because they have been composed in terms either of film music or concert hall, not only fail to match and deepen the radio illusion but positively destroy it. What could be more disillusioning—however exciting the music in itself—than a full concert orchestra in the middle of the jungle? The only terms on which it could be acceptable artistically would be in an essentially musical work—an opera, or even a 'melodrama'—in which the illusion is not likely to be broken, because a stylized convention has been firmly established.

One would expect music to have many possible uses in radio, aside from the basic dramatic applications of emphasis or resolution, and indeed it has. It can, for instance, be used simply as a link, a vivid or relaxing transition between scenes or moods. This is a fairly primitive function, but none the less necessary for that, although it is rarely demanded in work which has been closely conceived for the microphone. In the theatre the curtain-line may be pointed by a lift of the eyebrows or a twist of the mouth, or by a sudden movement from characters not obviously involved; on the air, there are no such possibilities of implied comment, ironical, farcical, or 'straight', on the final line—except by sound, and preferably by music. Music can not only swing you quickly from one mood to another, it can also—as

World Radio History

subtly as an eyebrow—give to a phrase an extra, and possibly contradictory, level of meaning. And it can provide unity where unity may be difficult to perceive. For example, in the production of Nushich's farce, *Wife of a Minister*, with its essentially Slav feeling and its unfamiliar twists of situation, we found that a gay Yugoslav peasant dance not only gave a framework of colour and vitality but also constantly reminded us of the satirical intention of the author. In Lance Sieveking's version of Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay*, the tune of 'Yes, sir, that's my Baby' provided not only a precise location in time, but also a sense of the ludicrous essential in this particular context; however, we found that we were using it so often in this production that by the time the final climactic sequence arrived it had lost its freshness and no longer succeeded in evoking the intoxication of a whirlwind taxi-ride through the West End in the nineteen-twenties; by using a completely different tune, the 'Charleston', played at gradually increasing speeds, we reached the desired effect. The principle was the same, but ingenuity in application was, and always is, essential, although it does not always come when we try to summon it.

In the two examples just quoted, the music was not specially composed; it already existed, it was selected and applied. The principles are the same; the peasant dance was suitable because it matched the feeling of the Yugoslav play and the way in which it was performed, the jazz tunes of the 'twenties, with their aggressive orchestration, added a dimension of farce and fun because they cut so brutally across the sophisticated wit of Huxley.

As one would expect, the most indispensable and vivid function of incidental music in Sound Radio is as an evocative and visual component. The words of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* were perhaps all too evocative in themselves, but it is hard to believe that his terrifying and astonishing island would have been so solid without Christopher's Whelen's music, nor would that alarming rock-tooth in *Pincher Martin*. The musical reinforcement which Archie Campbell demanded for his production made it almost unbearably disturbing. Elizabeth Poston's scores

World Radio History

for Barbara Bray's versions of *The Return* (Walter de la Mare) and *The Milk of Paradise* (Alain-Fournier) were equally remarkable for their visual evocativeness. One of the most arresting moments of *The Return* is that when the central character lights a candle and looks in the mirror only to see reflected a face which is not his own. It can certainly be managed, either visually or aurally, without the help of music; but the combination of visual surprise and emotional shock can be most arrestingly conveyed by an exclamation mark of harmony and percussion. In *The Milk of Paradise* the hero sees for the first time the land he has heard and dreamed of, the lost domain which he has sought for so long; as his eyes light on it a phrase of music conjures it, magical, more exquisite than a dream, from the air.

In all these examples, music is conceived not as a somewhat primitive adjunct to the text but as an integral component; not necessarily as a substitute for speech, but as a co-equal. I think that words must always be predominant in radio and music subservient; nevertheless, the music/speech complex should always be conceived as a unity, if it is to appear inevitable. However close the synthesis, words will always take first place, and a musical score which develops its themes at extravagant length will become so interesting in itself that it will command attention at the expense of the real business of the programme; a chord in close focus has, effectively, the duration and dimension of twenty bars played against a panoramic 'shot' in the cinema, simply because it has been selected, magnified, and strategically placed in an emotive time-sequence. And because no visual aids are involved; it must make its point immediately, concisely, and without help. The cardinal sin of musicians who have not bothered to study the essentials of Sound Radio—or for that matter Film or Theatre—is their determination to write 'a piece of music' at all costs—something which will in due course have an independent life of its own, as a suite or a symphonic rhapsody or a set of variations. Many amateurs still believe—largely because incidental music has been widely misused—that an 'incidental' score is not only unmusical but positively to be deplored. Whatever the truth of that, there is no doubt that music which is

World Radio History

more than 'incidental'—or should I say less—is a perpetual embarrassment and distraction. It may be a frustrating occupation to write music which will never be consciously listened to, but a composer who embarks on a radio score with the determination that it will register, whatever else doesn't, may succeed in creating a perfectly good piece for the concert hall, but will only destroy what it was his business to enhance.

What is the deciding factor in considering whether incidental music should or should not be used? The only test is whether it is necessary, whether it adds a dimension which is artistically correct at whatever point it intervenes. It is only too easy to dress up a text with musical decoration, without any artistic justification whatsoever; music as a genuine ingredient in radio communication is always demanded, not simply allowed. A straightforward example occurs in D. S. Savage's . . . *And Also Much Cattle*, for which Christopher Whelen composed the score.

THE LORD: Occurred to me you might like some little protection f'om de heat of de sun, Jonah, man.

JONAH: Mebbe so, Lawd. Mebbe so.

THE LORD: Jes' keep yo' eyes open, Jonah.

(*Music: saxophone to suggest the sinuous growth of a plant-stem. Followed by bassoon to suggest the swelling of the gourd.*)

JONAH: Doggone! A plant. And a kinda swelling thing, a pumpkin, gee!

THE LORD: You still watchin'-out, Jonah, man?

JONAH: Yes, sah, Lawd: I still watchin'.

THE LORD: Jes' keep your eyes wide open, Jonah.

(*Music: saxophone as before to suggest plant, followed by clicking of xylophone to suggest worm eating away at the stem.*)

JONAH: Say, Lawd. What happen to my plant? What fo' you sen' a little bug to chaw away my pumpkin, my on'y shade f'om de blazin' sun?

(*Music to suggest shrivelling of plant. Tambourine: cymbals.*)

READER: And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement East Wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself

World Radio History

to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
(*Music to suggest dry east wind: cymbals.*)
JONAH: A-ah! A-ah! My head, my po' head. . . .

No doubt this passage could be made to convey its point without musical help, but its *style* would be lost, since one of its vital elements is the comic, fantastic comment of music as an integral strand in a total sound pattern. A rather more complex service was demanded in Lance Sieveking's radio version of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited.* In the opening sequence, strictly realistic in manner, the battalion has arrived in the middle of the night at its new camp, 'somewhere in England'. Charles Ryder is awakened next morning by Lieutenant Hooper, and the following dialogue develops—I omit deliberately Sieveking's directions.

1. CHARLES: What's it called, this place?
2. HOOPER: Brideshead Castle.
3. CHARLES: What!
4. HOOPER: Brideshead Castle. That's what they said.
5. CHARLES: Brideshead? *Well* . . . ! So it is.
6. HOOPER: The house is up there beyond the trees.
7. CHARLES: Yes.
8. HOOPER: Brigade Headquarters are coming there next week. Great barrack of a place. I've just had a snoop round. Very ornate, I'd call it. And a queer thing, there's a sort of little R.C. church attached. I looked in and there was a kind of service going on—just one padre and one old man. I felt very awkward. More in your line than mine. . . .
9. CHARLES: Eh? What's that?
10. HOOPER: And there's a frightful great fountain too, in front of the steps. All rocks and sort of carved animals. You never saw such a thing.
11. CHARLES: Yes, Hooper, I did. I've been here before.
12. HOOPER: Eh? Oh well, you know all about it then. I'll go and get cleaned up. Cheerioh.
13. CHARLES: Yes. . . . That house . . . ! Never, never till my dying day shall I forget that first visit. . . .

This is a crucial passage, and on its successful handling depends the effectiveness of what ensues. Sieveking's solution followed

World Radio History

implicitly the demands of the words and the emotions involved. The first essential was to strike a poetic note—without any obvious 'poetizing' and in the middle of a completely realistic sequence, maintained throughout by the prosaic Hooper—as memory and emotion sweep over Charles and carry him back through the years. Naturally the actors contributed the fundamental feeling, but brilliant as Hugh Burden's interpretation was, indicating layers of unspoken emotion in the minimum of words, his performance had been 'set' in a realistic convention, and I am sure that he would agree that without the imaginative jump provided—in this case—by music, or visual impressionism, he would have been faced by a sizeable barrier to artistic truth. The sequence will stand close analysis. In speech number 1, Charles is still slightly dazed with sleep, not vitally interested; Hooper's speech 2 is matter-of-fact, rather bored. Speech 3 is hardly more than a catch of breath at the unexpected name, 4 somewhat doubtful, as Hooper, seeing Charles's excessive surprise, senses that he may have said the wrong thing. The first word of 5 trembles with incredulity, as realization dawns, and it is at this point that Sieveking inserts his first music cue: 'a faint chord or two'. Essential that it should be 'faint', i.e. discreet, as if it were growing from the ground; anything emphatic or sudden would intrude too abruptly and destroy the illusion. Essential, too, that it should be leisured—a gradual encroachment on silence, almost resolving into some sort of shape but not quite, then evaporating, as Charles's own emotions, memories long forgotten, stir into movement but cannot yet be gathered together, intangible, unseizable. After the word 'Brideshead', therefore, we introduced *pianissimo*, a deep, vibrant, echoing sequence of chords, barely audible and unresolved; as they began to be lost, Charles gave 'a little, broken-off laugh', then silence. Then, at last, '*Well* . . . so it is.' Hooper, puzzled, plods gamely on in 6, and here, as we return to reality, we introduce the distant cawing of rooks in the trees, an evocative sound calculated to blend nicely with the harmonics of the music. In 7, Charles is lost in thought. Hooper rattles on, unheard. Nine is completely abstracted; the focus moves close on to Charles, into

World Radio History

his mind, weighing the strange meaning that Brideshead holds for him. Hooper's practical description in 10 forms a counterpoint to the real line of action; 11 is Charles to himself, absorbed in his dream. Hooper is taken aback, but the explanation seems sufficient and he departs cheerfully. There is a pause after 12, as we wait for some resolution of Charles's problem; but instead of a vocal cadence we hear music—faintly again—the first statement of a nostalgic theme. Against this, treated unrealistically, voices as in a dream; we repeat speeches 11 and 12, we repeat them again. Immediately the theme is stated fully, in the major key, triumphant; it builds to speech 13, Charles in full close-up. By now, poetry and realism have each staked their claim to coexistence; the 'flashback' which ensues is not the simple mechanical device to which we are accustomed but an irresistible evocation of an ever-present past. Without music it is difficult to see how this transition could be made; with the wrong kind of music it could easily be unutterably vulgar. In this particular case, the music was not specially composed; we used the haunting theme from Rachmaninov's 2nd Symphony —sufficiently unfamiliar to be free of obvious associations—and the fact that it is a theme which *grows* was of inestimable value in paralleling the text.

Having established the convention, we used music in a fairly detailed way throughout *Brideshead*, not only in order to maintain the balance between naturalistic truth and imaginative truth but also to preserve unity in a version which had to suggest dimensions which in the original book could be explored in detail, and in order to heighten the emotional impact of a programme which must, necessarily, leave a great deal unsaid. When music is used in this way—particularly when a 'theme' tune is involved—it is essential that the music itself should grow and develop as does the dramatic texture of the script. Simple repetition of a musical phrase achieves nothing, unless the effect you require is that of simple repetition. Indeed, unless the musical score has its own shape, corresponding to the poetic or dramatic shape of the text, it will positively get in the way of the artistic illusion; it, too, must have diversity in unity, it must

World Radio History

march hand in hand with the words. And it can never be effective as an easy way out, as conventional accompaniment to the dialogue; whenever it occurs its significance must be precise and integral. At the simplest level (but none the less effective for that) this may perhaps be achieved by basing the incidental score on musical pointers already existing in the text. Thus, for James Forsyth's *Lisel*, in which the central character is a professional violinist, Franz Reizenstein used a solo violin alone to convey his musical emphasis; in Giles Cooper's *Mathry Beacon*, in which one of the characters was an ex-jazz-band trumpeter, Freddie Clayton's trumpet improvisations provided indispensable comment on and reinforcement of the action; in both there was an intriguing combination of music used as 'actuality'—played as part of the action—and as 'incidental': the same instrument used realistically and poetically, in turn. We extend this principle by basing the score on a theme which occurs actually in the text; thus, in *The Great Gatsby*, we provided musical pointing by various treatments of Gatsby's favourite ballad, 'The Love Nest'; in *The Milk of Paradise* the score grows and enriches itself from the simple theme which the young girl plays on the piano in the next room. Or perhaps we prefer the *leitmotif*; for example, Leighton Lucas's score for *The Alchemist* provided every character with his own signature-tune, and this seemed fitting for a Ben Jonson comedy; the result was a combination of clarity and comic individuality. Benjamin Britten's score for *The Rescue* associates particular instruments with particular characters—the alto saxophone with Penelope, the Bach trumpet with Athene, etc. Or what more economical way of summarizing the essence of natural sounds—inevitably too detailed in construction and clumsy in effect for real poetic expression? A burst of thunder or an explosion may be more telling in musical than in actual terms if only because they will be more controllable. In Stephen Grenfell's version of John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* there is a tense sequence in which the refugees have to attack a road-block in order to break through to possible freedom:

World Radio History

ROGER: Who the devil do you ruddy little tin soldiers think you are, putting road-blocks across the Queen's Highway?
CORPORAL: Okay, chum, you asked for it. Come on, lads.
ROGER: (*incisively*) Right! . . . Now! . . .
(*One shot from a high velocity rifle, followed by two others.*)
(*Music: harsh, discordant, frightening.*)
Cut to:
PIRRIE: I must apologize for poaching, partner, but they were such a good lie.
JOHN: Dead?
PIRRIE: Of course.
ROGER: (*away; calling*) Road block clear, Johnny.

The music not only renders the action more vividly than any realistic impression could do, it also makes an emotional short-cut between the tension before the act, the act itself, and the ensuing release and the next step, making it unnecessary to describe the action and irrelevant to paint a word-picture. Or perhaps we simply need a sophisticated, detached comment; as Michael Bakewell did in his sensitive production of William Saroyan's *Tracy's Tiger*, where an ingenious jazz motif crept delicately in and out of the action—not provoked by it, but linked almost by antipathy; contrast can provide as strong a connection as the closest affinity. There is another book to be written about the possibilities, simple and subtle, of music in a 'blind' medium, and I hope that long-playing records will be issued simultaneously, for the only way to perceive the potential is to hear it. Meanwhile, I would simply say that the only final test of incidental music is that it should sound unavoidable. There is no doubt that many listeners who resent it do so because they have only heard it at its worst; at its best it is as natural as the words themselves.

(*b*) *Natural Sounds*

One might assume that in a 'blind' medium natural sounds would have considerable importance in helping to build the artistic illusion: the sound of a door shutting will indicate an exit or an entrance and give perspective to a room; the cry of

World Radio History

sea-gulls will evoke an immediate and vivid picture. Unfortunately, a great many natural sounds have lost their freshness over the years, largely because in our day realism has been the most favoured form of dramatic expression, in radio as in the visual media, and realistic plays provide an opportunity for only a limited number of sound effects, which have tended to recur with undiscriminating monotony in different contexts. A great many natural sounds have lost their potential as imaginative stimulants and now exist only as aural short-cuts, like the 'shot' of a signpost in a bad film to locate the scene. If they are to be of any artistic value at all, they must be apprehended afresh and used in fresh permutations and in a new and discriminating focus. Otherwise their sheer conventionality makes them as unreal and apparently artificial a device as a phrase of music, and much less evocative.

The potential artistic value of strict naturalism is considerable. In the cinema, we have seen how a situation can be treated in the most detailed naturalistic way and thereby achieve its own poetry. A good deal of criticism was levelled at *On The Waterfront* because the dialogue was spoken so realistically that it was often impossible to hear what the actors were saying; they mumbled, interrupted each other, spoke simultaneously, shouted inaudibly against the noise of the dockside—in fact they made no conventional dramatic *points* for much of the time. The rhythm was that of reality, the sounds of the real world—traffic, crowds, machines—impinged as harshly and as irritatingly as they do in reality, and the whole was shaped imaginatively into a work which had the force and conviction of the best documentary. We cannot go as far as this in radio, if only because, lacking vision, we cannot afford chaos or lack of intelligibility in the sound sequence; adventurous radio producers have attempted a similar technique but it has always resulted in confusion. Even the theatre jibs at it, because words *are* important in the theatre, and because the discrepancy in quality and, more important, in size and perspective between recorded effects and the live presence of the actors is a bar to the dramatic illusion. Radio has the advantage that it can balance natural

World Radio History

sounds in a proper relationship with voices; moreover, its focus can communicate the most delicate realistic point. It has no difficulty in dealing with the ticking of a watch or the rustle of taffeta, but, lacking the visual support of film, which also can magnify minutiae, it has to aim at the utmost stylization in its handling of reality. A match strikes, breath is exhaled; but we do not hear—and could not keep mental track of—the creak of the chair, the sound of the matchbox being replaced, the match dropping into the ashtray, the scrape of the foot across the carpet. Sound Radio cannot aim at realism but only at the most persuasive illusion of reality; since every sound that comes out of the loudspeaker is significant the radio producer needs to look always for the most typical and evocative detail in order to build his sound picture; otherwise the ear is distracted and the image blurred. What is more, he must look for details of sound which have not lost their immediacy through excessive use. The most serious hazard of all is the fact that most natural sounds are extremely difficult to identify unless you have a key; the frequency range of natural sounds is narrow and few of us are in the habit of identifying them by ear alone. We recognize a knock on the door—but might it be someone hammering a tintack in the corridor? If we were unaware of all the facts we might find it impossible to distinguish between a torrent of rain, a burst of applause in the Festival Hall, the production line in a factory. The sound which is unique and exciting when paralleled by a visual situation can be confusing and inexpressive on its own. The blade of an axe biting into a tree could just as well be a pencil tapping on a desk, a man snapping his fingers, a grandfather clock ticking. A clock ticking could be—and has been taken to be—a horse trotting. Indeed, there are so many possibilities of confusion that one wonders whether it would not be advisable to avoid this range of sounds altogether. In practice, that is precisely what the best radio practitioners do. Various attempts have been made in the past to construct radio programmes from sound effects alone, unaided by voices. They look promising on the page: 'footsteps cross the street and mount the steps'; but already the writer overestimates his raw materials,

World Radio History

for 'cross the street' is a visual conception in his own mind, and I would defy anyone to judge by ear alone whether the feet in question are crossing the street or walking up the side of a house, or even to be quite sure that they are feet at all—they might, for example, be the sound of a methodical workman stacking bricks into heaps. 'Fade in the sound of Euston Station': the picture is clear enough to writer and producer, but to the listener it might well be Beachy Head during a storm; it certainly will not be *Euston* Station unless someone says so.

In fact, natural sounds alone, divorced from the text, can rarely be effective. If they are to be even comprehensible, the text must demand them and, moreover, must give a fairly sure signpost to their nature; indeed they will hardly ever register at all unless the text provides a key. Consider the sound of a piano-lid being shut smartly. In isolation it could be almost anything. Preface it with the word, 'Good-bye,' and it becomes a door closing; follow it with 'Well played, sir,' and it is a cricket bat; synchronize it with 'Look out, he's got a gun,' and it is a pistol-shot; add, as an afterthought, 'Now look what you've done,' and it is whatever the context leads us to suppose that you will do. I exaggerate only slightly. In the production of Walter de la Mare's *The Return*, the sound of the tiny weir by the churchyard, poetically evoked by the text, was rendered by a recording of the Zambesi Falls, which corresponded exactly to the imaginative conception. The ear will believe what it is led to believe when it is confronted by sounds as undifferentiated as those of the real world. It follows that whenever a text needs the reinforcement of real sounds to achieve whatever purpose cannot be compassed by words alone, the words themselves must guide the mind towards an accurate apprehension of those sounds; they must guide it discreetly, and without quitting their own convention, if the artistic illusion is to survive.

Yet if natural sounds are highly suspect as a means of radio expression, they are often an essential complement to speech; perhaps because the rhythm of the text demands punctuation marks other than purely musical ones, perhaps because the visual image evoked needs the extra dimension of realistic

World Radio History

sound before it can be fully arresting, or because natural sound itself is the most economical way of conjuring atmosphere and suspense. There is no point in opening or closing a door every time a character enters or leaves a room (though it is often done). If the banging of doors is an integral part of the character of the house, as in Cocteau's *Les Parents Terribles*, it is almost certainly an exciting dramatic device; if not, the effect is merely fussy and distracting. However, there is every point in closing the door firmly on a highly-charged or decisive exit, which needs some percussive reinforcement in order to resolve emotional tension and to provide a rhythmic break before the action resumes its new tempo. We should find it intolerably irritating to hear every footstep of every character in a play; yet when Ugo Betti's crippled Irene makes her first appearance in the courtroom we *need* to hear her stumbling approach—the text insists on it, emotionally and rhythmically. We do not wish to hear the church clock chime every quarter, even if it is immediately adjacent to the scene of action, but if the ghost is to walk at midnight the first stroke can hardly be avoided and will in itself be dramatic. The glass which slips from the hand and smashes on the ground is a well-worn device for underlining emotional shock, and it is still an effective one: it is a sound selected from many because of its clarity and appositeness. *Selection* is the key word—and one needs to be every bit as selective in order to convey the impression of an apparently complex sound-montage as for the simplest underlining of a dramatic point: in *Brideshead Revisited* a bead curtain and an obnoxious, buzzing fly served to re-create the heat and squalor of Tangier; in Marcel Pagnol's *Marius* a ship's siren and a distant accordion brought us at once to the waterfront of Marseilles. Even where sound appears to be at its most functional—that is to say, an almost unheard background to root the action in reality, as for example a scene in a motor-car, a crowded restaurant—certain characteristic facets will still have to be selected in order to point the action when required; otherwise the sound background will be literally unheard and therefore wasted. As Norman Corwin has demonstrated, the action of a radio programme may be set entirely

World Radio History

in an aircraft but the only time we need to hear consciously the sound of the engines is when it impinges on the characters; otherwise it serves no dramatic purpose save, perhaps, to drive the listener to distraction. That basic instrument, the telephone, becomes a terrifying dramatic device in the hands of Patrick Hamilton; in his *Caller Anonymous* its placing in the text and the timing of its interpolations contributed more emotional tension than paragraphs of dialogue. A simple bedside clock, magnified in the mind of an old woman and counterpointing with its assured rhythm her own lack of repose, became a vital suspense motif in E. J. King Bull's production of Pamela Hansford Johnson's *Corinth House*. When Francis Durbridge and Martyn C. Webster make Paul Temple ring the doorbell several times—with no result, save silence—then try the handle, then open the door, they are not simply passing the time; each sound has its own dramatic function.

A certain stylization is always necessary in deploying real sounds in an artistic context. It is often more rewarding to use real sound unrealistically—that is to say, distorted, with some of its original characteristics removed, in order to convey a special kind of auditory effect which cannot be achieved so easily by musical means. In the Marabar caves sequence of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* we needed a special kind of sound. The author describes it:

'The echo in a Marabar cave . . . is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. "Boum" is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or "bou-oum", or "ou-boum"—utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "boum".'

A musical sound would have been in the wrong convention; a strictly realistic sound ineffective. Eventually, taking a gong as basis and subjecting it to various technical processes, we constructed an unidentifiable, yet almost familiar, sound, vibrant, odd, ominous. In Giles Cooper's *Mathry Beacon* one of the most important characters is the 'deflector', the unheard-of

World Radio History

machine manned by the small army unit in the Welsh mountains. The deflector is in turn realistic and symbolic, its movement marks the passage of time, and when it stops an illusion is shattered. No exactly realistic sound of machinery could have fulfilled these demands, but a combination of machine-sound with semi-musical sound—say, high-frequency notes, giving the effect of wires humming in an unheard wind—might, and, I believe, did. The possibilities of the non-realistic method applied to realistic sound are amongst the most intriguing available to the radio practitioner. Giles Cooper, who has a fine ear for the imaginative potential of sheer sound, made severe demands in *The Disagreeable Oyster*—a radio equivalent of the cartoon film, necessitating just as special a treatment: a fantasy, set in the real world, in which real things suddenly become an unfamiliar nightmare. The basic technique for approaching this artistic problem was precisely conceived by Francis Worsley in his 'Itma' productions: a door may have certain affinities with a real door, but essentially it is a percussive effect to despatch or introduce a character with maximum speed—the emphasis being not on 'realism' but on tempo, rhythm, dramatic effect. For many years the 'Itma' door (shades of a real door clinging about it) was regarded in the profession as a mere variety 'gag'. A short-sighted view, as the 'Goons' have demonstrated with their own highly stylized use of real sound; they have evolved a kind of shorthand which, in its compression and distortion of actuality, achieves a more penetrating and evocative effect than the most detailed realism could hope for—just as the U.P.A. cartoon, with a few brief brushstrokes, hit straight and true on the viewer's imagination. *The Disagreeable Oyster*, situated apparently in the real world, demanded just this extreme stylization of handling. In one sequence the ill-fated Mervyn Bundy, away from home for the first time in twenty-two years, arrives at the Midlands factory in search of Mr. Rigg.

(*Fade in heavy industry: trip hammers, giant presses, blast furnaces, etc.*)

1. DOORMAN: Wa-wa? (What do you want?)

World Radio History

2. BUNDY: I'm the representative of Craddock's Calculators and I've just come down from London to see Mr. Rigg.
3. DOORMAN: Wa-wa?
4. BUNDY: (*louder*) Craddock's Calculators. I've come to see Mr. Rigg.
5. DOORMAN: Wa-wa?
6. BUNDY: Mr. Rigg! I want Mr. Rigg!
7. DOORMAN: Ah, Mr. Rigg.
(*A series of voices, some on Tannoy, some shouting, call out 'Mr. Rigg, Mr. Rigg.' At their peak they are cut off.* RIGG *speaks, quiet and truculent.*)
8. RIGG: I'm Rigg, yes?
9. BUNDY: I'm from Craddock's Calculators.
10. RIGG: Where?
11. BUNDY: Craddock's Calculators, London.
12. RIGG: Can't hear a word, come in here.
(*Door shuts.*)

It would have been possible—and pointless—to evolve a thoroughly realistic treatment of this sequence. Pointless because the passage insists on ruthless stylization for its comic effect. In the sound sequence, therefore, we stated blatantly our non-realistic purpose: the factory noises were not unlike factory noises, nor were they identifiable—rather a nightmare babel of eccentric sound. This 'background' was in fact held in the foreground from speeches 1 to 5, so that the dialogue was almost inaudible until Bundy, with his crescendo on speech 6, silenced them abruptly. In the silence the doorman quietly delivered 7, and there followed a seemingly endless succession of voices of various kinds, ultimately distorted and magnified into a kind of scream. Cut; and in the silence speech 8. Violent factory noise cutting in to mask Bundy's speech 9, ending as he ends. In the silence, quietly, speech 10. Violent factory noise over 11, cutting as it ends. Again in silence, speech 12.

All the sound effects in *The Disagreeable Oyster* were stylized in this way:

BUNDY: A loaf, a wrapped loaf, I must get one for Alice.
(*Cash register rings.*)
Thank you very much.

World Radio History

If Bundy was in a hurry, the sound of his feet accelerated to a prodigious pace; when, slightly intoxicated, he sought for refuge,

BUNDY: One three and ten

a haze of harmony and exaggerated vibrato loomed up, a quintessential cinema organ. Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* made somewhat different demands. The highly individual blend of realism and poetic vision in the text necessitated a corresponding feeling in the treatment of the actual sounds. Strict realism would have been crude, complete stylization pretentious. It soon became clear that a double technique was the probable solution. The sounds which gradually impinged on the consciousness of the presumably alcoholic heroine must begin as fantasy and resolve into some form of perceptible reality; thus the donkey-and-cart, the bicycle, the car, which approach her on the road, were initially distorted and only gradually emerged into a recognizable sound. On the other hand, the footsteps of Mr. and Mrs. Rooney, their real journey, must gradually attract poetic and symbolic overtones, so that eventually even the wind and rain which beat against them are almost musical in conception.

(c) *Musique Concrète and Radiophonic Effects*

It is a short step, but a decisive one, from the stylized handling of real sound to the creation of new sound. The B.B.C.'s official label for created sounds is 'radiophonic effects' by which we mean something very near to what the French have described as *musique concrète*. Concrete music—as opposed to what we conventionally understand by music, i.e. abstract music—does not necessarily come out of musical instruments and it cannot yet be adequately notated. In fact it is sheer sound, or patterns of sound, manufactured by technical processes. Its basis is an unlimited supply of magnetic tape, a recording machine, a razor blade with which to cut the tape at precise points, and something which will join the pieces together again in whatever sequence is required. The principle is simple: take a sound—any sound—record it, and then change its nature by a multiplicity

World Radio History

of operations. Record it at different speeds, play it backwards, add it to itself over and over again, subject it to the influence of frequency filters, acoustic variations, combine one segment of magnetic tape with another, unrelated, segment; by these means, among others, we can create sounds which have never been heard before and which have a unique and indefinable quality of their own. By a lengthy technical process we can compose a vast and subtle harmonic pattern using only one basic sound—say, the noise of a pin dropping.

Some musicians believe that the technique is a valuable adjunct to conventional musical devices; some are sceptical, more particularly as the resultant sound is often only remotely musical and is in no way dependent on the interpretative ability of an individual performer. Whether or not *musique concrête* can become an art form in itself is not our present concern, although many practitioners in Europe believe that it can. Our immediate interest is in its possible application to Sound Radio, the possibility of enriching the sound complex with a new colour, a new dimension. Properly used, radiophonic effects have no near relationship with any existing sound, they are free of irrelevant associations, they have an emotional life of their own; they can be a new and unique strand in the radio texture—and in that of Television, theatre, cinema. All these media have opened their eyes to the possibilities. It is some years now since *Forbidden Planet*, a not unconventional space-fiction film, assaulted the ears of its audience with a highly unconventional and exciting 'radiophonic' score; in the theatre, Peter Brook, among others, has applied identical techniques to, of all writers, Shakespeare; more recently, Television has also made tentative steps in applying the method to some of its more imaginative productions. In radio, Pierre Schaeffer has been the guiding light; already at the end of the Second World War he was at work in the Studio d'Essai in Paris, investigating and perfecting Sound techniques which we are only now beginning to value, and it was he who proposed the name *musique concrète* to describe his experiments manipulating recorded sound: '*concrète*', because it is produced from concrete material, whereas traditional music is con-

World Radio History

ceived in the abstract, noted down, and then made 'concrete' by the instruments which play it. In Britain, various tentative experiments have been made in the past few years, notably by composers such as Humphrey Searle and Roberto Gerhard and producers such as Douglas Cleverdon and John Gibson. Our first positive attempt to compose a radio programme specifically designed to exploit these new sounds and entirely dependent on them for effect was made by Frederick Bradnum in *Private Dreams and Public Nightmares.* It begins:

BASIC EFFECTS		DIALOGUE
A contrapuntal rhythm.	1ST VOICE:	Round and round Like a wind from the ground Deep and deep A world turns in sleep.
A comet-like shriek. Acoustic change. Pulsating beat. Descending scale.	2ND VOICE:	I fall through nothing, vast, empty spaces. Darkness and the pulse of my life bound, Intertwined with the pulse of the dark world.
A developed sound like a cry.		Still falling, falling, But slower now. . . .

in fact, an inextricable conception of word and special sound and an exploratory flight into a new territory of sound. The words were designed to evoke, and be reinforced by, new sounds, sounds never heard before, and to be themselves subjected to technical processes which would achieve emotional effects (with the human voice as basis) quite different from anything the actor can do on his own; the programme was to be put together inch by inch, not as a stunt, but to demonstrate the possibility of groping towards a fresh co-ordination of aural elements.

Perhaps I should distinguish, briefly, between radiophonic and electronic sound, since they have often been confused. Electronic music deals exclusively with sounds of electronic origin; the basic sound is produced by an oscillator or sound-

World Radio History

generator and recorded on magnetic tape; it is then manipulated. It is possible to notate electronic music, although the score bears no resemblance to a conventional musical score, but rather to a geometrical diagram.

THE RAW MATERIALS: SILENCE

The final ingredient in the creation of the radio illusion is silence. There is a not unnatural fallacy abroad that the air is there to be filled; a pause is a lapse is a chunk of dead air is defeat; words and sounds must bombard the ear without cease. And it is true that silence can simply be dead air (not that that is a bad thing outside the framework of a particular programme) that is, simply *silence*. It is the words on either side which make —or fail to make—it vibrate. In fact, silence as a calculated device is one of the most potent imaginative stimuli; prepared for correctly, broken at the right moment, in the right context, it can be more expressive than words; it can echo with expectancy, atmosphere, suspense, emotional overtones, visual subtleties. For example, it is perfectly possible to perform the opening of Ugo Betti's *The Burnt Flower-bed* as a rapid dialogue with no pauses:

TOMASCO *enters.*

1. GIOVANNI: Well, well. I never expected an actual visit.
2. TOMASCO: We wrote to you. More than once.
3. GIOVANNI: Yes, but . . . fancy *you*, coming all the way up here.
4. TOMASCO: It had to be me. I had to talk to you.
5. GIOVANNI: It must be important then. Sit down.
6. TOMASCO: You look very young still. Are you keeping well?
7. GIOVANNI: Yes.
8. TOMASCO: And what have you been doing all these years? You've been very sparing with your news.
9. GIOVANNI: Resting. On holiday.

(*Translated by Henry Reed*)

A pleasant reunion between two old acquaintances, possibly. Now insert pauses, *long* pauses, between almost every interchange. Pause after 'well, well,' in 1. Longer pause after 1. Pause

World Radio History

after the first sentence of 2. Long pause after the first sentence of 4. Long pause before 5. And after 5. Pause before 7. And before 8. Long, long pause before 9. Suddenly we are in the middle of a duel without weapons, in the presence of a highly-charged past which affects every word that is spoken. The words themselves are mere formalities; the real feeling, the real passion of the scene, is precisely in what is not said. The play we are about to hear is not simple social badinage; the two characters are deeply involved, they distrust each other profoundly, they are sparring for position. And their silences are dictated by the sharpness of their feelings.

During silence, things happen invisibly, in the minds of the players and in our imagination; we are drawn through the shimmer of words into a world in which there is another level of existence apart from what is merely *said*. In fact, silence adds a dimension; sound comes from it, sound returns to it, words have their being surrounded by it, it is the cloth on which the pattern is woven. And in Sound Radio silence is different again from silence in the visual media, where the only true silence occurs when all movement too is stilled. In theatre and cinema silence never works alone on the imagination; it must always be filled visually, by the 'noise' of colour or movement, or lack of repose in the spectator's own eye, which is active at the expense of the inner vision. In radio, silence like a magnet draws us deep into the heart of the experience. Samuel Beckett understands this; in *All That Fall*, after one of the many halts on the journey home:

(*They move on. Wind and rain. Dragging feet, etc. They halt. Pause.*)

MRS. ROONEY: Do you want some dung?

(*Silence. They move on. Wind and rain, etc.*)

One can hardly imagine a more effective way of saying more by saying less. Nothing is more effective in radio than a machine-gun rattle of dialogue when the characters concerned cannot contain their thoughts, nothing more irritating than the prompt pick-up of a cue when the character involved could not possibly

World Radio History

arrive at the point of self-expression without prolonged reflection. Silence, in radio, can take the place of an involved physical movement in the visual media—the pacing up and down, the toying with a cigarette-lighter before the crucial question is answered, in fact, the psychological time-lapse necessary in order for the character to become vocal. Or it can express what is inexpressible in visual terms:

SURGEON: Let me see the eye.
Now, John, the hypodermic, please.
I am going to give
The ganglion an injection of cocaine . . .
You'll feel just a prick from the needle:
You understand that?
The knife itself won't hurt you.
John: watch closely.
PATIENT: What's this that glitters?
A'hh!
What in you sees
Something—someone—not you.
(R. C. SCRIVEN: *A Single Taper*)

Or it can be used, as in music, as an element in a time-composition, to underline the inner rhythm, to emphasize the poetic shape.

And, of course, silence comes in all sizes, and rarely will its actual length coincide with its apparent length. The actual length will be decided by considerations of emotion, rhythm, pattern; the apparent length will depend on the extent to which the listener is impelled to fill it with colour, movement, feeling. The object of the aural design will be to stimulate the listener to create his own space-time conception, regardless of the actual dimensions of the physical performance in the real world; silence is one ingredient in this design which can be interpreted in an infinity of ways. The only guidance lies in those factors which are not silent: they can steer, though they cannot determine. Indeed, it is in silence that the listener is at his most creative; if he does not depend on visual stimuli it is at these moments of pause that he will evolve, out of the creative act and

World Radio History

his own experience and potential, the most compelling moments of insight and realization.

The raw materials of radio may be used in a variety of ways, in isolation or mixed together and synthesized; their possible permutations are infinite. However, the creative mind must always be fresh and searching in its approach. Since the raw materials themselves are few in number and the focus on them close, formulae are quickly recognizable; the combination of, say, a discord of music and a scream may be effective once (as in *The Masque of Falsehood*, when Truth loses her eyes); repeat it, and its impact is diminished, it becomes conventional, it may soon be put into the library of stock sounds. Nothing is more stereotyped than a burst of thunder at a dramatic moment—as dismal as the first act of a play in which the servants talk about their masters; relate it in an original way to the total texture—perhaps as a comic, rather than 'dramatic' ingredient—and it may be exciting. But whatever the combinations of speech, sound, and silence, the most powerful imaginative effect is always created by a single note, singing alone and purely; the *mélange* has its part to play, but in the end the purest sound is also the most persuasive. In practice, this means that we must preserve the most delicate balance between all the elements, so that each can fulfil its purpose, like each note in a musical score. The opening passage of Barbara Bray's version of Walter de la Mare's *The Return* is illuminating. The effect we wish to produce is a combination of repose and underlying mystery; the central figure, Lawford, still weak after a serious illness, wanders quietly round the country churchyard, idly inspecting the gravestones. The radio version states the scene in terms of a soliloquizing voice, music, and a simple effects complex—footsteps, church bell, birds. We hear the birds singing; measured footsteps approach; at last they stop, and Lawford reads to himself an inscription:

'Stranger, a moment pause, and stay;
In this dim chamber hidden away
Lies one who once held life as dear

World Radio History

As now he finds his slumbers here:
Pray, then, the Judgment but increase
His deep, his everlasting peace.'

His intonation changes, becomes, if anything, more intimate, as he speculates:

... But then, how do you *know* you lie at peace? ...
What on earth does it all mean?

After a moment, his footsteps move slowly away; they halt; and again he reads an inscription, this time in a longer perspective, no longer close to us. The church clock strikes, reminding him that it is time to go home, the footsteps approach us once more, and the music is delicately superimposed on them—strange, mysterious. The footsteps stop, and Lawford mutters, close in our ear:

'Here lie the bones of one, Nicholas Sabathier, a
Stranger to this Parish, who fell by his own hand
on the eve of St. Michael and All Angels, 1739.'

There is a sudden discord, which vibrates for a moment then disappears, as Lawford speculates on this new inscription.

The mixture seems a simple one. In practice, the various ingredients must be blended with the utmost precision, the rhythms and timbres of speech, sound, music, must be balanced and complementary, if the sequence is to have its proper emotional effect. A similar instance occurs when Lawford arrives home; again, the ingredients are simple in the extreme, their balance finely adjusted; again their emotional impact is direct and potent.

ADA: Shall I come up and light the lamp for you, sir?
LAWFORD: No, don't bother. I'll manage with the candles on the dressing-table.
(*Door shuts.*)
(LAWFORD *begins to whistle cheerfully.*)
(*Match struck.*)
(*Whistling stops.*)
(*Music begins.*)

World Radio History

(*in a whisper*) But my God! . . .
(*Music.*)
Whose face is that in the mirror? . . . Who is it? . . .
Who am I? Who am I? . . .

I need hardly say that without Elizabeth Poston's music, Eric Portman's voice, and the calculated rhythm of the scene as a whole, it is almost impossible to convey any impression of its vividness and horror when performed. Yet its component parts are of the simplest.

The radio craftsman has not the apparent range of resources available in other media. What he has is an artistic instrument of great delicacy and penetration, capable of expressing a tremendous variety of fine shades and nuances; every whisper, every half-formed note, every heartbeat, can become part of the artistic communication, provided the total pattern is as balanced as selective, and as precise as a piece of music.

THE SYNTHESIS

In his essay *On Dramatic Method*, Granville Barker wrote: 'Every artist feels after form and fine proportion, if for no other reason than that they make for clarity of expression . . . it is a question of harmony mainly, of just proportions, significant emphasis, congruities and arresting contrasts, of an ultimate integrity.'

In Sound Radio, as we have seen, the raw materials are strictly limited, although within that limitation they are capable of communicating subtle and varied patterns, emotions and ideas. To achieve the radio 'integrity' they must be blended into an artistic unity. There are no immutable rules governing this transformation, and I should not envy any new-world Aristotle who tried to extract rules from current practice. There is one simple and vital fact governing radio form, which I have already indicated: the radio act comes out of silence, vibrates in the void and in the mind, and returns to silence, like music. To be more dogmatic would be rash and misleading, because within the

World Radio History

basic limitation each piece of radio-writing must create its own terms and its own form; it may or may not conform to any precedent. Yet, because of the conditions governing its existence, structure is of prime importance to radio, as it is to music; whatever the shape of the radio programme, it *must have shape.* No one moment can be captured or held by the listener; each must be a precisely planned ingredient in the total structure, which can only succeed if, aside from whatever meaning it communicates, it forms a full and satisfying aural pattern.

It is a long time since the Aristotelian definition of dramatic form was held to have universal validity in the theatre; we have recognized that it was a systematization of *one kind* of drama, an attempt to notate the aesthetic of a rich and exuberant art, as observed and practised at a certain moment in time. A stage play which observes the Unities is not necessarily thereby a good stage play; nor is one which ignores them. Indeed, all attempts to formulate the method of good play-writing or film-making or radio-creation must come to grief, because it is impossible—except on the most superficial level—to cabin and confine such plastic and incalculable art-forms. The three-act division, still regarded as integral in certain quarters, is after all a mere vestige and of purely practical significance in the modern theatre; in fact, it is contemporary commercial considerations (concerning bar profits, cups of tea, ice-cream, etc.) which, stemming initially from an attempt at artistic systematization, have stood in the way of a real exploration by young dramatists of new forms and modes. Not that either discipline or limitation is necessarily negative; to the artist it should be a positive stimulus, though he will break the rules when he must. The limitations which radio in this country imposes on serious writers are still for the most part, and fortunately, limitations which stem from the nature of the medium, not from commercial considerations—that is to say, they are limitations which are artistically acceptable. Within them there is a limitless range. *Form* is the way in which a writer discovers that he can say what he wishes to say. Not that this implies that he simply sits down and writes as the mood takes him.

World Radio History

'A song by Shakespeare or Verlaine, which seems so free and living and as remote from any conscious purpose as rain that falls in a garden or the lights of evening, is discovered to be the rhythmic speech of an emotion otherwise incommunicable, at least so fitly.' (James Joyce; quoted in Herbert Gorman's *James Joyce*.)

In fact, form is the highly conscious mobilization of elements which may in themselves be unconscious in origin; it stems from the sense that whatever one wishes to express is insufficient in itself, that it must find its own inevitable pattern. Sound Radio has, of course, many *forms*, as many as exist in music: sonata, fugue, concerto, theme and variations, impromptu, nocturne, bagatelle, what you will. If the old forms do not fit, the writer may invent new ones. He may be satisfied with conventional theatrical 'form', i.e. fairly substantial scenes confined within a limited space; he may even find the three-act form suitable for what he wishes to express, rather as Robert Bolt did in *The Last of the Wine*; he may need the flexibility of film, an intricate pattern of short scenes, each with its own vividness but meaningless except in relation to the whole; an interior monologue, with or without the heightening of other sounds and voices, may serve his needs; he may wish to create an evocation of mood or atmosphere, with no dramatic development of any kind; he may simply wish to tell a story. His canvas may be as vast as was Goethe's in *Faust*, embracing all experience and using any and every technique, or as concentrated as Sartre's in *Huis Clos*; his form will be the result of his mobilization of the simple elements of sound in the service of a subtle experience: the balance of one scene against another, line against line, rhythm against rhythm, each element contributing its own inevitability and strength to the total structure. Whatever individual *forms* the artist's imagination may postulate, his work cannot give real satisfaction unless he is alive to total *form*. Much radio writing that one hears seems to have left this out of account: plot, yes; characters, yes; amusing dialogue, beginning, middle and end—it is really not enough; we are left with the feeling of having existed on one level, and that a prosaic one.

World Radio History

However, it is unwise to consider form without relation to content, for experiment with techniques and styles is a barren occupation unless it connects ultimately with the expression of an individual and truthful vision. I trust we may avoid the sterile region of 'Art for Art's sake', where intellectual spiders spin their interminable webs. I hope it is true to say that in any artistic medium the only limitation on choice of theme is that medium's capacity for expressing it. This is, alas, not so true of artistic media which also have a function as mass means of entertainment; here there may be considerable restrictions on the artist's freedom of expression. Sound Radio is still a part of the entertainment industry, an industry whose main concern is not inevitably creative expression. However, in recent years economic pressure has helped to break the ice by showing that mass production of mediocre goods is only temporarily profitable, that in the long run quality pays dividends, that a large section of the public can come to know the best when it sees it, though the road may be long. In any case, Sound Radio has always been a privileged part of the entertainment industry in this country because of the fact that the B.B.C. is a public corporation. It has an obligation to serve the needs of its licence-holders, but it is by no means tied to the commercial demands of box-office; indeed it has an obligation to provide for minority as well as majority tastes, to act as a patron to the creative artist. In addition to discharging its broad responsibilities in the field of entertainment, information, education, it has a positive responsibility to represent the best of the world's artistic endeavour, and to try to call into being new works of interest and distinction. An *enlightened* patron; it does not have to adopt the sterile caution which may inhibit a theatrical manager unless he has a 'winner'. On the other hand, it cannot blithely cast public money in all directions, hoping vaguely for some return. Its attitude must be rather like that of a responsible publisher who knows that he must—and can—afford a certain number of 'prestige' books, and that he must chance his arm on new writers who, in his eyes, have genuine talent or promise, without expecting to make a profit out of them. And it has a degree of freedom to

World Radio History

experiment unthinkable at this time to any commercial manager; it can handle themes and subjects which, although they will interest sizeable minority groups, are anathema to the box-office mogul; it can faithfully interpret works which, in other media, might have to be watered-down or softened in order to be made 'acceptable to the masses'. In practice this freedom is generally used responsibly and enterprisingly, although the fact is rarely acknowledged because in the mass output of radio it is often difficult for the non-professional to know which programmes are likely to be rewarding—he must make a lucky dip, guided by such information as may be available, and he may frequently miss, simply through ignorance, an exciting piece of writing. It is hardly surprising that Sound Radio as a patron of the arts and of new creative expression should often be undervalued, regarded as 'old hat'. Yet one has only to consider the record. In the field of drama alone, the plays of Anouilh, Betti, Montherlant, had been performed on radio before anyone decided to 'chance' them in the English theatre; the work of writers such as Pirandello, Lorca, O'Casey, Schiller, Kleist, Lope de Vega, Ghelderode, Crommelynck, Hauptmann, Marlowe, seldom if ever performed in the theatre, appears constantly in broadcast programmes; writers of distinction such as Wyndham Lewis, Dylan Thomas, Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, James Hanley, have found that in radio there is a form of expression which on occasion can be more rewarding to their creative genius than any other; writers now celebrated in other media still maintain an allegiance to radio—Robert Bolt, John Mortimer, Paul Scott; and a host of gifted and original minds find that radio provides a special kind of outlet for their vision of the world—Giles Cooper, H. A. L. Craig, Henry Reed, James Forsyth—because it satisfies something in their imaginative make-up and offers a freedom of expression only rarely attainable elsewhere, first by the flexibility and fluidity of its form, second by the opportunity it affords of treating adult themes in an adult way.

All themes, all subjects, are at the disposal of the serious and sincere writer. What is more, however experimental or unpredictable his script, he stands a good chance of achieving per-

World Radio History

formance in Sound Radio, and in a world in which manuscripts gather dust, year after year, in one agent's or manager's office after another, that is no mean attraction. The only way in which a writer who writes to be performed can develop, learn, progress, is through performance. You do not develop a new school of dramatists simply by reading and criticizing their plays; performance—even—or particularly—if it is a failure, is essential. In spite of this attraction, it is natural that the writer should hesitate to confine himself to one medium; he must keep his eye on as wide a distribution as possible; he has to live. Yet if he writes for one medium with a conscious eye on another his work will amost inevitably suffer. There is no reason —and indeed it has often happened—why a successful radio script should not later be converted into film, stage play, television play, novel, and no one would blame a writer for hoping that this might happen to his own work, and frequently. Nevertheless, to aim at this target in the first conception can only lead to a compromise in form and a softening of content, an inartistic realization of the subject. A radio script written in this way can be effective enough when broadcast; it does not make any particular contribution to the art of radio writing.

The writer's curse nowadays is that he usually has to work with both hands at once. It is not enough to express what he wants to say in what he considers the most effective manner of saying it, he must also constantly ask himself: 'Will my agent be able to sell this?' 'Will the actor we have in mind agree to this climax or will he ask me to alter it in order to provide him with a more gratifying theatrical effect?' In fact, how best can he compromise between his own work and the formula which his advisers will consider a safe financial risk? There is the opposite danger—the temptation to dismiss the audience entirely—and dramatic writing cannot go quite as far as that if it is to have any chance of performance. Unfortunately the middle-of-the-road line does not make for good writing or lasting art. As I say, the problem is less acute in Sound Radio. It has often been said that the disadvantages of a public corporation may be an inclination towards caution and timidity in certain matters;

World Radio History

nevertheless, it is still easier for a writer who is true to himself to achieve performance in radio than it is in theatre or cinema. And, in spite of cynical smiles, the sheer financial inducement, though not negligible, is hardly of first importance.

It is often urged that Sound Radio is too ephemeral a medium to warrant the consideration of a serious writer. It is indeed ephemeral; sound comes out of the air, vanishes; most radio works get no more than two or three broadcasts at most; one has not the illusion of permanence provided by theatre or cinema, where the performance is repeated night after night; radio is more ephemeral in that you cannot attend the performance as and when you wish. This is not necessarily a permanent condition of radio, but simply a condition brought about by immediate demands and policies. Richard Hughes has suggested that any worth-while programme is worth broadcasting every night for at least a week; an admirable idea, in my opinion, not only because you can never tap more than a fraction of the potential audience at any one given moment (they have, one hopes, other interests) but because any programme of value demands a second hearing, just as a poem demands more than one reading.

Perhaps I digress too much over matters of rather general interest, but they have their importance. From a purely aesthetic standpoint this chapter-heading is probably misleading; questions of form and content are explored elsewhere in this book. The core of the matter—the point at which form and content collide—cannot be discussed in the abstract; in any art form there is a perpetual tension between the two: how to say what you want to say within the limitations of your medium, and how to modify or intensify the possibilities of your medium to accommodate what you have to say. This tension, reproduced to some extent in spectator, reader, or listener, is the dynamic force of any work of art. Of course it is possible to be excited by the vivid—or unvarnished—account of an actual experience, regardless of the way it is framed. The passion and immediacy of, say, a survivor's account of a shipwreck will arrest because of its directness; it may have no formal construction. And of

World Radio History

course we may be enchanted by simple form or forms—as often in the work of Paul Klee or Haydn—attractive new patterns which please us though we may detect no meaning in them, except possibly a mathematical one. The most rewarding artistic experience comes when the artist, concerned with both, achieves his synthesis, and in radio this postulates a proper balance between *sound*, the means of expression, and *meaning*, the inspiration itself. In *All That Fall*, Samuel Beckett took as his framework a perfectly conventional radio form—a journey; a walk to the railway station, with various encounters on the way, the walk back home. A journey exists very clearly in time, and radio, as we have seen, is a time-continuum, it cannot legitimately handle any purely static experience; on the other hand its movement must lead somewhere, even if it is only in a circle, for you cannot, any more than in music, put an arbitrary halt to the movement; the listener must *arrive* somewhere, or be left still moving, or at least on the way. The real meaning must be complemented and rounded off by the musical pattern. *All That Fall* achieved this double resolution in a remarkable way, and without any kind of arbitrary *finish*—indeed it is still going on. The statement of the actual events on Mrs. Rooney's journey, her own emotional responses and those of the people she meets, form a counterpoint with the journey itself, the increasingly musical and rhythmic pattern. *All That Fall* is almost a circle, but we are several feet further ahead at the end and the journey will spiral on. In *Without the Grail*, Giles Cooper treats of a journey which is a zigzag line; the line of action conflicts with the line of development in the leading character. The first scene ends:

HAZEL: And when you've found some girl whose face will look right behind those long green candles, I suppose you'll order yourself to fall in love with her.
INNES: What's love got to do with it. Love's a word. This is life.
HAZEL: Mine too.
INNES: I don't know about that. There's no point in worrying about other people's lives.

Ninety minutes later, in vastly different circumstances, Innes is saying:

World Radio History

INNES: Hell, you were ready to marry me a little while ago, and it wasn't because you thought I was a comrade.
LEILA: No, because for a moment I thought there was something else, that all my father's tales were true.
INNES: Love?
LEILA: A word, like all his other words. Now this is life. You taught me that.
INNES: I never said it, not to you.
LEILA: You didn't have to say it. There you were.

In *Under Milk Wood*, Dylan Thomas took as his frame a day in the village of Llareggub. A day and a village are a loose enough discipline; they exist temporally and spatially. Thomas's formal problem was to realize the experience of years within the framework of hours, the variety of the world within the limits of a village square.

Whatever the content of a radio programme, it must, if it is to be artistically satisfying, form a coherent pattern of sheer sound. It may be that a rhythmic substructure of sound will give form to a text which, in terms of words on the page, has no perceptible form at all, because the words are only one element. Indeed, the more experienced the radio writer, the less his genius will be apparent on the page; the business of the radio producer is to grasp the essential artistic function of sound patterns in relation to meaning and to ensure that not only the words are interpreted properly but that the whole work attains its proper musical shape and emphasis. Consider an early example, from Tyrone Guthrie's *Squirrel's Cage*:

ONE VOICE: All tickets ready, please.
ALL: Tickets, please.
THE ONE: She's late again.
ALL: Late again.
THE ONE: It simply means I'll have to travel on the 8.10.
ALL: Travel on the 8.10.
THE ONE: I do nothing but travel up and down on these suburban trains.
ALL: Suburban trains.
THE ONE: Up and down—up and down.
ALL: Up and down—up and down
Up and down—up and down

World Radio History

THE ONE: Do you mind if we have the window *open*?
ALL: Up and down—up and down
Up and down—up and down.
(*Chorus continues with gathering speed and volume, etc.*)

This is effective only in action. It is the expression of something which only has meaning in its mobilization of word and sound. Each moment is calculated in relation to another moment; a total edifice in which words on the page and words in the mind, sound and silence on the page, in the mind, in the ear, work together and against each other. How to do it successfully? Certainly not by reading a book.

World Radio History

PART TWO

The Participants

So far, I have dealt in fairly general terms with the nature and raw materials of the medium. Now I shall examine the more detailed technical and aesthetic problems which face the members of the team who work together to create the radio performance.

The writer is the key figure in imaginative radio, even more so than in the visual media, if only because there are fewer means of disguising any shortcomings in his work, and because he is in a more direct and personal relationship with his audience. He depends vitally, of course, on his performers, technicians, and producer, but his is the voice that speaks whilst they are his interpreters, and it is more difficult for executants to make bricks without straw in radio than in any other medium. This does not imply that, in practice, all radio producers treat the writer with the respect he deserves; only too many have found an outlet for their own egotism in reconceiving what the writer has written instead of interpreting it; only too many writers have ignored the creative contribution which producer and cast can make. But these are hazards in all fields. In radio, the writer knows that he has at least a fair chance of a production which will spare no pains in trying to do justice to his conception rather than distort it simply because what is written seems, on the face of it, commercially difficult. The writer's business is to make excessive demands of his interpreters. If they cannot meet these demands it is his bad luck; even so, there is a fair chance that something

World Radio History

of his intention will penetrate even an unsympathetic production.

We have seen that the radio writer speaks directly and personally to the individual listener; the clearer his utterance, the purer his expression, the sharper his impact. The conditions of the medium exact a refinement of technique which, in the theatre for instance, might be almost invisible. Broad, overemphatic strokes will sound merely crude; his intuition must be that of a poet, a musician. There are no rules for him to follow, and I should not wish to formulate any; all I can do is to investigate the possibilities which are open to the writer.

There are no mysteries, although practitioners in all media like to pretend that there are. The basic attribute of a radio writer is simple: that he should have ears to hear and something to say. He has simply to realize that every moment of a broadcast—be it sound or silence—has its own significance and is part of a pattern. He need not know in detail how various technical effects are achieved, but he must know what effect he wants to achieve, and he must know precisely. Ears to hear, something to say, and a dash of poetry in the soul—qualifications which most of us would lay claim to but which few of us could justify. If it were simply a question of communicating our individual vision in terms of dialogue it would be bad enough. But good dialogue is not necessarily the same as good radio dialogue; conversation is too diffuse to stand up to the magnifying-glass, theatrical dialogue has a different objective, film dialogue is more like incidental music. True, if you can write good dialogue of any kind—even novelistic dialogue, which has usually little contact with actual speech, unless handled by an Isherwood or a Henry Green—you have a fair start as a radio writer, provided you have no preconceived ideas. Equally, if you can invent a bedtime story for a sleepy child you are a potential Homer.

The radio writer's practical approach is rooted in the general conditions and possibilities outlined in the previous section. We must also look briefly at the technical apparatus and resources available to him. In the first place, the human voice is at his disposal—or human voices, in whatever combination or juxta-

World Radio History

position he may require, and of whatever quality. Individual voices, each with its own character and interpretative ability, have an enormous range of expressiveness; moreover, mechanical distortion can produce any vocal tone or timbre that you may wish. In *The Masque of Falsehood* there is a sequence in which the pressure of drought gradually drove the citizens of the town to distraction. A choral sequence consisting of individual reactions to the situation (treated in variously distorted acoustic terms) culminated in the climactic line:

I am not thirsty, I am dead.

To give the line full value, it was necessary to differentiate it acoustically from everything which had gone before; therefore we treated it in such a way that the higher frequencies of the actor's voice were removed. The result was a special quality of dryness and woolliness, as though the actor were speaking through layers of blankets—claustrophobic, parched. We obtained a reverse effect in *Private Dreams and Public Nightmares* by removing the bass frequencies from the voice: an increasingly shrill and hysterical effect.

I do not suggest that the actor in close focus needs technical assistance in order to be versatile and expressive; far from it—the subtlest effects are only attainable by the human voice, which is the subtlest instrument, played by the most sensitive interpreter. Yet it is rash to generalize. Many voices, uncharacterized by any strong personality, fall within a narrow range of frequencies and—due also to a certain standardization of *method* bred by dramatic (and merely educational) schools—bear a depressing resemblance to each other. If the radio writer wishes his characters to live, he would do well to anticipate his producer by thinking from the outset in terms of vocal orchestration; he will not only contrast his characters in personality but also in their mode of speech and vocal type. In his book, *Radio*, Rudolf Arnhem lays great stress on the possibilities of vocal deployment:

'The multiplicity of voices, harmonious and discordant, raucous and smooth, calm and restless, nasal and resonant, re-

World Radio History

pressed and open, piping and booming, serve to enrich the variety of the sound-images in the piece, not only making the characters distinguishable from each other, but also symbolizing acoustically the function and character of every member of the cast. . . .'

As a piece of music is conceived in terms of balance and inter-relation of instruments, each with its own special character, so a radio programme must be orchestrated for voices. There are dangers. It is easy to adopt a superficial formula—a 'big' voice is a big man, a thin voice is a thin man, etc.—but the most interesting effects will come from working against type, as, in reality, the voice of the man is usually untypical of his appearance. Some degree of off-centre casting will usually be more effective in radio than a quick and easy correspondence. This, of course, is largely the producer's business, but the radio writer will be well advised to have in his head a very clear *sound*; he will not write his words without relation to the kind of instrument which, ideally, will play them—indeed, the optimum tone and pitch of that instrument will have been an operative factor in the conception of each character. The hazards of casting are such that the ideal instrument may be unobtainable at the right time; this is an occupational risk, and in any case the principle of swings and roundabouts applies. As long as writer and producer work in the same direction and with the same concern for realizing the individual vision one may hope that all will be well. It is the easy way out, the line of least resistance, the script or production manufactured to formula or 'off the cuff' which leads to disaster or—worse—to dullness. It is simple enough to rely on the stock voice, the conventional musical effect; everybody does it all the time. The temporary disadvantage of 'off-beat' vocal characterization or casting is that it often provokes the response that 'he was miscast' among those who prefer to dwell on the surface of things. The risk is worth taking. The sure test of a radio writer is the intensity with which he feels his text as a sound of voices; we may similarly judge a radio producer by the harmonics which he throws off in his casting. My own tendency to oversimplify was driven

World Radio History

home to me powerfully when discussing the casting of *Small Island Moon* with the author, Errol John. I could gaily have cast this beautiful West Indian play to my own satisfaction—and no doubt to that of many listeners—simply on the basis of my own feeling about it and my acquaintance with a limited number of West Indian actors. Ten minutes' conversation with the author brought me back to an acute appreciation of my own ignorance. I had left out of account factors which vitally preoccupied him; fortified by my intuitive perception of 'dramatic values' I had ignored certain fundamentals—not least the variation of speech-rhythms and intonations which exist within what we conveniently assume to be a consistent and unified group of islands. My initial approach to the production could only have resulted in a distortion of the writer's intention. Closer to home the problem is clearer, though no simpler. In *The Ocean*, James Hanley makes the cleanest distinction between his characters; one is Irish, one a West-Countryman, one a Midlander, one a 'business-man'. This kind of regional distinction can be only artificial if it is used simply as a device; in Hanley's work it is integral and we do not question it. Whatever the method of differentiation, the moment it becomes apparent as technique it ceases to have any artistic compulsion. For the radio writer, therefore, the problem is not only one of orchestration but one of individual character; if he wishes to attain a clear-cut effect his puppets will be contrasted in every possible way. It is only too simple to write dialogue in which every character has the same stresses and speech-rhythms because each is a mouthpiece of the author (under a different name). It is hard work to express individuality in terms of individual modes of expression.

The radio writer has voices, and all possible modifications of voices, at his disposal. He has machinery which can mix and modulate these voices in whatever way he wishes, cutting violently from line to line, or fading imperceptibly from sentence to sentence. And he has the magical device of electro-magnetic tape-recording and editing, by which any sound can be transposed, modified, blended or linked with any other sound. Record the sound of a man breathing; reduce it in pitch by two octaves;

World Radio History

re-record it backwards, and you have an indescribable monster rising from the primeval slime. Interpolate, every five seconds, a *pizzicato* note on the violin, and the monster will hiccough. Intersperse it with a human voice singing a well-known tune backwards, but with the words in the right sequence, record the whole thing in reverse, and you get something rather reminiscent of the Missing Link. And so on. In his radio version of André Gide's *Prometheus Misbound*, George D. Painter used this kind of technical process to excellent comic effect. It was necessary, at certain stages in the action, to recapitulate a scene in miniature; the irresistible point was made by playing the scene at a faster speed each time—eventually so fast that it was only recognizable by its tune, not its meaning. There is no limit to the aural magic. Do you wish to have the voice of your leading character speaking close into the ear of the listener whilst the same voice engages in dialogue in the background? Simple. But a little sleight-of-hand goes a long way, and no useful artistic purpose can be served by exploiting the technical battery unless there is no simpler means of achieving the effect you want.

Simplicity, embracing subtlety, is after all the most difficult target in any medium. The quicksand of radio lies between its need for absolute clarity and its fascinating capacity for complexity. Victims succumb every day. Yet the simplest rule must remain the most important: nothing is more necessary in a 'blind' medium than a guiding hand; without understanding on the simplest level all the subtlety in the world is wasted. The listener is in the dark, literally; illuminated signs must be put up to help him find his way. Every new scene must be clearly located, every character identified, and—since nothing is more tedious than obvious 'planting'—the more discreetly the better. The verbal equivalent of the Elizabethan placard announcing 'the forest of Arden' will make its point impersonally, and it may be that its very coldness and formality may be a necessary component at certain key moments of a performance, cutting across the emotional texture. The Russian film directors have advanced similar arguments to justify, artistically, the use of captions in silent films; if their theories now ring somewhat hollow it is

World Radio History

because the cinema has gone far beyond its early limitations and perfected other, more satisfying, techniques. The placard and the caption remain valid devices only if they are inevitable in the context—as, for example, Brecht's use of captions in *Mother Courage* (and Adamov's use of government reports, newspaper paragraphs, etc., as an ironic comment on, and counterpoint to, the action in *Paolo Paoli*). In radio, the 'signposts' will be most vivid if they are simultaneously telling moments of character or plot, not just superimposed. This simple demand for clarity seems so obvious that even experienced writers can sometimes overlook it, so clear is the picture they wish to convey to their own mind's eye; they may forget to ask themselves whether the words they have used communicate an equal precision to the listener. The opening sequence of *The Drunken Sailor* read as follows when we took it into the studio:

(*Door opens briskly.*)

TOBY: (*distant, approaching*) Miss Clark says you're to wash the new china, Mary. (*No reply; fondly rebuking.*) Mary. You're——

MARY: Look, it's come right in. I could throw a stone on the deck.

TOBY: You couldn't. It's half a mile away.

MARY: (*lazily*) Oh . . . *What* kind of ship is it?

TOBY: I don't know. (*Calls.*) Mary says what kind of ship is it?

PAUL: (*distant*) It's a corvette.

It soon became apparent in rehearsal that although we were gradually building a coherent sound-picture the detail was blurred and confusing; Mary and Paul were simply voices with no existence in physical reality, and the relationship between ship and shore less precise than it should be because the lens at this end was out of focus. So Robert Bolt rewrote on the studio floor:

(*Fade in* PAUL *humming to himself 'The Drunken Sailor'. He is polishing harness: we hear the sound of this and the effort is apparent in his voice.*
Suddenly he breaks off.)

PAUL: Get off! (*He slaps his cheek.*) Get off! (*Calls.*) Hey, shut the window, Mary. You're letting the bees in.

World Radio History

MARY: (*close, dreamy*) I like bees . . .
(PAUL *snorts impatiently, then resumes his humming and polishing.*
Door opens.)
TOBY: (*distant, approaching*) Miss Clark says you're to wash the new china, Mary. . . .

This simple adjustment brought the scene to life; it established Paul and Mary immediately as real people in a real environment, set the heat of the day and the tempo of a leisurely country life on shore, and registered the 'Drunken Sailor' motif which is to become an important element, in a different context, later in the play. All in the space of a few words and some simple sound effects and all the better for being indirect. The same principle applies when moving from one scene to another. It is far more difficult in radio than in film to make a sharp cut between two different locations unless the transition is prepared for and covered by the dialogue. One may, for example, use the direct link (as in *The Dark Tower*):

SERGEANT: I recommend that you pay a call on Peter.
And his house is low; mind your head as you enter.
(*Transition.*)
PETER: That's right, sir; mind your head as you enter.

Alternatively, the link by contrast (as in *The Drunken Sailor*):

MARY: Like feathers . . .
Cut to:
BACON: Like bloody iron!

Or the punning sound effect:

MR X: Well, I only hope your brother breaks it to him gently.
(*Cut to;*
Crash of glass smashing on stone floor.)

Or a thousand other devices. Whatever the method—and of course it will vary according to mood, tempo and situation—the radio writer can afford the possibility of confusion only at the risk of weakening his dramatic impact, unless, that is, it is his intention deliberately to mystify, to put the listener in the dark.

The need for clarity is equally pressing at any point involving physical action. You may write what seems to be an effective

World Radio History

action sequence in terms of sound: 'A key is turned, the door opens, footsteps cross the hall, mount the stairs, pause on the landing; a gentle knock on the door, the door opens; there is a sudden pistol shot, the door slams, footsteps run downstairs, the front door slams.'

The sense of the action implied in this sequence is fairly clear on the page, if only because of the words 'front door', 'footsteps', 'stairs', 'pistol shot'. Translate it into sheer sound (and this sequence would be excessively difficult to translate) and the possibilities of confusion multiply out of all proportion. It is certain that the sound equivalent could not be as immediate as the words on the page, simply because there is always the *possibility* of ambiguity when dealing with sound alone, and a moment of doubt spoils the illusion. But this is incidental. One of the most grievous shortcomings of the microphone is that it cannot itself *move*. I do not mean that you cannot move it about; of course you can; your actor can stride round the studio with a microphone in his hand if he wishes, but the effect from your loudspeaker will be completely static. It is impossible in radio to give an accurate impression of people moving *with* the microphone, only towards it or away from it. One can try an elementary kind of back-projection, but it is rarely satisfying artistically. For example, at its simplest, the sense of movement in a motor-car is usually evoked by the sound of a car engine; yet if we are to sit with the passengers in the car and hear their dialogue we are subject to the same obvious lack of motion, since the microphone cannot move with a car any more than it can with an actor; our imagination must work overtime on the strength of the noise which indicates that the car is indeed travelling. At a slightly more complex level one may juggle with extraneous sounds which one might encounter passing by; if your characters are taking a country walk you may, in the course of their dialogue, move an odd cow, bird, river, bicycle bell, towards them and away from them, but here again the chances are that the total effect will be one of static characters with cows, birds etc., moving past them. Even footsteps don't really help, since they, too, will seem to be marking time. The opening sequence

World Radio History

of Lance Sieveking's adaptation of *A Passage to India* called for a busy sound picture of Dr. Aziz riding furiously on his bicycle. Alas, nothing is more difficult to represent in sound than a bicycle because—even if it has a flat tyre—it has no immediately distinctive sound, apart from its bell and nothing is more chillingly static than a bicycle bell if you are unable to see the wheels going round. In practice, we could not begin to accompany Aziz on his trip; let him ring his bell by all means, and swear at the pedestrians, but the entire sequence must be composed of short 'shots' of Aziz coming towards us and Aziz going away from us, and this, in turn, must be balanced by a constantly changing foreground. A detailed montage on these lines produced a total impression of movement *with* Aziz; put the microphone in the saddle and, simply because it will always be in the same relation to Aziz and his bicycle and, indeed, to us—the result would be as lifeless as a bad stage set, a barrier which the audience has to jump before it can get to grips with the play. It follows that, in spite of its remarkable fluidity and range in the realm of imagination, radio cannot accommodate convincingly long realistic scenes of people walking together. Abjure realism and it is quite another matter:

HARE: What is our next address?

LITTLE BIT OF PAPER: Follow *me*. Follow *me*!

HARE: What's that? The voice of an oracle?

LITTLE BIT OF PAPER: No, no, no, just a little bit of paper blown by the wind through the gutters of London.

(*Music to get them moving.*)

All who are anxious to find the truth must follow me, follow me, follow me quickly, for I am on my way to the home of Truth—through Piccadilly Circus, don't look round—past the National Gallery, don't go in—and along the Strand——

HARE: Along the Strand——

LITTLE BIT OF PAPER: And here we are—in Fleet Street.

(*Music ends. Here they are.*)

(Louis MacNeice: *Salute to All Fools*)

World Radio History

Complex physical movement *on the spot* is just as difficult to manage realistically. For instance, one can, by a highly refined selection of detail, convey a shorthand glimpse of a fight, though the utmost precision of detail is necessary to produce the effect of anything other than a scuffle with percussively dramatic moments. The drama of movement is visual; the dramatic effectiveness of a punch on the jaw lies not in the sound but in the sound as the climax of a silent, arresting movement.

The combination of unique imaginative flexibility with the sternest practical limitations is perhaps as stimulating an influence on the creative writer as one could wish for; it can also be a treacherous one. The fact that you can go round the world in thirty minutes without any protest from cameramen, scene designers, electricians, or backers, is a positive danger which leads quickly to the pitfall of easy writing. Technical experimentation is deliciously attractive, but in itself, without subject, without meaning, it is sterile. There is no point in going from the Equator to the North Pole in three seconds unless something interesting and relevant is going to happen when you get there. There is also no point in ignoring the fact that a simple tin-opener may be a vital part of your equipment on this supersonic journey. The temptation which radio offers above all others is utter disregard of simple structure and form, the temptation to 'write as it comes', since no holds are barred. Yet if that unseizable and indefinable thing, a radio play, is to have any duration beyond its actual length, it must also be accurately riveted. Every scene, however short, must have its own dramatic shape, its 'point' and its curtain, in fact it must be a miniature of the whole. A scene which is simply a few lines of functional dialogue may seem to the writer to move his story on a few paces but it will not add anything to his complete vision—in fact it may stop the programme dead, suspended in mid-air, with no future and no past.

The radio writer cannot afford waste. He has not to make concessions in order to allow his audience to settle in their seats and unwrap their chocolates, he is expected to intrigue them from the moment he begins to speak. His sense of drama or poetry or

World Radio History

music must operate immediately. It is easy enough to conceive a 'shock' opening in the work of suspense or terror, but every radio script must begin by creating some kind of anticipation, by posing some sort of question. The writer must at least imply some inner tension, which is ultimately to be resolved, if he wishes to involve the listener. It may be through situation, character, atmosphere, or shock tactics, although 'stunt' openings for the sake of it are liable to fall flat; whatever the method, the initial tension must come from the heart of the programme and the first sounds we hear should seem pre-ordained and inevitable—an impression which should subsequently be confirmed and consolidated. The radio version of James Hanley's *The Ocean* begins with a radiophonic effect, an almost musical rocking sound, strange, disturbing, mysterious. Over it, a voice —not a human voice quite—whispers intimately into our ear:

THE VOICE: Nearly dawn. Nearly day. Clear sky.
Silent water. Sky-y-y. . . . Water . . .

It echoes away, indeed it sounds as though it might be two or more voices. But suddenly the whole illusion is brutally cut away. Silence, and:

CURTAIN: (*sharply*) Anybody hear me?

This is a real voice all right, but it provokes only silence. Then, imperceptibly, we hear the sound of water lapping quietly against the boat:

CURTAIN: How many are you? Damn you, I can't see in the dark!
(MICHAELS, *some way away*, *groans weakly*.)

And we are into the play. The sound sequence is unexpected and intriguing in itself, the blend of realism and stylization is intrinsic to the piece as a whole, and all the ingredients used will be used again to interweave and mix, in dramatic juxtaposition, as the programme develops.

Assuming that the writer has succeeded in involving the listener and will maintain his interest by the tightness and drive of his text, what specific techniques does radio offer him for the

World Radio History

communication of his personal vision? The most obvious, and abused, device is that of the storyteller, commentator or narrator, who, himself either detached from or involved in the action, pushes the development forward and focuses it through his own personal state of mind. It is a device which is frequently criticized—and with justice—for such an obvious trick has been used too often as an easy answer: when it is difficult to achieve a real integration of scenes, the storyteller will come to the rescue; when it seems impossible to incorporate visual detail or ironical comment into the dialogue, send for a narrator; his is the most misused role in radio. Yet I never heard *Under Milk Wood* criticized for its use of narration—though its role here is gigantic—because Thomas knew how to use it: as an integral part of the script; not an intrusion, but an element which is always part of the total logic and whose poetic overtones constantly reveal fresh facets of the theme. Similarly, the verse narrative in D. G. Bridson's *The March of the '45* not only adds a dimension, but is the keystone of the work's epic conception; the personalized narrative in Peter Watts's version of *The Small Back Room* enables us to view the action from the crucial viewpoint, the hero's own consciousness; the multiple-narration technique in Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin's *Look Back to Lytteltoun* is the kaleidoscope in which we see the shifting patterns of an era; the detached narrative of *The Great Gatsby* throws highlights of irony and poetry across the hysterical surface of the story; the impeccable formalism of the narrative framework in E. J. King Bull's version of *The Repair of Heaven* gives space and symmetry to the antique legend. The issue has been clouded largely because narrative is also part of a novelist's equipment; critics have accepted dramatic dialogue (which, after all, is inherited from the theatre) as a legitimate ingredient of creative radio, but have often jibbed at narration. Possibly because, although the principles of composition are different, radio narration does often consist of badly digested novel narrative; it is not enough to 'lift' narrative passages from a novel, nor can they be effectively composed without reference to the conditions of the medium. And yet narration, properly used, is the most direct way of cut-

World Radio History

ting through irrelevant formal associations, the keenest burning glass for a writer's vision. It may, in theory, seem an artificial device—as for instance in the radio version of *The Ocean*, where I used a dehumanized voice whispering to and for each character in turn, reviewing the action in terms of different responses to it —but in practice it enables us to penetrate to the heart of a character and to underline symbolical and poetic key-moments to an extent and with a subtlety which would otherwise be impossible.

Close to narration, indeed fundamentally indistinguishable from it, is the technique of soliloquy. By which I don't mean writing 'thinks' in brackets; once soliloquy has the artificial air of an 'aside' in Victorian melodrama it becomes ineffective, as it is when used simply for convenience. The Shakespearian soliloquies are models, if only because they are emotionally and rhythmically integrated with the dramatic pattern of the play. This must always be the aim. When making my radio version of Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*, it soon became clear that I should have to use some form of soliloquy if the listener was to be brought to a full understanding of Gulley Jimson; the character was too complex to yield to one-dimensional treatment. To have him telling the story from his own viewpoint would have been false; on the other hand, such a man would quite naturally be in the habit of talking to himself, and to anyone who cared to eavesdrop. How, then, to establish the convention? Best to go straight for it. The radio script begins:

GULLEY: Ha! It's enough to make an undertaker smile. Here am I, Gulley Jimson, whose pictures have been bought by the nation or sold by millionaires for hundreds of pounds——

BUTLER: (*at the other end of telephone*) Mr. Hickson's residence. (*Button A pressed.*)

GULLEY: (*in a high reedy voice*) Er—hullo. Is Mr. Hickson there?

BUTLER: Who shall I say?

GULLEY: (*as before*) The President of the Royal Academy.

BUTLER: Certainly, sir. Hold the line.

GULLEY: (*soliloquizing again*) No, I mustn't exaggerate. The nation has only got one of my pictures, and only one millionaire has ever bought my stuff.

World Radio History

Once established, the convention must be tied in as closely as possible to the realistic action. In a later scene, Gulley and Miss Coker are waiting on Sara's doorstep:

COKER: Where did you pick her up anyway? Is there a place for models or did you take her off the street?
GULLEY: She wasn't a model and I didn't pick her up. She was a married woman and she picked me up. When I went to paint her husband.
SARA: (*as a young girl; distant, echoing*) Oh, Mr. Jimson, I do love art.
GULLEY: (*to himself*) Ha! Didn't know a picture from a bath bun.
SARA: (*as before*) Oh, Mr. Jimson, how wonderful to be able to paint like that.
GULLEY: (*to himself*) She believed in butter, Sara did.
COKER: (*aloud*) It turns my liver.
GULLEY: (*coming back to earth; aloud*) Eh? Oh, that was thirty years ago. (*To himself.*) Umm . . . thirty years . . .
SARA: (*as before*) Oh, Mr. Jimson, and I'm so fond of my husband. He's such a true, good man.

Here we use soliloquy for double effect; first, as a focus, second for comic juxtaposition; we shall need it later in the script to investigate the complexities of Gulley's private world, a world which can only be investigated in private. James Hanley makes the point in the title of his radio piece, *I Talk to Myself*; this monologue with interpolations draws us deep into the mind and heart of a solitary man.

In *The Disagreeable Oyster*, Giles Cooper gives an extra twist. He simply splits his main character into two selves, call them separate parts of his consciousness; at any given moment, Bundy is what Bundy mi is not, and vice versa; each side of the personality is vocal and reacts to and on the other. The possibilities of machine-gun interpretation of motive or lack of motive which this method provides are fascinating. In the performance, the two aspects of Bundy were played by two actors (Hamilton Dyce and John Graham) working brilliantly together, matching their intonation and personality, sounding always as though they might be one and the same actor, yet always subtly individual. Bundy, away from home and his wife, Alice, for the

World Radio History

first time in twenty-two years, goes to the cinema and discovers that he has seen the cartoon. Yet in spite of himself he becomes involved, partly as a defensive manœuvre *against* himself; the other aspect of his personality gets crosser and crosser.

BUNDY: Waste of time.
BUNDY MI: My only evening.
BUNDY: Yes, he hits the bee with a swatter.
BUNDY MI: The only evening I shall ever have.
BUNDY: And the bee sits on his tail.
BUNDY MI: I could be drinking.
BUNDY: Now he hits the bee with a mallet.
BUNDY MI: Making friends.
BUNDY: And hurts himself.
BUNDY MI: Having fun.
BUNDY: He brings up a trip-hammer.
BUNDY MI: Seeing life.
BUNDY: But it falls on his own head. Squish!
BUNDY MI: Having experiences.
BUNDY: And he hurts himself.
BUNDY MI: For when I'm old.
BUNDY: Then he swallows the bee.
BUNDY MI: When there are no more evenings.
BUNDY: And he flies round buzzing till the bee comes out of his beak, then he drops.
BUNDY MI: No more pubs.
BUNDY: And he hurts himself.
BUNDY MI: No more women.
BUNDY: And he hurts himself.
BUNDY MI: Women!
BUNDY: And he hurts himself.
BUNDY MI: Women!!
BUNDY: Yes, women. (*Pause, then hesitantly.*) Alice.
BUNDY MI: WOMEN!!
BUNDY: Excuse me, excuse me, thank you, excuse me, thank you. . . . (*Hastily making his way out, along the row.*)

In *Under the Loofah Tree*, Cooper takes another step on his imaginative journey through the radio jungle. Again the focus is on a solitary middle-class man. In the isolation of a middle-class bathroom, indeed of a middle-class bath, he concentrates a pungent assessment of certain contemporary beliefs and ideals, a devastating, yet curiously touching, analysis of a certain kind

World Radio History

of human being. I analyse *Under the Loofah Tree* in some detail in a later chapter; at this stage, I simply wish to underline it as an example of the way in which radio can invade the privacy of human thought and feeling, laying bare the most secret recesses of the personality with a word.

In all Cooper's work the use of rhythms and rhythmic contrasts is interesting and provocative. The trouble about his kind of writing is that it is easily ignored or dismissed, if only because we tend to associate the most highly refined simplicity with superficiality. Write a simple truth in five hundred lines of free verse and you will persuade a good many people that you are more profound than they, as the magician proves that he is cleverer by means of his intricate gestures and complexity of handkerchiefs. Strip your statement of every trace of superfluity, sum it up in one bleak word, and you may be accused of writing about nothing. Which implies that radio demands a poetic vision from the writer—not poetic in the literary sense, involving sophisticated elaboration and decoration, but in the true sense: the most intricate perception of idea, emotion, and imaginative vision, expressed in the sparest symbol. In his penetrating foreword, 'On Spoken and Written Poetry', to the collection of his own radio works, *The Christmas Child*, D. G. Bridson writes: '. . . the reading eye was prepared to read, re-read and re-read again—until the last fine shade of meaning surrendered to the assault. It was prepared cheerfully to accept the principle, amidst its pausings and puzzlings, that a poem was merely a collection of parts. Under its influence, poetry ceased to be an uninterrupted progression from a beginning to an end —in short, a significant pattern of sound. For the reading eye, the pattern was something to see on the printed page. Sound, on the other hand, had vanished into the silent depths of the reading mind.'

He goes on: 'Spoken poetry, if it is to succeed at all, will succeed by reason of three factors, all of which had been sadly neglected in the evolving of a written poetic style. Spoken poetry calls above all else for simplicity, an understanding of speech rhythms and the quality of immediacy.'

World Radio History

Bridson's own major concern has always been with speech-rhythms and with the extraordinarily subtle effects, invisible to the eye, which one obtains by cross-cutting speech-rhythm against metre. J. Maclaren Ross has demonstrated a similar pre-occupation in, of all fields, the popular serial: the counterpoint of colloquial dialogue with a strict, if imperceptible, beat. The resultant complex of rhythms may defy analysis at the time, but its impact is unmistakable: unchangeable and complete. The doggerel of *The Masque of Falsehood* is deceptive on the page; in performance it is electric and full of life:

2ND CITIZEN: *They* are responsible, *they* are to blame:
It must be them, it is always the same.
1ST CITIZEN: Let's make them suffer for their shame.
CHORUS: Chase them, catch them, take them,
Seize them, strike them, shake them,
Beat them, bruise them, break them.
5TH CITIZEN: But *where* are they?
And *who* are they?

In this example, the author's rhythmic intention is comparatively clear, and may be interpreted with some accuracy. It is rare to be able to ensure such precision; the author, after all, is not dealing with instruments of fixed capacity as a composer is, nor has he any system for notating marks of expression. He has to rely on the awareness and devotion of his interpreters, and these qualities are infinitely variable. His closest link is the producer (in radio the term embraces also the function of the director in film), who is at once his prime interpreter, his channel of communication with the executants, and the man who joins the sound-complex together and tries to ensure that each ingredient is properly balanced and weighted in relation to the whole. As in any medium, the radio producer's first responsibility is to understand—intellectually and emotionally—his author's intention; to immerse himself in the work in hand, and, however outrageous much of it may seem, to refuse to suggest rewriting, jettisoning, or ignoring anything until he is convinced from every point of view that the author has really misjudged the potential of his medium or of his executants. The

World Radio History

good producer would no more dream of altering a word simply because it seems difficult to *say* in the early stages of rehearsal than a conductor would alter a note of a score simply because the oboe was having some difficulty with it; in certain emergencies both might be unavoidable, but if the interpreter is to get near the heart of the matter he must assume that the writer has good reasons for choosing the words he has chosen; these reasons must be proved wrong before the words are replaced by others, which the writer may already have considered and discarded. I know that this seemingly self-evident principle cuts across most current practice in all dramatic media, and I believe firmly in the creative value of rehearsal, that is to say in the ability of executants to exert a positive influence on the way in which the writer expresses himself. Naturally, too, producer and actors are the writer's expert advisers on matters of technique and professional practice; as professional interpreters, they have experience of success and failure, they know what 'works'. At the same time, no medium, whatever its limitations, can remain alive unless you simultaneously recognize these limitations and defy them. The fact that a certain effect has always failed in the past does not mean that it cannot succeed in the future, in the right context and rightly used. The urge to avoid finding a new and proper expression for what seems an unnecessary piece of wilfulness on the part of the writer is insidious.

Unless the producer's attitude is fundamentally one of respect for the author, he will not serve him well, although he may achieve for himself a certain flashy and transient notoriety, born of imposing his own ideas regardless of intention or context. This is not to say that I underrate the creative value of the producer's critical approach to the text; provided it is constructive *in the terms in which the writer has conceived*, it is a fertile counter-stimulus. After all, in the field in which we work, the text which has been written in the study, in isolation, must ultimately be subjected to the scrutiny of thousands of people, must communicate with them. The producer is a kind of touchstone; if there is a point at which communication lapses, he may be

World Radio History

able to suggest the reason why. The temptation he has to resist above all others is to indulge his own frustrated creative ideas at the expense of the script; he will not do anyone any lasting service by overrating his omniscience.

Once he has absorbed his writer's intention, the producer's next responsibility is to ensure that this interpretation is conveyed to the actors, and to accept and integrate modifications or any enrichment which may suddenly and incalculably be generated by working contact with them. The producer is not the man who knows all the answers, on the contrary his make-up must include a large slice of humility; knowing that a dramatic text only comes to life when it is performed, he will also know that the actual process of rehearsal will throw up all kinds of unsuspected and exciting possibilities. His business is to select, from the new potentialities, those which are fitting—because many of them are not. The business of rehearsal and performance is plastic: executants working together, suddenly sharing their various degrees of understanding and assimilation of the artist's intention; they, like the writer, have worked out their attitude in private; they are flung together, with inevitable clashes and correspondences, insight and misunderstanding. The producer's own insight may be profound but, unless he is an automaton, he must give full value to this creative process whilst, at the same time, reconciling it to his own carefully studied assessment of what is to be done. That accomplished, his job is to co-ordinate this complicated human mechanism and to try to reach as true and rich a realization as can be fused from the combined creative elements: words, sound, silence; writer, actors, technicians. In fact, the fundamental business of the radio producer corresponds exactly to that in any other medium of dramatic expression; so does that of the actor. The distinction is in the degree of focus and projection. In the theatre, the actor must make his interpretation clear to a large body of spectators, most of them at a great distance from him. In order to do this, he has to discover means of broadening his performance so that, without sacrificing subtlety, he can be heard and seen from the back of the gallery. The technical triumph of our great

World Radio History

theatrical actors is that they achieve the maximum subtlety with the minimim loss of communication; even though they may have to reject what, ideally, would be the finest shades of tone and gesture in order to project their performance, they convey the required effect by a specific kind of stylization. In film, with the face magnified to almost intolerable proportions, the twitch of a muscle is a major event, the expression in the eyes may mean more than a dozen lines of dialogue. Clearly, acting under the magnifying glass or the microscope poses problems different from those involved in acting at the wrong end of a telescope: the performance of a theatre actor has little or nothing in common with normal human behaviour, except the meaning behind it, since every gesture is larger than life; the film actor, on the other hand, is even less explicit than he would be in life, and understates in order to appear normal.

This contradiction in techniques poses problems for both actor and producer, and explains why we often see and hear indifferent performances in all media. In a century of specialization it is difficult to switch quickly from one mode of expression to another, particularly when the vital business of interpretation is common to all. Radio acting, like film acting, is far closer to actual behaviour than to the conventional concept of 'acting'. We have all heard radio performances which have sounded false and perhaps we could not put a finger on the reason why; almost certainly it was because the artist was 'acting', using perfectly valid theatrical methods which, under the microphone, became only too patently 'methods' far removed from the truth of behaviour. Yet if all radio performances were adjusted precisely to the canons of real behaviour, a radio production would be dull indeed. Not only does art enter into it, it is all art; it is only the illusion of reality, and the 'behaviour' is a calculated act, conceived within the terms of reference of the work as a whole. The fact that an actor does not project his voice, does not necessarily articulate clearly, does not overemphasize, does not strive after dramatic effects, all this does not mean that he is not acting; on the contrary. For an actor born and bred in the theatre nothing is more unsatisfying than this undemonstrative tech-

World Radio History

nique; yet if he is to give a compelling performance in the medium he must, within its restrictions, develop a subtlety and precision of emphasis as exact as any he would adopt in the theatre. The dangers are as formidable: in theatre, to over-balance into melodrama, to discover effective gestures and apply them regardless of the psychological situation of the moment, to win a round of applause by an unnecessarily pointed exit; in radio, simply to behave, to ignore dramatic complexity and merely mutter—or even worse, to become obsessed with the 'voice beautiful'. The technique of radio acting is the ability to express all shades of meaning with, apparently, the minimum vocal effort. And the whole business of rehearsal should be designed to develop and foster as intimate and subtle an interpretation of the author's intention as the material allows, and, in addition, to seek for the rhythm, the musical shape, which will be inevitable in terms of *this* writer and *these* actors.

The good radio script usually appears underwritten in comparison with a stage play, simply because the actor's voice in close focus invests words with extra magic and power; a seemingly prosaic sentence may conceal emotional riches which only become apparent when fused with the act of speech. Francis Dillon has said that actors are the instrument with which the producer explores the writer's intention, sounds its depths, tests and discovers its subtleties. And it is true that, however clear-cut one's appreciation of the text in the abstract, the real discoveries take place when all the human agents concerned begin to interact, that is to say in rehearsal; new harmonics are struck, new refinements of action and meaning emerge from between the lines. I take as a simple example the opening of Giles Cooper's *Without the Grail.*

INNES: (*fade in*) . . . And a toothbrush, razor, toothpaste, soap and towel.
HAZEL: But what sort of job is it?
INNES: I've got to go and see a man.
HAZEL: All the way to wherever it is to see a man.
INNES: Assam.
HAZEL: To see one man.

World Radio History

INNES: That's where he lives.
HAZEL: But why?
INNES: Confidential. Let's have those socks.
HAZEL: Honest, love, anyone would think you worked for the Secret Service, not a tea merchant.
INNES: We have our secrets. Handkerchiefs? Thanks.

After intensive rehearsal, the actual performance was based on the following blue-print:

INNES: (*fade in; disinterested, under his breath*) . . . And a tooth-brush . . . (*pause*) razor . . . (*pause*) toothpaste . . . (*Pause. Crisply, finishing the job*) Soap and towel.
HAZEL: (*this is the third time of asking; not that she expects an answer*) But what sort of job is it?
INNES: (*long-suffering; the third time of answering*) I've got to go—and—see—a—man.
HAZEL: (*she doesn't want to offend him, but what else is she to say? The conventional response, but there's sadness in it too*) All the way to wherever it is to see a man.
INNES: (*irritably, snapping*) Assam.
HAZEL: (*trying to turn it; but the humour is half-hearted*) To see one man.
INNES: (*sorry for being snappy; more reasonably*) That's where he lives.
HAZEL: (*making the most of his change of mood: wide-eyed innocence*) But why?
INNES: (*evading it*) Confidential. (*Matter-of-fact.*) Let's have those socks.
HAZEL: (*not critical, not sorry for herself*) Honest, love, anyone would think you worked for the Secret Service, not a tea merchant.
INNES: (*almost gaily*) We have our secrets. (*And quickly, before advantage can be taken.*) Handkerchiefs. (*Pause: rather more politely.*) Thanks.

I quote this extract in some detail, not as a model but simply as an indication of the kind of detailed investigation of each word that a good radio text demands. Some nuance of character or emotion is reflected in and between every line; producer and actors must dig it out if the words are to be more than words. And mere words in radio are so much sound.

World Radio History

The second creative function of rehearsal is to probe and assess the ideal rhythm of the text and the possible variations within it. One of the problems is the discrepancy, already mentioned, between apparent time and real time. The length of a pause through the loudspeaker is magnified, just as the power of a word is reinforced; the apparent length or intensity is inextricably related to what precedes and follows. The actor in the studio has his feet in reality; cut off from his audience, he is situated in the impersonal environment of a workshop. He could not tell you whether the pause he makes is three or six seconds by the clock; he only knows whether it corresponds to the rhythm evolved in rehearsal. Frequently he may be reluctant to pause, because he is vividly aware that the gap cannot be filled by extraneous visual 'business' but only by overtones of what has been said and what may be said next; in these surroundings the temptation is to feel that he is only acting if he is using his voice. Yet silence is an essential part of his equipment; he is the man who can make silence vibrate, who can convey the impression of several dimensions by his sensitive use of one. The producer is the ideal listener; he sits outside the performance, hears it whole; he can and must assess the total rhythm. If he, too, is afraid of silence, then all is lost.

Words, sound, silence: how to integrate them? The basic principles of radio production are an extension of those which concern the writer. In casting, the producer must not only find the right interpreter for each part, he must have an ear to the final orchestration of the cast as a whole. Since there are no costumes, each actor must be readily identifiable by voice alone; no easy matter, particularly as the frequency range of women's voices is narrow and does not allow for much contrast in pitch; the contrast must be in vocal individuality or eccentricity. (Incidentally, I might dispose of the notion that the beautiful voice is most suitable for radio; on the contrary, the best radio voice is the most idiosyncratic, as the best television face is the craggiest.) On the other hand, it may be necessary on occasion to convey similarity of vocal type. In *The Drunken Sailor*, for instance, the two seamen, initially quite distinct in character and

World Radio History

attitude (and therefore in voice), grow together during the play, become blood brothers; this process is marked, among other things, by a gradual affinity in intonation and vocal attack. The twins in Cocteau's *The Typewriter*, played by the same actor, must have a complete surface contrast although certain tones and notes are common to both.

His cast assembled, the radio producer's next concern is to decide what acoustic qualities he needs for each scene in order to show it to best advantage, bearing in mind that when moving from one scene to another the inner eye finds the change more vivid if it is helped by a new and contrasting acoustic. He will map out in his mind how to dispose his actors in relation to the microphone, remembering that variation and ingenuity in their placing will convey, unconsciously, the impression of depth and dimension—and that two actors standing on opposite sides of the microphone but equidistant from it will appear to be standing on the same spot; for the microphone is not concerned with direction, except towards or away from it. Approach it from any angle, and the listener may place the sound as coming from some particular direction if he wishes; it will be his fancy that does it, for the actual sound process is one-dimensional. Yet, since the listener finds it difficult to assimilate a dramatic experience in one dimension only, the radio producer may rely on him to convert distance into direction where required; the more cunningly the producer's pattern of perspectives, the richer will be the illusion of space. One of the disadvantages of stereophony, to my mind, is that it brings the precise sense of left and right to the radio illusion; in other words, places us in front of an invisible stage. The imaginative strength of monaural radio is that an illusion *in depth* and incalculable dimension can be created beyond what appears to be a single plane. And finally, the radio producer will decide on the convention he wishes to observe in using music or sound effects, remembering that if he gets too involved in realism the performance will be cluttered by doors opening and closing, footsteps coming and going, and will make up his mind, I hope, only to use effects if they are dramatically to the point.

World Radio History

These are the most elementary of principles, dictated by the medium's need for clarity and precision. Nevertheless, they are the props on which a producer rests while searching for style. For the creative purpose of any production is to evolve from the author's blue-print an aural style which is completely apposite and special. I find the achievement of 'style' difficult to define, largely because it depends on a multiplicity of factors, not least the re-creative power of the individual vision of producers and actors. Before the radio producer goes into the studio, the script should echo in his mind like a chord, complete; whatever modification he may make in practice to any of the parts, he has a total pattern in his mind which will control and influence the mobilization of the parts and which in turn will be the sum of the parts and different from them. This total pattern is what we call 'shape', that is to say, a structure which will leave in the mind a feeling of architectural wholeness, even if the detail is arguable, an aural composition whose totality can be *seen* in the wink of an eye. Let us consider as a practical example John Mortimer's *Three Winters*. The form of the piece is classically simple: three equally balanced sections, each dealing with the events (involving the same people) of a particular Christmas and spanning, together, a period of twenty years; the whole recollected in disillusioned tranquillity by the central character. The theme, if so sensitive a piece of writing can be reduced to a single theme, is in the contrast and tension between two ways of life, symbolized in the contrast between two houses, 'Farnfield, big and soft and shaded by trees, and Brobdingnag, the giant's house'. Within each section there is a variety of incident, scene, and character, and subordinate themes weave in and out, develop and merge with the main pattern. The dialogue is rich in verbal felicities and humour, yet is always strictly dictated by the highly idiosyncratic characters. On the page, the form and style are clear enough. The piece begins:

> Thinking of it now, seeing it as at the end of a long and dark tunnel, it all appears amazingly clear—a bright picture like those painted by the primitive Dutch in which every detail

World Radio History

> stands out with meaningless intensity. The only danger, after all these years, is not remembering too little but remembering the wrong things. . . .

Each of the three sections begins with a preamble of this kind, and each demands a typical tune of its period as an atmospheric pointer. The intention and shape could hardly be more obvious *on the page*, yet converted into aural terms they tend to become diffuse, difficult to hold in the head. In fact, the piece is elusive and calls for some kind of aural reinforcement to maintain the solidity of its structural outline through the constantly shifting pattern of its detail. In practice this meant that, first, we had to underline the shape of the programme by a rhythmic device which would clearly and simply set one section against another. We decided that the most effective way of doing this was the sparest and most direct. Before the action begins we had the single stroke of a bell, it might be a church clock, allowing it its full reverberation. At the end of section one, a silence, followed by two strokes of the bell, followed by another silence; at the end of section two, silence, three strokes, silence. It may be objected that this is unnecessary elaboration, since it is clear from the text where each section begins and ends. I can only say that a simple pause between sections proved inadequate, both emotionally and rhythmically; in addition, the recurring motif reminded us relentlessly of the perspective of the work as a whole and gave time to shift our vision from the particular incident of the moment and relate it to the whole. The play ends:

> Thinking of it now, looking back on it today, I wonder . . . where did we go wrong? What moment was it, in our bewildered childhood, our tentative youth, our clear-sighted and obstinate middle-age, when Diana and I slipped away from each other and joined different sides. Was there, in all those years, a moment when we were free to choose? Or had it all been decided for us when those different, near and distant houses were built. . . . Farnfield, big and soft and shaded by trees, and Brobdingnag, the giant's house, squat and strong and ugly, in the middle of the town. . . .

And very effective, too. But aurally something more is needed,

World Radio History

particularly as the piece is not only a story but a pattern. The solution is in the text itself (it usually is). We introduce this passage by a recapitulation of the musical 'signature-tune' of the first section, recapitulating the mood of the beginning of the play; on the words 'tentative youth', the music is imperceptibly replaced by the nostalgic war-time tune of the second section; up under the closing words, hard and hopeless, comes the hysterical jazz motif with which we introduced the third winter. The balance between speech and sound, between resolution of story and recapitulation of pattern, fulfilled aurally the shape intrinsic to the written text. Not that aural shape or style is something which can be superimposed by adding music or sounds; this particular example is simply an example of the leeway left by any text to the re-creative powers of its interpreters. The formal problem of *Three Winters* could have been dealt with in any number of ways and to quite different effect, and I do not pretend that the way we chose was necessarily the right one; it seemed the inevitable way at the time, taking all factors into account.

In Robert Bolt's *The Drunken Sailor*, the theme, roughly stated, is the contrast between the brutality of life at sea in the early nineteenth century and the romantic conception of it in the mind of the landlubbers—with the added twist of the sailors' impulsion towards the life whose brutality they often detest. The writer's method is quick cross-cutting between ship and shore; short scenes of contrasted type, whose linking thread is the interest of the domestic group in what is happening on the ship. In the simplest of frameworks, Bolt weaves a number of dramatic threads; the extraordinary economy of the dialogue (hardly a line could be cut without damage) belies the complexity of the dramatic texture. All the ingredients of plot and character are constantly on the move; they meet, they cross, they synthesize. At first glance, it seems that an essentially realistic treatment is called for. But with all the details of shipboard life is this not going to be cumbersome and confusing? In addition, realism is *slow*, and this play must *move*; it will permit loving realization of character in individual scenes, but its structural rhythm is

World Radio History

swift and stylized. What is necessary in fact, is a form of shorthand: a sound-complex for the quarter-deck, another for the fo'c'sle, another for the mast-head, another for the harbour, and one for the quiet house. Dispense with footsteps, save for those of the captain stumping on his deck—a recurring dramatic motif—and those descending into the fo'c'sle—an important contrasting theme. Let the only detailed sound-sequence be that of hauling up the anchor, since we shall need this harsh, cruel noise as a symbolic reprise to reinforce the irony of the second part of the play. And aim at the quickest possible cutting from scene to scene. This will demand variety in method if it is not to become a monotonous device; we will therefore vary our technique of 'fading in and out', using it sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes with a mixture of styles; as the dramatic tension mounts we shall cut faster and faster from scene to scene, using a near-film technique—though to do this we must make sure that our various locations have been clearly established and contrasted. And at the first major climax, roughly half-way through the play, we shall need a point of rest. Silence will not serve after this mounting rhythm, so we solve the problem in the convention of the whole; the crew has already been heard singing a chanty, so let us at this point construct a stylized sound-sequence—ship at sea in the far distance, wind, snatches of song coming and going—make it shapely and interesting in itself; time passes, the days merge into one another, we are ready to proceed. However, the very rapidity of the play's movement will quickly lead to confusion unless it is given rhythmic breaks closely linked to significant moments in its development. On a superficial level there are certain obvious demands; for example, as the storm at sea mounts, the tempo and pitch of life on land become quieter; this contrast of mood and rhythm will underline certain character points. But it is in the phrasing and tempo of the dialogue itself, in the possibility of repose within action and inner tumult within apparent repose that the essence of the play will be communicated.

Indeed, the last thing I should wish to do in considering radio 'style' is to overemphasize the importance of the sound-elements

World Radio History

at the expense of a close realization of word-meaning and speech rhythm. But in this blind medium sound is often an indispensable adjunct in the creation of a complete pattern; it may provide a frame, in which the action may be seen in proper perspective. Beginnings and endings in radio are always difficult, since there is no equivalent of the lights going down or the curtain going up. The sense of *beginning* must be evoked by the programme itself. There are many ways of doing this; and perhaps the most frequent is the sound-montage. There is no point in building a sound-picture of a deserted chapel on a windswept hill unless that picture is relevant to the play as a whole; but there is every point in doing so if the immediately arresting image is likely to be of continuing and variable dramatic value. Sense of place is usually important in the radio play, and even if the dialogue localizes a scene, we should not lightly disregard the imaginative enrichment which fresh, evocative sound provides. The opening of Ugo Betti's *Corruption in the Palace of Justice* seemed flat and vague in rehearsal; by adding a tracking shot through the building—the busy foyer, the quieter corridors, the silent, isolated room in which the old clerk is working—we gave extra reality to the image. (Though there are dangers here, too; imagine those early British films—or those early television plays—in which it is assumed that you get away from a photographed stage play by inserting occasional scenes in the hall or outside the front door.) Perhaps music will serve; in *Mathry Beacon* one of the characters is an ex-dance-band trumpeter and is often heard improvising during the course of the play; stylize one of the improvisations, use it as an opening theme, let it recur in different forms, let it appear, finally and triumphantly at the end. (In this case the theme was based rhythmically on the noise made by the 'deflector' machine which is an integral component of the action.) On the other hand, the opening situation of the play may be so vibrant that no preamble is needed. But then, how treat this opening dialogue? Fade slowly into it, giving the impression of a gradual approach towards a conversation which has been going on for some time? Start 'cold', that is with a character speaking suddenly out of the blue? Or a mixture? Or

World Radio History

a 'trick' opening? The ending will set similar problems: how to discover the aural equivalent of a theatrical 'curtain'. Dialogue which just stops does not end a radio play; the emotional and rhythmical pattern preceding the last line must reconcile us to the conclusion, as a *rallentando* does in music; the exact proportions of the *finale* will vary according to the size and weight of the whole programme.

Perhaps the clearest way of coming to grips with the practical problems facing writer, actor, and producer, is to analyse in detail an actual production. Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* is particularly suitable for this kind of analysis, since it raises in concentrated form many of the questions which are always with us.

It begins with a tiny prelude: 'rural sounds'; various animals give voice individually, then together, then, after a silence, the play begins. The purpose of this prelude is not primarily to evoke a visual picture, and if it resolves itself into 'farmyard noises' it will in fact be pointless, since it is not directly linked to the action, although echoes of it are heard during the course of the play, in various contexts. It is a stylized form of scene-setting, containing within itself a pointer to the convention of the play: a mixture of realism and poetry, frustration and farce. It also demands a strict rhythmic composition; a mere miscellany of animal sounds will not achieve the effect. The author specifies four animals; this corresponds exactly to the four-in-a-bar metre of Mrs. Rooney's walk to the station and back, which is the percussive accompaniment to the play and which, in its later stages, becomes charged with emotional significance in itself. But in this case it is impossible to use real animal sounds, since the actual sound of a cow mooing, a cock crowing, a sheep bleating, a dog barking, are complex structures, varying in duration and melodic shape; to put these four sounds in succession would be to create a whole which is only too obviously composed of disparate elements. The way to deal with the problem seemed to be by complete stylization of each sound, that is to say, by having human beings to impersonate the exact sound required. This enabled us to construct an exact rhythmic pattern

World Radio History

in which no element was out of place. The same principle was observed in the *ensemble* of animals; each observed strictly the tempo already set, a tempo which gradually slowed down and subsided into inarticulate, choked-off silence. We hoped to achieve the comic overtones, not by any attempt at caricature or grotesqueness in the impersonation, but by the strict stylization of the quartet.

Silence. Then, 'Mrs. Rooney advances along country road towards railway station. Sound of her dragging feet.' It is to be hoped that the opening sequence will have signposted the rural setting; the railway station can look after itself—when the dialogue begins, we shall soon find revealed the objective of Mrs. Rooney's journey. At the moment, our concern is to consolidate the underlying rhythm and to merge, imperceptibly, the musical and realistic elements of the play. From the far distance, therefore, the sound of footsteps, in strict tempo. They will not be immediately recognizable as footsteps—they might be a clock ticking, a tap dripping—but no matter at this stage. But gradually we must connect them with a human being; Mrs. Rooney herself must swim into our focus. As the footsteps draw nearer, therefore, we begin to hear another sound: a tiny gasp of physical effort, barely audible but clearly identifiable; this too in regular rhythm, but on the first and third beats in the bar only. Now we have to introduce a third element: 'Music faint from house by way. "Death and the Maiden." ' As we fade in the music the listener has the sense of approaching its source, together with Mrs. Rooney; its rhythm cuts across the established tempo of steps and breathing, for a moment it overcomes them and both of them stop; the music plays, cracked and tinny on an old gramophone, and we listen. At this moment we cannot have any precise visual picture in mind—indeed we are being drawn into the dramatic structure simply by sound-patterns. Then we hear the first words. Mrs. Rooney says, 'Poor woman. All alone in that ruinous old house.'

But she doesn't *say* it, rather she *thinks* it; the effect we want is of an unspoken thought, magically overheard, and the volume we require from the actress's voice in this closest focus would be

World Radio History

almost inaudible at the other side of the room in which you are sitting. Magnified by the microphone, it draws us into the mind of the character, it is almost as though it had been spoken in our own head. This demands from the actress complete relaxation and vocal control. Not a *whisper*, which would create quite a different effect, but the minimum vocalization and articulation consonant with intelligibility, and this, of course, within the terms of reference of the characterization.

Gradually the world of sound is taking shape. We do not yet know who Mrs. Rooney is or where she is, but we perceive that an old woman, trudging along a country road, pauses to listen to a gramophone playing in a house by the way. The 'ruinousness' of the house is reflected in the ruinousness of the gramophone record (deliberately distorted to emphasize the contrast between the beautiful theme and the ugliness of its setting). We listen to it; then Mrs. Rooney, with a vocal sigh, launches herself on her way. The footsteps resume, and as we slowly leave the music behind (fading it away) Mrs. Rooney begins to murmur the melody, this time in the rhythm of her own steps, which in turn cuts across the rhythm stated by the record. She hums the melody, again in close focus; tunelessly, with effort, her voice raddled with age and with living. As I hope I have indicated, this entire sequence, comprising merely ten lines, demands the most detailed rehearsal work if it is to be anything but a mere jumble of sounds; the actress playing Mrs. Rooney must be so under the skin of the character that in one barely-voiced sentence and a snatch of song she can set her vividly in our mind. And the sequence must develop its own musical shape—a complete 'shot', with an imaginative effect greater than the sum of its ingredients.

Now the basic technical problem of the play is set before us. Mrs. Rooney trudges towards the station, absorbed in her own thoughts. From time to time reality will impinge on her in the shape of people she knows, who meet her on the way. It is essential, at this early stage, to clarify what is reality to her (i.e. what is going on in her own head). 'Sound of approaching cartwheels.' If we treat this in terms of simple realism we miss the

World Radio History

opportunity of a definitive statement of Mrs. Rooney's relation to the physical world; we also risk mixing our conventions, since the play as a whole demands stylization of sound; we must also bear in mind that the percussive footsteps which begin the play must, if they are to fulfil their ultimate symbolic function and carry the intense emotional overtones of the piece, themselves change in character until they are no longer footsteps at all but something very close to music. Might we not realize an exciting imaginative tension if we treat the sounds which gradually force themselves on Mrs. Rooney's preoccupied attention in the reverse way? That is to say, taking a real sound as basis might we not distort its nature so that when first heard it is unrecognizable—if possible rather frightening—and only as it moves into our field of vision does it become recognizable for what it is. If we accept this basic premise, we solve many of the problems raised by this difficult work at a blow, except, of course, for their technical working-out. Let us concentrate first on the approaching cartwheels; an indeterminate sort of sound unless associated with the trotting hooves of a donkey. Hoof-beats may be a more profitable starting-point, since they lend themselves to metrical organization; therefore let us extract from a regular pattern of hoof-beats the individual notes; separate them, magnify them, distort them, play them—almost as single drum-strokes—against Mrs. Rooney's footsteps; let her react with a tiny, inarticulate, puzzled sound (the vocal equivalent of the flutter of an eyelid) to indicate that she too has heard something whose nature eludes her; let her footsteps stop; a pause; then slowly fade in the 'drum-strokes', this time in a formal rhythm, losing distortion as they approach. They will still be not quite recognizable even though the rhythm is familiar, since they have in fact been made by recording the sound of an actor's tongue playing tunes on the roof of his mouth; but as they draw nearer add to them the 'sound of cartwheels' and we recognize the picture. The cart draws to a halt, the rhythm slows and stops (though rather more formally than would a living donkey). Silence. 'Is that you, Christy?' says Mrs. Rooney, speaking for the first time in her 'normal' voice, that is to say,

World Radio History

aloud, and indicating by the distance to which her voice is pitched the position of Christy, the position from which he now speaks.

We have set scene, character, style, rhythm; now the real business of the play begins. Mrs. Rooney is a solitary; as she herself says later, in a moment of self-confession, 'I estrange them all. They come towards me, uninvited, bygones bygones, full of kindness, anxious to help . . . genuinely pleased . . . to see me again . . . looking so well. . . . A few simple words . . . from my heart . . . and I am all alone . . . once more.' This provides the key to the interpretation of the first half of the play—except that the people Mrs. Rooney meets on her way to the station are not 'full of kindness' nor 'anxious to help', save in the most superficial social way. All these encounters are meetings between people who fail to communicate with each other, except on the surface, and even there they barely speak the same language. Bright and vacuous Christy, unctuous Mr. Tyler, prissy Mr. Slocum, bad-tempered Mr. Barrell, brash Tommy, sanctimonious Miss Fitt: each will force Mrs. Rooney more and more back into her own thoughts and their conversations, bright at first glance, will be threatened by uncomfortable pauses, ultimately to expire. The note can be set by Christy, bright as can be, completely uninterested, and quick as a flash on his cues:

MRS. ROONEY: Is that you, Christy?
CHRISTY: It is, ma'am.
MRS. ROONEY: I thought the hinny was familiar. How is your poor wife?
CHRISTY: No better, ma'am.
MRS. ROONEY: Your daughter, then?
CHRISTY: No worse, ma'am.

Then silence. 'Why do you halt?' asks Mrs. Rooney. Then, after another long silence, quietly, intimately, to herself: 'But why do I halt?' Silence surrounds it. 'Nice day for the races, ma'am.' Christy invades the silence, chirpily. 'No doubt it is,' says Mrs. Rooney, 'But will it hold up?' Another pause; then again to herself, this time with the utmost intensity, a question of global significance: 'Will it hold up?' These sudden switches of

World Radio History

mood, from flat conversation to intense emotion in the space of two sentences, occur frequently in the play; they make great demands on the actor's technique—more so when the return to social normality follows equally quickly—because normal methods of 'building' to an emotional climax and slowly withdrawing from it will not suffice. The emotional moment here must be complete within the line, must not spread to either side; it is almost as though a different person were experiencing it, self-contained, closed. This is, of course, not strictly a radio problem, though it is an effect more difficult to achieve vocally than visually, if only because the action of a radio play moves much more quickly than does that of a theatre piece, and the actor has correspondingly less time in which to adjust his transitions. Again, the approach cannot be strictly realistic; emotional yes, but basically musical. For example, a little later, in a moment of despair, Mrs. Rooney, alone, is heard to say:

> . . . oh to be in atoms, in atoms! (*Frenziedly.*) ATOMS! (*Silence: cooing of doves: faintly*) Jesus! (*Pause.*) Jesus!

Whatever the emotional content of the actress's voice at this moment—and it should be the torrent of utter despair—it is essential that the first sentence should be *pianissimo*, the frenzied cry *fortissimo* and with maximum ugliness of tone, the 'Jesus' no more than a sigh in the air.

The scene with Christy continues and ends. The performances already make it clear that we have to deal with people who, if not larger than life, have their own logical pattern of behaviour, a pattern to which they give themselves utterly, except when constrained to cry out against it. Mrs. Rooney must move on to the station; but the pattern of moving and stopping, moving and stopping, is now to develop as a counterpoint to the emotional action and must be adjusted accordingly. As she moves away, we replace her footsteps by brush-strokes on a drum; bearing in mind the four-beat time of the opening, we do this quite formally: four pairs of footsteps followed by four pairs of drum-strokes, then Mrs. Rooney soliloquizes in the same rhythm. From now on we have established a relationship between reality

World Radio History

and a musical shorthand expression of it; it will be possible, later, to intensify the expressive qualities of this basic device. However, we must also find a suitable convention for Mrs. Rooney's soliloquies—she soliloquizes a great deal. Never will they be as *voiced* as normal conversation, although under stress a scream may be torn out of her; yet within this narrow range of volume there must be sufficient variety of tones to highlight various emotional points. Generally speaking, the most important utterance will be that which, framed suitably by silence, is nearest to silence itself, most intimate—not that which is spoken with the greatest emphasis. There are many important 'points' in Mrs. Rooney's first soliloquy; the vital one is her reference to her child, later to become identified with the real meaning of the play, and unless this first reference is clearly registered on the listener's mind and emotions, much that follows will go by the board. The text reads:

> Oh, I am just a hysterical old hag I know, destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and churchgoing and fat and rheumatism and childlessness. (*Pause. Brokenly.*) Minnie! Little Minnie! (*Pause.*) Love, that is all I asked . . .

In performance, the thought of 'childlessness' must provoke the pause which follows; the pause in turn must generate a new, more intimate thought; the operative words, 'Minnie! Little Minnie!' are too painful even to be voiced; the silence which they, in turn, generate is broken with conscious effort, with a turning outwards of mind and feeling—and therefore of voice. A similar moment, moving in a different way, occurs a few lines later; Mrs. Rooney pushes the thought of Minnie away by working herself up into a state of irritability at the thought of 'affection'—'peck, peck, till you grow whiskers on you'. At this point we have to break the rapid, jangling rhythm which has suddenly started to build up, and to change the harsh, angry tone. The next line should be taken with the utmost contrast—slowly, reverently, softly: 'There's that lovely laburnum again.' A moment of poise and beauty, just as quickly shattered by the violent sound of Mr. Tyler's bicycle bell (magnified beyond

World Radio History

recognition), which reminds the listener that he, as well as Mrs. Rooney, has been momentarily bewitched. (Mr. Tyler's bicycle and Mr. Slocum's car in the following scene are handled on the same principle as Christy's cart.)

The scene with Mr. Tyler can, and should, be played at a good deal faster pace than that with Christy. The ear is refreshed by the rhythmic contrast, and the text demands it—Tyler is a great chatterer. And now a practical advantage of our stylized footsteps is apparent. I cannot conceive of any realistic method of conveying accurately, in sound alone, the picture of Mrs. Rooney walking along with Mr. Tyler riding beside her on a bicycle; the aural equivalents of the visual situation cannot be related and combined; our stylized sound saves us. However, Connolly's van soon sends them both flying into the ditch—and Connolly's van must sound like a bolt from the blue, like a bomb, if its shock effect is to be compelling, and if the pauses in the ensuing dialogue are to have full comic effect:

MRS. ROONEY: Are you all right, Mr. Tyler? (*Pause.*) Where is he? (*Pause.*) Ah, there you are.

There is no need to explain what takes place in these pauses; they give full rein to our comic imagination. After the rough-and-tumble of the van this snatch of dialogue can be as spaced-out, as leisured, as you wish.

The conversation continues. The point to be made in the acting is the contrast between Mrs. Rooney's real agony of mind and the platitudinous, skin-deep emotional responses of Tyler.

MRS. ROONEY: Go, Mr. Tyler, go on and leave me, listening to the cooing of the ring-doves.

And we hear the cooing—again in the four-beat rhythm, and not in natural perspective but close-up, thus bringing Mrs. Rooney, too, into close-up and underlining her grief. In contrast, Tyler's insincere exhortations to her to accompany him (repeated in exactly the same words whenever he has a chance to speak) must be played with utter lack of subtlety, indeed with the same intonations each time.

World Radio History

Mrs. Rooney's soliloquy as Tyler's bicycle bumps away on its flat tyre (in a familiar rhythm) again necessitates various levels of expression. 'You'll tear your tube to ribbons,' she calls after him. Silence, alone in the world, save for the ring-doves, which remind her of her own state. Intimately, poetically, she apostrophizes them. Then, 'Mr. Tyler,' she calls after him. 'Mr. Tyler', pitching her voice still further to locate for us the silent, irascible Tyler pedalling far away down the road. Her own practical situation has demanded her attention, and she must pitch her voice still farther as she cries out to the world and to Tyler, 'Come back and unlace me behind the hedge.' The laugh which follows is a hideous and inhuman sound; it is hardly Mrs. Rooney laughing, but rather the anger, bitterness, the ribaldry of humanity. It splits the silence, appals our ears, stops. We shall hear it again, with recognition and horror; it speaks with Mrs. Rooney's mouth, and it is as though she hears it, for her own voice comes whispering to us: 'What's wrong with me?'

The scene which follows (with Mr. Slocum) is the one scene in the play which may be handled realistically, since its farcical detail is so extravagant and unreal in itself. Not that Slocum himself or his car can be dealt with in this way, but the business of heaving Mrs. Rooney up into the car may be treated in minute realistic terms and will only gain in comedy thereby. And for the first and only time in the play it is permissible to move the focus away from Mrs. Rooney and on to someone else. So far she has been the pivot of the action and, at the same time as being a part of the play, the listener's eye to some extent, since she has been in closer, more intimate contact with him than has any other character. Now, for a moment, we may see her objectively and in 'long shot': a fat old woman, enjoying the experience of being heaved up on Slocum's shoulder into the car; and we may use Slocum for a moment as our guide and companion. His unintelligible mutters speak volumes about the world's attitude to Maddy Rooney. As soon as she is in and the door slams, Slocum has served this particular purpose, and we cut back to Mrs. Rooney (remembering that in radio it is impossible to cut from close-up to close-up with any *dramatic* effect because both

World Radio History

voices appear to be in the same place; in this case, we make the point by having Slocum recede into long-shot when we have done with him and linking Mrs. Rooney's next words to the slam of the car door; the *effect* is of cross-cutting.) But there are other elements, apart from farce, in this sequence, and we must give them full value. Slocum presses the starter for the second time. Let the incredibly antiquated engine turn over as grotesquely and at as great a length as you wish; it subsides; hold now an interminable and pulsating pause.

MRS. ROONEY: What are you doing, Mr. Slocum? (*This in tones of extreme irritation.*)

MR. SLOCUM: Gazing straight before me, Mrs. Rooney, through the windscreen into the void.

The grotesque Slocum has at the same time a poetic insight into reality; the performance must unite farce and terrible truth:

> All morning she went like a dream and now she is dead. That is what you get for a good deed. (*Pause. Hopefully.*) Perhaps if I were to choke her.

Roar of engine, grinding of gears, and the point is underlined, the mood changed, visual and emotional picture shattered and redesigned.

The car arrives at the station, and now we have to deploy the possibilities of contrasting perspective: Mrs. Rooney (and the listener) sitting next to the driver, Mr. Slocum slightly farther away, Tommy farther still (outside the car), and Mr. Barrell in the remote distance at the top of the station steps. We shall have to modify these relationships consistently if the listener is to gain a clear impression of the physical 'layout' of the station. We can give some assistance by varying acoustics; for example, as Mrs. Rooney is helped up the steps to the platform the gradual addition of an echoing acoustic, though not consciously apprehended by the listener, will indirectly modify his mental image. If I may digress for a moment, I think it is true to say that many of the most felicitous refinements in the use of sound are of this order, that is to say, *not noticed* by the listener; indeed, if they were noticed they would lose their effect because the artifice

World Radio History

would become a distraction. It is easy enough to provoke applause or catcalls with an obvious 'stunt' effect, and the temptation to 'try it on' is not always to be resisted. After all, actors and producers face a constant tension between their impulse towards artistic truth and their impulse towards exhibitionism; both can be equally strong, but the immediate rewards for indulging the exhibitionist urge tend to be more flattering to the ego. Let us look back, and re-perform Mrs. Rooney in a way calculated to tear at the heart-strings of the undiscriminating. Mr. Tyler has left her. Panic-stricken, genuinely concerned, she calls after him, 'Heavens, you're not going to ride her flat. You'll tear your tube to ribbons.' Delicately we fade in the cooing of ring-doves as she sighs in matronly distress. 'Venus birds,' she murmurs nostalgically, and an exquisite theme-tune merges with and takes over from the birds. 'Billing in the woods all the long summer long.' The music elaborates this mood, then breaks off. 'Oh cursed corset,' says Mrs. Rooney, with genteel charm, delicately amused at her own effrontery. 'Mr. Tyler,' she cries, with girlish immodesty and charming impudence, 'come back and unlace me behind the hedge.' Suddenly shocked by her own uncharacteristic impulse, she checks, giggles, then says to herself, wide-eyed, 'What's wong with me?' Far-fetched perhaps, but greater crimes are committed every day in all media. And if it is unfair to blame the audience, the audience is certainly an accessory. It is a well-known fact in music-hall that the audience will never believe that a juggler has performed an impossible feat unless he caps it by a flourish of the hands, a self-satisfied visual gesture (if he's pleased with himself he must have done something clever); he can do the most difficult trick in the world, and if he turns his back and sidles off the stage the audience will find him second-rate—unless, of course, the turning of the back is a self-consciously modest gesture. There is no compromise. Either you use your basic material as a springboard from which to demonstrate your own virtuosity, or you subordinate your undoubted talents to artistic truth. Since we are fallible human beings we often back the wrong horse, in art as well as at Epsom.

To continue. The problem of perspective, or suggested per-

World Radio History

spective, is a key one in a medium which has no actual existence in space. Mr. Barrell chases Tommy off the 'set', comments to himself, turns to Mrs. Rooney.

> Do you want me to come down to you with the shovel? Ah, God forgive me, it's a hard life. Well, Mrs. Rooney . . .

Each of these three sentences must have a different target in the actor's mind and a different degree of vocal projection, otherwise the illusion of space cannot begin to exist. Given the proper differentiation, no other actors are necessary to fill out the picture; one voice alone can people the void with characters, give exact location to invisible and inaudible beings—as Ruth Draper did on the stage.

There is no communication at all between Mrs. Rooney and Mr. Barrell—or perhaps there is too much; they have known each other for a long time. At any rate, Mrs. Rooney's words go over Mr. Barrell's shoulder—though *she* enjoys them well enough—and he is far more concerned with his station, though gentleman enough not to be positively offensive to her. He turns to leave, and his character is superbly established by the combination of what he says and—even more—does not say.

MRS. ROONEY: Don't go, Mr. Barrell. (*Silence. Loud.*) Mr. Barrell! (*Pause. Louder.*) Mr. Barrell!

MR. BARRELL: (*at last; testily*) What is it, Mrs. Rooney, I have my work to do.

He has been edging away, he has been constrained to come back; the movements, his invisible facial reactions, are entirely a matter of silence and vocal projection on Mrs. Rooney's part. Now we hear the wind. Like all the effects, this too was stylized; in fact, it was human breath, technically treated, used on this, and subsequent, occasions as a deliberately formal device with the barest pretence at realism, the principle being that if a sound is demanded by the text let it be heard, but do not pretend that it is anything but a sound demanded by the text.

MRS. ROONEY: The wind is getting up. (*Pause. Wind.*) The best of the day is over. (*Pause. Wind.*) *Dreamily.* Soon the rain will begin to fall and go on falling all afternoon.

World Radio History

At this point, Mr. Barrell goes. The listener does not know that he goes, since we do not have him muttering, 'I'm off'; and frankly it is more effective if the listener, like Mrs. Rooney, is so wrapped up in the immediate thought that he has no inkling of anything outside it.

MRS. ROONEY: Then at evening the clouds will part, the setting sun will shine an instant, then sink behind the hills. (*She realizes Mr. Barrell has gone.*) Mr. Barrell! Mr. Barrell! (*Silence.*)

Miss Fitt shortly appears and is constrained to address Mrs. Rooney. Once started, there is no stopping her; indeed, she goes on uninterrupted for some thirty lines. Usually one would look at this askance, even in Shakespeare, for the simple reason that if a character ceases to share the conversation in radio he very soon disappears from the scene altogether. In Shaw's *St. Joan* in the theatre, the Inquisitor may talk at whatever length he pleases; our eye still takes in Joan, she is there, she remains an integral part of the action. In radio, Joan is liable to disappear—we may forget her presence, except when the Inquisitor reminds us of it by addressing 'Joan' directly. Mrs. Rooney, however, does not disappear during Miss Fitt's harangue (which it would be artistically wrong to interrupt); we ensure this, first, by rooting Mrs. Rooney deeper in reality than Miss Fitt, by making her a true, as against a self-deceiving, character; second, by making Miss Fitt play her monologue in long perspective and therefore at a disadvantage in relation to Mrs. Rooney (the character closest to the microphone is always dominant). Reverse the positions of Miss Fitt and Mrs. Rooney in this scene and Mrs. Rooney would evaporate, Miss Fitt become the central figure. And yet it becomes tiresome to the ear to listen for any length of time to a voice in distant perspective; we solve this, provided the speech is long enough, by slowly moving the focus on to the speaker, so that she is in near close-up for the centre of the speech, then withdrawing. The impression is that we have shared her thoughts, but because of the actual physical contrast in perspective between her and Mrs. Rooney at the *beginning*

World Radio History

and end of the speech we shall have the illusion of having remained with Mrs. Rooney. And the dramatic effect obtained by contrast in *apparent* focus is all the more exciting. We believe Miss Fitt to be in close focus, although in fact she is receding from us. . . .

> Is anything amiss, Mrs. Rooney, you do not look normal somehow. So bowed and bent.

Then, jerking us back to the true focus, reminding us that for a moment we almost lost our way, Mrs. Rooney's voice, square in the foreground: 'Maddy Rooney, *née* Dunne, the big, pale blur.'

When Mrs. Rooney reaches the platform, we get the only detailed scenic description in the play. Up to this point, all pictorial images have been suggested only in a glancing way: after the advent of Connolly's van, 'Now we are white with dust from head to foot'; Slocum's car, 'You look very high off the ground today, those new balloon tyres, I presume'; the station steps, 'If you would help me up the face of this cliff.' By-products of character, in fact, as is the description of the scene which now occurs; we are hardly conscious of it as visual painting, it is so moving. Mrs. Rooney, ignored, isolated, listening to the deliberate snubs of the other characters, speaks, apparently to them, in reality to herself and to us.

> Do not flatter yourselves for one moment, because I hold aloof, that my sufferings have ceased. No. The entire scene, the hills, the plain, the race-course with its miles and miles of white rails and three red stands, the pretty little wayside station, even you, yourselves, yes, I mean it, and over all the clouding blue, I see it all, I stand here and see it all with eyes . . . (*the voice breaks*) through eyes. . . .

It is at this point that one realizes that the experience so far has been basically non-visual; words and sounds and silence have created an emotional and intellectual experience to which we have given ourselves; the actual physical picture has been unimportant.

At last the train arrives, and in production it is impossible to

World Radio History

exaggerate this moment. The sound-complex in its grotesque fantasy must fulfil the wildest expectations and fears of the people who have been biting their nails on the platform; we should hear it as the nightmare realization of their own heightened anxiety. Silence ensues. A long silence.

MRS. ROONEY: He isn't on it.

This is the climax of the first half of the play, and the interplay of sound and voice must make it a real climax. From this point onwards the convention changes; we must make an end—and the possibility of a new beginning. This can be done, first, by giving to Tommy's announcement before the train arrives:

She's coming. She's at the level crossing

a significance and intensity which the words themselves could never suggest. At once, the comically exaggerated sounds of train arriving, passengers disembarking, train moving off, etc., must steal the scene; you never heard such a train, and never will again, it is the best and worst of possible trains, and its absurdity will be sustained as long as we can encourage it to go on. The silence which succeeds must be just as remorseless. And it will be broken eventually by the simplest of sounds—the tapping of a blind man's stick, the following rhythm of his feet. They approach, coolly, they stop, and Mr. Rooney speaks to his wife.

MR. ROONEY: Maddy.
MRS. ROONEY: Where were you all this time?
MR. ROONEY: In the men's.

The rest of the play (and it is the core of the play) is to all intents and purposes a duologue, and will depend for its effectiveness on the intensity and variety with which the words are interpreted. The initial point of interpretation for this scene, towards which the whole play has been moving, is its understated contravention of one's expectations. Mrs. Rooney is as devoted as ever, but Mr. Rooney could hardly be crisper:

Why are you here? You did not notify me.

World Radio History

As the two of them move off on the long journey home, we have, once more, to translate realistic sound into symbolic sound. The tempo of Mr. Rooney's stick and his feet establishes itself; it is repeated in the same way as Mrs. Rooney's footsteps earlier on, in the sequence of four phrases, then—in the same tempo and without any glossing over it—a purely percussive and unrealistic pattern replaces it. The sudden jump from real to symbolic, unmodified by any attempt to make the transition palatable, is in itself dramatic, and registers emotionally as a turning-point in the play. From this point on, we use the symbolic footsteps as a purely musical device, and sometimes simply for the sake of their own musical effect. (As in Ravel's *Bolero*, the insistent, rigid pattern gains in intensity through repetition.) Without some such technique, it is almost impossible to contemplate sequences such as this:

(*They move on. Wind and rain. Dragging feet, etc. They halt. They move on. Wind and rain. Dragging feet, etc. They halt.*)

If this is not music, what is it? The wind and rain are used as required—no question of providing a consistent and continuing background; the background is only heard when we need to hear it, that is when it has emotional validity. The principle is indicated by Beckett himself:

MRS. ROONEY: The wind—(*brief wind*)—scarcely stirs the leaves and the birds—(*brief chirp*)—are tired singing. The cows —(*brief moo*)—and sheep—(*brief baa*)—ruminate in silence.

Now Beckett makes great demands of his actors, in that the switches of emotion he requires of them are true and not theatrical. First, Mrs. Rooney is caught up in the sadness of existence: 'We are alone. There is no one to ask.' The mood is broken by Mr. Rooney, as every-day as can be: 'We drew out on the tick of time, I can vouch for that. I was——' She, dragged back to the conventional world, conventionally irritable, 'How can you vouch for it?' Then this beautiful passage (the directions are based on the actual performance):

World Radio History

MR. ROONEY: (*quite conversationally, this*) But why do we not sit down somewhere? Are we afraid we should never rise again?

MRS. ROONEY: (*matter-of-fact*) Sit down on what?

MR. ROONEY: (*matter-of-fact*) On a bench, for example.

MRS. ROONEY: (*long-suffering*) There is no bench.

MR. ROONEY: (*irritable*) Then on a bank, let us sink down upon a bank.

MRS. ROONEY: (*as to a child*) There is no bank.

MR. ROONEY: (*suddenly a child himself; simply, softly, naïvely*) Then we cannot. (*Pause: with intense, quiet longing.*) I dream of other roads, in other lands. Of another home, another—(*he hesitates: with utter despair*) Another home. (*Pause. Matter-of-fact, brisk, inquisitive*) What was I trying to say?

The whole section is packed with these unexpected contrasts; they demand from the actor not only a deep understanding of the text, but a sensitivity to emotional possibilities outside the range of a normal realistic or poetic-realistic interpretation.

At last, they draw near to home, and suddenly—it ought not to be a surprise, but it is—we hear again 'Death and the Maiden'. The emotional effect of this reprise is electric; partly because it brings to us a sharp realization of the road we have travelled, partly because it has, by now, drawn new poignancy from the dramatic action, partly because the musical 'shock' caused by introducing 'real' music into a sound-pattern which has developed a kind of musical texture of its own adds an extra, unexpected current of sound. The music dies; silence. 'You are crying,' says Mrs. Rooney, and this must be spoken as quietly as can be. Pause. And hardly disturbing the pause, a mere vibration of sympathy, 'Are you crying?' 'YES' from Mr. Rooney, quick on the cue and as violent as possible. Silence. The 'footstep' motif again, relentless, inevitable. This tremendously moving moment is all the more shattering if played on both levels, emotional and musical. The sheer musical shape: silence; *pianissimo* flute, *andante*; fortissimo, brass, *staccato*; silence; percussion, *piano* and *andante*. Then, immediately afterwards, the brisk, down-to-earth routine of 'Who is the preacher to-

World Radio History

morrow? The incumbent?' acts as a bright passage on the tuba. And now we are at the crucial moment of the play.

MR. ROONEY: Has he announced his text?
MRS. ROONEY: The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
(Silence. They join in wild laughter.)

We have already registered Mrs. Rooney's laughter as something not specifically characteristic of her as a person, but as a universal assertion of disrespect, contempt, and cynical belief in survival. Strengthened by the harshness and violence of a male voice, its impact is (as the author might say) excruciating. This is laughter in the void. And when it has stopped, and the void has ceased to echo: the 'footstep' motif again, implacable; life goes on. We have moved to the plane of poetry and symbolism, precisely the point at which to reintroduce reality, to effect a final conjunction between the two aspects of the play. The little boy runs after the old couple; let *his* footsteps be realistic. He plays his scene; he ends:

JERRY: It was a little child, ma'am.
(MR. ROONEY *groans.*)
MRS. ROONEY: What do you mean it was a little child?
JERRY: It was a little child fell out of the carriage, ma'am. (*Pause.*) On to the line, ma'am. (*Pause.*) Under the wheels, ma'am. (*Silence.*)

The temptation is to make the point hard by having Jerry's realistic footsteps running away and disappearing into the distance. But the point has already been made; Jerry is an intrusion from an intolerable world; we can add nothing to the final silence that would augment the emotional tension already achieved—and the final curtain is no time to indulge in realistic detail simply to satisfy a secondary level of consciousness. Let the silence speak. And then augment the symbolic theme; let the wind speak with three voices; let the footstep-motif, when, as it must, it starts again, take up a slower, deeper, more resigned rhythm; let the final impression be of something which has been blown towards us by a chance breeze and is now blown away again—but which is still going on.

World Radio History

'It is no part of my tottering intentions,' as Molloy might say, to attempt an interpretation of *All That Fall*; from my own point of view interpretation is performance. But I am in no doubt that it merits close study as a radio work which makes challenging demands on its executants. I have avoided as far as possible the futile attempt to convey the writer's intention in my own words, and may therefore have laid undue emphasis on technical and non-textual points. They are—to me, at least—fascinating; but the heart of any play is laid bare only in performance. There seems to me little point—and it would be a dull process—in working through the text word by word, indicating exactly how each intonation was arrived at; indeed it would be an academic exercise, meaningless unless you could simultaneously hear the intonations of the gifted and devoted cast, led with sympathy and emotional understanding by Mary O'Farrell and J. G. Devlin. The art of radio cannot be reproduced on the page except as a pale shadow; it is as uncapturable as a half-forgotten song.

World Radio History

PART THREE

The Art as it Exists

Already, during the short life of Sound Radio, a prodigious number of scripts have been created specially for the medium, and most of them have vanished into oblivion. No reasonable being would expect many masterpieces in the first forty years of a new art form's existence; before you can forge one masterpiece you have to explore the medium, test it, experiment with it; the artist must learn how to handle his tools, find out why he has failures before he can hope to have successes. Unfortunately, nowadays, technical development proceeds at a phenomenal rate, and artistic advance is generally expected to keep pace with it; we tend to be impatient of experiment, of the near-miss, we do not wish to know about the finished product unless it is perfect. Masterpieces are a common part of everyday experience, thanks to the development of communications, broadcasting, gramophone records, film, publishing, and we are intolerant of any work which is almost comparable with the greatest—though not, strangely enough, of work which blatantly sets out to be commonplace. To make matters worse, the radio writer has not been allowed to work out his own salvation in peace, since radio is not only an art-form but also a medium of communication and he therefore has had perpetual competition from the greatest exponents of world drama, whose works are regularly performed on the air, and with whom he is inevitably compared. At the other extreme, his work is quite likely to be submerged by the mass of hack-writing on which broadcasting

World Radio History

has relied to maintain its illusion of perpetual novelty, happily now fading. Forty years is a short time in which to hammer out a technique or an aesthetic; since it is also half a lifetime, one is tempted to assume that if radio has not by now found answers to all its problems, it never will. Yet in spite of the considerable work of exploration and invention done by such creative practitioners as E. A. Harding, D. G. Bridson, Francis Dillon, E. J. King Bull, Lance Sieveking, among many others, there is still a lot to be done before the medium emerges from adolescence, and I fancy that most of us would hesitate to attribute any permanence or definitiveness to our contribution; what we may like to think of as our most finely wrought-out innovations are bricks and mortar, for the building is still going up.

For many years now, it has been an integral part of B.B.C. policy to make available to the listener the best of the theatrical repertoire, classical and contemporary. May this long continue, for the B.B.C.'s function as a kind of National Repertory Theatre of the air (J. C. Trewin's phrase) is a vital one. No other medium could afford such a profusion of dramatic riches as appears in any one year's radio schedule. Aeschylus and Marlowe rub shoulders with Adamov and Fabbri, and distinguished actors come regularly to the studios to play in Ibsen, Strindberg, Betti, Anouilh, Shakespeare, Molière, Shaw. The B.B.C. is justly proud of its record in maintaining a distinguished and adventurous policy on a scale which could not be matched by all the theatres in the country put together, a policy, moreover, which has played an important part in stimulating and keeping alive an interest in 'live' theatre, as well as ensuring that innumerable works of high quality, which would otherwise never have been performed, have been interpreted for millions of listeners. In fact, it has provided a rich complement to the work of the 'live' theatre, and one which we should be unwise to underestimate.

However, it remains true to say that the radio performance of a stage play can rarely be a completely satisfying artistic experience. It is to some extent a substitute for the 'real thing', and the more precisely the play in question has been calculated for per-

World Radio History

formance in the theatre the greater the loss is likely to be. Not that radio performance is simply a reading, far from it; the nature of the medium permits a performance essentially different from that in the theatre, and the best radio productions use to the full its faculty for closing-in on the actor and conveying a different degree of emphasis and subtlety. If the play is to stand up to this close scrutiny, the radio producer and his cast must evolve methods of interpreting the finest nuances of character and conveying the subtlest speech-rhythms. Some stage plays lend themselves more than others to this microscopic interpretation: the tightly-constructed play of character and psychology (e.g. *Hedda Gabler*) takes to the air comparatively easily, as does the free fancy (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for different reasons. Yet whatever new truth the radio performance extracts or highlights, there will still be a loss, for which the new insight may not compensate; if you have already seen the play performed in the theatre, the loss will be particularly noticeable, because you will almost inevitably relate the 'blind' performance to the one you have seen, and find it correspondingly difficult to be objective about the new experience. Even more difficult if the play has not been properly adjusted to the microphone, and, alas, one still hears radio performances which keep the listener at the same remove from text and actor as is the spectator in the theatre. Let us look at the end of Ibsen's *Ghosts* (Max Faber's version):

MRS. ALVING: Look, Oswald, it's going to be such a lovely day! Bright sunshine! You'll see your home as you've never seen it before.

(*She crosses to the table and turns out the lamp. It is sunrise—the glacier and snow-covered peaks in the background are bathed in early morning light.*)

OSWALD: (*still sitting motionless with his back to the window*) Mother . . . Give me the sun. . . .

MRS. ALVING: (*looking at him, suddenly afraid*) What did you say?

OSWALD: The sun . . . the sun . . .

MRS. ALVING: (*crossing to him*) Oswald, dear, what is it?

(OSWALD *appears to shrink up in the armchair—his muscles relax, his face is expressionless, his eyes staring vacantly.*)

World Radio History

(*Terrified.*) What is it, Oswald? (*Screams.*) Oswald, what's the matter? (*Drops to her knees beside him and shakes him*) Oswald! Oswald! Look at me! Don't you know me?

OSWALD: The sun . . . the sun . . .

MRS. ALVING: (*springing up desperately and burying her fingers in her hair*) I can't bear it.

It is, of course, possible to broadcast this effectively, though dialogue must be written in to clarify the visual situation (the change from lamplight to clear day, for instance). And in radio we can penetrate deep into the mind of these two characters; Oswald's mutters, for example, will have a particular degree of horror for being so quiet. But the full power of the situation is theatrical; a gain in subtlety of expression will hardly compensate for the loss of the electrifying picture which confronts us on the stage; the sun on the mountains, the boy shrinking up into himself, the dramatic balance of the visual composition as a whole. In radio, the balance of parts has to be manipulated differently, the overall rhythm modified, the characters more finely graded; if we cannot capture the author's full intention we can at least explore his mind with a precision instrument.

It is a sad thought that in performing a considerable service to the serious drama Sound Radio has unwittingly set up barriers against the proper appreciation and understanding of its own serious forms. It is still by no means uncommon for listeners to judge radio writing by theatrical standards. There are, I believe, two reasons: first, that 'Radio Drama' has come to mean to many people the reinterpretation or relaying of theatrical drama; second, that many people find it difficult to discover a new yardstick for a work which contains elements of both drama and something which is not drama, particularly if it happens to be written in terms of dialogue. One still hears the lament after the broadcast of a new radio play, 'But it wasn't a *play*!' Writers themselves have helped to foster this attitude, partly because some of them have held it themselves; those who have not have often had to bear with misunderstanding and blank incomprehension from many of their listeners, and it is to their credit

World Radio History

that they have not allowed this to divert them from their purpose of forging new forms and styles in their chosen medium. It is worth noting that, in spite of lack of publicity, there has been a vigorous upsurge of new radio writing in the past two or three years, and the reasons are many: a deliberate policy of cultivating the potential and imaginative radio writer, his own dissatisfaction at the compromise demanded by other media, a growing realization that radio is approaching maturity, the small but discriminating section of the audience which has learned how to appreciate radio and wants work of value from it. The best kind of radio writing has never had a large audience—certainly not a mass-audience—and never will, but it is the only kind of writing for which I see a positive future in the medium. We shall not evolve a worth-while art-form by taking the line of least resistance.

The case of Peter Gurney's *The Masque of Falsehood* is a singular illustration of the changes and chances to which the radio writer must reconcile himself. Its first two performances evoked no noticeable response from critics or listeners (apart from a review in the B.B.C.'s own journal, *The Listener*). Some six months later, when the piece was broadcast for the third time, the *Manchester Guardian* printed a very welcome review headed 'A radio classic', hailing the broadcast as a major artistic event in creative radio. The point I wish to make is that, whereas the theatrical writer who achieves performance may expect serious reviews whether his work merits them or not, the radio writer may see his work disappear like a stone in a pond. He may possibly be rewarded, years later, when an unidentified listener crosses his path and confesses to having found revelation in his work; but unidentified listeners only rarely meet the writers who delight them. Naturally, we who work in radio are ready enough to carp and quibble at the lack of consistent criticism accorded to our work. Yet we have to remember that the radio critic, as far as he still permitted to exist, has only a tiny column in which to review 'radio', and 'radio' of one kind or another is broadcast all day every day on various wavelengths. One can well understand the dismay of the theatre

World Radio History

writer who had to wait six months after his first night for his review, however favourable; he is in an enviable position compared with the radio writer who considers himself privileged if he is reviewed at all—much to his chagrin when he sees the serious press devoting columns to reviews of last night's television production of the commercial theatrical success of twenty years ago. In fact, the radio writer must work for love; naturally he also works for money, but the golden carrot of a six-year run in the theatre with its consequent financial reward is never even on the horizon. He may therefore be freely true to his own vision and take as his prime recompense the achievement, however transitory, of artistic truth. For his work, even if it is an attractive miniature, will not be framed and hung on the wall; it will not, unless he is a celebrated personality, be re-recorded and sold commercially in a gaily-coloured sleeve for reproduction on a record-player; it will almost certainly not be published; it will simply be paid for, performed, and heard—by someone. There will be no applause after the performance; it may be remembered, but it will not have the butterfly-permanence of even a short run in the theatre—half an hour, and it may be gone. I never cease to be surprised that in such circumstances writers continue increasingly to explore the resources of the medium, actors to devote themselves to perfecting its technique, and producers to work on a half-hour programme as though it were *Hamlet*. The only answer I can find is that the medium offers a means of human and artistic expression which is unique in its quality and rewarding in itself, regardless of material considerations. I know of no more fruitful occupation than giving oneself with writer and actors to a single-minded creative process, to the making of an artistic experience which, however ephemeral, will be true for those who take the trouble to see it clear, and in which no inartistic considerations need operate. I realize that to take up such a position in the modern world is to seem to inhabit an ivory tower; and perhaps the tower will crumble, if it exists. It would be equally unrealistic to suggest to theatre workers that they should rehearse for a year or more on a single play, simply in order that they should be able to do it justice;

World Radio History

it is not a commercial proposition. Yet who, having seen the Brecht company and the Moscow Art Theatre, could conscientiously claim that our own system of make-do and mend—with a 'star' artist to bring in the customers—is on the same plane, much less that it has anything to do with 'art'? A constant complaint in this country is that there is nowhere where actors can learn and perfect their profession; they must work to live, and for the most part they must work in plays which make no demands on them. This is less true than it was; the Repertory Theatre is more alive to its responsibilities than it has been for many years, and drama is taken more and more seriously both by managements and audiences. Nevertheless, art is still, for the most part, subservient to box-office; the fallacy that escapism is the only form of entertainment is still largely propagated; and it is sad to state that the one medium which still has the possibility of a pure form of expression has still to shake free of the desire to please as many people at the same time as possible.

These generalizations simply indicate that radio, in spite of its potential as a unique form of artistic expression, is still subject to the mass hysteria of the day. Its genuine creative contribution is only a small part of its total output, and often ignored. Our concern is that this creative contribution does exist, is real and distinctive. How, and why? We are more likely to find the answer in actual radio texts than in aesthetic generalizations.

The most obvious radio form—and the most difficult to manage successfully—is the free fantasy. Obvious, because no medium could be more fluid or flexible; difficult, because these qualities, with their invitation to cast discipline aside, are the most dangerous of temptations to the imaginative writer. If radio fantasy is to succeed artistically it demands at once the subtlest imagination and the most stringent discipline. Giles Cooper's *Under the Loofah Tree* is an impeccable and apparently effortless example of the best kind of 'free' radio writing. Cooper takes as his basic situation a simple, but potentially comic, event: a man having a bath.

World Radio History

(*Fade in taps running; they are turned off.*)

This might be anything: but as soon as Edward Thwaite speaks, there is no doubt about it.

EDWARD: Toe. . . . Ow, no.
(*One tap runs briefly.*)
Leg . . . other leg. . . . All right so far, warm but not agony. Bend the knees. . . . (*A high thin scream.*) No! . . . No, I can stand it. Sit. . . . Lie. . . . (*Sloosh.*)

This soliloquy is economical, evocative and comic, and Cooper strikes shrewdly in immediately establishing the soliloquy convention in terms of terse near-farce. At once we recognize and share the experience; audience identification with the main character can seldom have been more quickly achieved. The realistic core of the play is emphasized as Edward's wife calls to him; but the fact that the play is at one remove from reality is underlined by placing her outside the bathroom door. Indeed, every *real* character in the play has to speak to Edward through a closed door, with the result that the figures of fancy (the creatures of Edward's imagination) are far closer to him, and to us, than the figures of fact among whom he spends his life. Muriel's (for such is her name) conversation is the distillation of every real life interchange which ever took place under these circumstances, punctuated by stylized sounds which correspond to Edward's temporary access of individuality and inviolable personality.

MURIEL: (*beyond door*) Ted.
(*Bubble, bubble, bubble—angrily.*)
Don't take all the hot.
EDWARD: What?
MURIEL: All the hot. Don't take it.
EDWARD: Why?
MURIEL: There's washing-up, you never think.
(*Bubble, bubble—petulantly.*)

which brings Edward back to himself. 'Never think,' he says irritably to himself, 'never do anything else but think.' Provoked, he adds more hot water to the bath, which prompts an un-

World Radio History

expected flight of fancy. 'Being boiled alive in a pot for cannibals in a humorous joke.' At once he hears in his head that which in his limited experience has affinities with such a situation, namely a calypso singer:

Oh Mr. Edward Thwaite
Is in a most extraordinary state.
His toes are boiled to tenderness
But his head containing all his cleverness
Is cold as any refrigerator. . . .

And if that seems inadequate, any calypso singer would quickly demonstrate that words are not always what they seem. The automatic connection is 'Old Man River', with which Edward now begins to demonstrate to himself his own vocal prowess. I must stress that all these transitions, stemming inevitably from character and situation, may seem trivial and, indeed, disconnected on the page; in performance they occur as a logical and comic progression. Edward is now so pleased with his voice that he begins to speculate on what he could have made of his humdrum life. 'I could make hundreds. . . .' His train of thought is interrupted by interpolations from the other side of the door—from his wife and child—to which he reacts with admirable callousness and self-absorption. He is, however, keenly interested in his immediate surroundings: 'One plastic duck'—and, not altogether surprisingly, the duck quacks, as it will on subsequent occasions, acting almost as an inarticulate conscience. The bath reminds him of the sea, he plays games with his son's toy submarine, the sea reminds him of the promenade where he first proposed to his wife—and we cut surrealistically back and forth between once idyllic memory (grotesquely treated in performance) and cruel present. We perform the flashbacks (and distort the voices) in such a way that the original idyll seems to have been enacted by positively cretinous creatures; in contrast, the voice of the present is humdrum (and 'normal') in the extreme.

(*Background of promenade orchestra.*)

EDWARD: I love you.

World Radio History

MURIEL: Oh, Edward.

(Cut to:)

EDWARD: *(to himself, in the present)* And then, and even then I needn't have said it; had the words, four cherry-stones in my mouth and could have swallowed them or spat 'em out. I spat 'em out.

(Into character again; promenade orchestra.)

Will you marry me?

(Cut back again.)

But she was pleased. It made her happy. Well, it would.

(Duck quacks.)

Speculation on his own personality and potentiality liberates his fancy:

EDWARD: *(to himself)* In the long run it's personality that counts. What you are, what you've done, where you've been and who you've known.

(Long quack, cross-fading quickly into a chord.)

COMPÈRE: This is a Man!

(Hysterical applause.)

We come before you once again with your favourite programme. . . .

Edward continues to build a fantasy-world in his mind; there are, however, slightly disturbing undertones.

HEADMASTER: Who is this?
COMPÈRE: Mr. Thwaite.
HEADMASTER: Oh no.
COMPÈRE: He says he is.
HEADMASTER: Then he's an imposter.
EDWARD: No, no, sir. I'm Thwaite, really. . . .

The real world, too, has unpalatable ingredients. Various visitors appear outside the bathroom door: a travelling salesman, a rate-collector. Fact and fantasy intermingle; fact itself has overtones of fantasy.

JUDKIN: *(outside the door)* I've something to give you, sir.
EDWARD: What sort of thing?
JUDKIN: A document, sir.

(The duck quacks in alarm.)

World Radio History

SOLICITOR: (*a fantasy-figure*) It will, no doubt, come as a surprise to you, Mr. Thwaite, to know that you are the only beneficiary under the will of your fourth cousin, Mr. Augustus Thwaite, the sheep millionaire of New South Wales. We believe that after death duties . . . (*Fading out.*)

EDWARD: Push it under the door.

JUDKIN: No, sir. I'm afraid it has to be delivered into your hand.

(*A disembodied voice speaks with terrifying menace.*

VOICE: Something to do with the Rates! . . .

(*A high hum of pure agony, which mounts to a climax behind the following speeches.*)

EDWARD: I forgot to pay the rates. A summons—is it?

JUDKIN: As a matter of fact, sir, yes.

EDWARD: I can't let you in. I've nowhere to put it and it'll get wet.

JUDKIN: Will you be out soon?

EDWARD: Oh, I'll be out.

JUDKIN: I'll wait then, sir.

EDWARD: Yes, but in the kitchen, please. Tell my wife that—in the kitchen. Say I said. Oh Lord, oh no, oh what shall I do?

(*Cut quickly to the Broker's Men, pantomime style.*)

1ST MAN: And here we have Baron Hardup's bedroom.

2ND MAN: And a very nice piece of hardware under the bed. I say a very nice piece of hardware under the bed.

(*Hysterical pantomime audience laughter.*)

And fantasy has uncomfortable echoes of fact. In the Television parlour-game, Edward meets his old wartime sergeant:

COMPÈRE: Tell us the truth about Corporal Thwaite.

SERGEANT: (*as though giving evidence*) Sir! 851927 Corporal Thwaite E. was at all times an example to the men in his platoon. By his courage, energy, initiative and leadership, he was an inspiration to all that served with him, from the highest (*like a stuck record*) to the lowest, to the lowest, to the lowest, to the lowest——

(*Quack.*)

Edward, his guilty secret of cowardice in face of the enemy betrayed in his fantasy, justifies himself; the voices of his sergeant,

World Radio History

his mother, his father—all of them now dead—refuse to leave him in peace:

EDWARD: But why me? Why put all that on me? I never set out to be a hero. I wanted to stay at home and sleep in bed. I didn't want to die.
SERGEANT: You will.
MOTHER: You will.
FATHER: You surely will.
MOTHER: Like me.
FATHER: And me.
SERGEANT: And Elliott, Errington, Hartfield, Johnson, Leary——
CHORUS: (*in a mounting whisper*) And all of us, and all of us, and all of us, and all of us. . . .
(*With melancholy cries they sail away through vast and subterranean caverns, echoing, re-echoing to silence.*)
EDWARD: But how?
(*An intensely menacing rumble begins in the distance.*)

The tempo quickens. Using every shorthand device of imaginative radio, Cooper paints vividly, with a blend of farce and bitter irony, a man's life, his aspirations, hopes, frustrations, failures; the 'little man's' triumphant assertion of his own individuality—'There's always ME'—as he rises from his attempted suicide by drowning, is the comi-tragic climax of forty-five minutes of pungent human observation. A rich variety in a concentrated frame, the free-ranging mind which cannot be contained even by a bathroom—this is radio at its virtuoso best.

In *The Dark Tower*, Louis MacNeice chose a broader canvas and an ostensibly more serious theme. This parable play begins with a trumpet playing the Challenge Call and the words of the Sergeant-Trumpeter:

> There now, that's the challenge. And mark this:
> Always hold the note at the end.

An evocative complex of speech and music which will recur at crucial moments during the play and be finally enriched at the end, the last triumphant moment:

World Radio History

(*The Challenge Call rings out: the Sergeant-Trumpeter speaks as the last long note is reached.*)
Good lad, Roland. Hold that note at the end.
(*The trumpet holds it, enriched and endorsed by the orchestra. They come to a full close.*)

This is all the more effective because of the contrast between the realistic treatment of the Sergeant-Trumpeter at the beginning of the piece and the fact that at the end he is simply a memory speaking to the isolated Roland. Indeed, at the opening he is not speaking to Roland at all, but to his elder brother, Gavin, which makes the circle even fuller. The imaginative compression of the opening scenes is indeed masterly. Roland's question:

Why need Gavin hold the note at the end?

The reply:

Ach, ye're too young to know. It's all tradition.

The transition, as Gavin still practises, to Roland's

Mother! What's tradition?

And her trenchantly evocative reply:

Hand me that album. No—the black one.
ROLAND: Not the locked one?
MOTHER: Yes, the locked one. I have the key.

Roland looks through the album and recognizes his brothers.

Michael and Henry and Dennis and Roger and John.

One could hardly imagine a less 'poetic' line, yet when it is repeated it suddenly gains enormous emotional significance from the sheer fact of *being spoken* again in a different context. Gavin is going on a journey. As he says:

Across the big bad sea.
Like Michael and Henry and Dennis and Roger and John.

Gavin's entrance at this point is, incidentally, a model of

World Radio History

economical and imaginative radio technique. The trumpet-call is heard in the distance:

ROLAND: Ah, there's Gavin practising.
He's got it right at last.
(*The Call ends and* GAVIN *appears.*)
GAVIN: Mother! I know the challenge. When can I leave?

This compressed telescoping of situation and emotion makes for clean, crisp listening, though it may seem thin on the page. As may the immediately ensuing sequence.

ROLAND: What's the Desert made of?
GAVIN: Well. . . . I've never been there.
Some deserts are made of sand and some are made of grit but——
MOTHER: (*as if to herself*) This one is made of doubts and dried-up hopes.
ROLAND: And what do you find at the other end of the desert?
GAVIN: Well, I—well——
MOTHER: You can tell him.
GAVIN: I find the Dark Tower.
(*The Dark Tower theme gives a musical transition.*)

Cold print cannot hope to indicate the emotional impact of, first, the Mother's line: 'This one is made of doubts', etc.—because of its sudden close focus a dramatic insight not only into *her* mind but into the mind of the poet; second, the musical underlining of the Dark Tower motif.

We cut to the schoolroom:

TUTOR: Now, Master Roland, as this is the first day of lessons . . .

Roland's question, like the tutor's line, combines character, situation and technical necessity:

When's my brother Gavin coming back?

The scene which follows, develops and colours the situation and adds depth to the characters; a time-lapse of years is briskly dealt with:

TUTOR: Thank you, Roland.
After all these years our syllabus is concluded.

World Radio History

A few final instructions, and then:

TUTOR: Go!
Yes, Roland, my son. Go quickly.
(*We cross to*)
SYLVIE: But why must you go so quickly?

And immediately a new relationship, which has not even been hinted at, is placed clear before us. Roland has grown up in a split second; his grown-up emotional life is exposed in a moment. He sets out on his journey, after a leave-taking whose formality heightens the importance of the quest:

TUTOR: To you, Roland, my last message. . . .
SERGEANT-
TRUMPETER: To you, Roland, my last message. . . .
MOTHER: To you, Roland, my last message. . . .

He meets the Soak, who conjures up a pub for him; they drink; the Soak goes to sleep, leaving Roland with a question:

ROLAND: If I were something existing in his mind
How could I go on now that he's asleep?
SOAK: (*muffled*) Because I'm dreaming you.
ROLAND: Dreaming?
BARMAID: Yes, sir.
He does have curious dreams.

If there is a quicker or more plausible method of adding a dimension of fantasy to a situation already far removed from naturalism, I have not come across it. And no need for elaborate 'business'; the spoken words are uncompromising and compelling.

BARMAID: Never mind, dear.
Tomorrow he'll wake up.
ROLAND: Tomorrow *he'll* wake up?
And I—Shall I wake up? Perhaps to find
That this whole Quest is a dream.

The Stentor breaks in: 'All aboard!' and we are on the ship; the atmosphere of nightmare develops:

World Radio History

ROLAND: I want a sleeping draught.
How many times do I have to ring for that?
STEWARD: As many times as you like, sir.
If you can keep awake, sir.
(*Pimpishly.*) But talking of sleeping draughts, sir,
Do you hear that lady playing the fiddle?
ROLAND: Fiddle? No. I don't.
STEWARD: Ah, that's because she plays it in her head.

In due course we hear the violin, accompanied by Neaera's velvet voice: '*Andantino . . . rallentando . . . adagio. . . .*' This, and the frenzy of the tombola players—a kind of mad, irrational chorus:

OFFICER: And we—
CROWD: Shake the Bag!

punctuate and point the shipboard passage.

STEWARD: The sea today in the sun, sir, looks like what shall I say, sir?
ROLAND: The sea today? A dance of golden sovereigns.
NEAERA: The sea today is adagios of doves.
ROLAND: The sea today is gulls and dolphins.
NEAERA: The sea today is noughts and crosses.
OFFICER: (*cutting in rapidly*) And we—
CROWD: Shake the Bag!
NEAERA: The sea today, Roland, is crystal.
ROLAND: The sea today, Neaera, is timeless.
NEAERA: The sea today is drums and fifes.
ROLAND: The sea today is broken bottles.
NEAERA: The sea today is snakes and ladders.
OFFICER: Especially snakes!
CROWD: Especially snakes!
NEAERA: Roland, what's that ring? I've never seen one like it.

This combination of various elements—poetic, choric, realistic—exists, when performed, on various levels simultaneously. The visual picture, important though it may be, is only one ingredient; even more important is the emotional and poetic pattern which moves the drama forward, enriching our awareness of character and situation by the skilful manipulation of words,

World Radio History

sounds and rhythms. The writer is not simply telling a story or resolving conflicting actions; at the same time he is generating atmosphere, music, colour, perpetually stimulating the inner vision, guiding the listener (as a composer does) through an infinitely variable world of sound. The musical analogy is most apparent in the 'Desert' sequence:

(*A mechanical voice creeps in.*)
CLOCK VOICE: Tick Tock, Tick Tock,
Sand and grit, bones and waste. . . .

At the end of the speech, the Clock Voice reverts to its rhythmic 'Tick Tock', which is held in the background as Roland speaks:

Flat—no shape—No colour—only here and there
A mirage of the past—something I've met before.

The Clock Voice continues, and is joined, one by one, by other voices from Roland's past; they speak to him first, then add their words to the rhythmic background. The Soak:

Look—a pull on the wire, his feet move forward.
Left Right, Left Right.
CLOCK: } Tick Tock, etc.
SOAK: } Left Right, etc.

This continues and is augmented by the Steward's:

'Golden days, sir, golden days,'
NEAERA'S: 'Kiss me, kiss me,'
SYLVIE'S: 'You and I, you and I!'

The voices build in rhythmic intensity and gradually dominate the scene.

(*The voices swell in the foreground, driving as it were at the camera, till Roland can bear it no longer.*)
ROLAND: (*screaming*) No!
(*The voices break off as if cut with a knife.*)

There is no limit to the number of technical tricks which the imaginative writer can turn to for this kind of emotional effect. The strength of *The Dark Tower* is that, although it is packed with technical invention—indeed it could serve, unaided, as a

World Radio History

textbook of radio technique—the trickery is not imposed; rather it springs out of the needs of the particular situation, so that in performance we are conscious only of the inevitability of every word. The poet guides us effortlessly through the maze and our understanding is enriched at every turn; the total experience is of a work of art, complete in its own terms.

In his introductory note to the published text of *The Dark Tower*, MacNeice makes an important point: '*The Dark Tower* is a parable play, belonging to that wide class of writings which includes *Everyman*, *The Faerie Queene* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Though under the name of allegory this kind of writing is sometimes dismissed as outmoded, the clothed as distinct from the naked allegory is in fact very much alive. Obvious examples are *Peer Gynt*, and the stories of Kafka, but also in such books as *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, where the disguise of "realism" is maintained and nothing happens that is quite inconceivable in life, it is still the symbolic core which makes the work important. My own impression is that pure "realism" is in our time almost played out, though most works of fiction of course will remain realistic *on the surface*. The single-track mind and the single-plane novel or play are almost bound to falsify the world in which we live.'

I think it is true to say that Sound Radio as much as, if not more than, any other medium demands this double- or multi-plane approach, if only because it seems so primitively to exist on one plane only. The single-plane radio work may be worthy; it will probably also be dull and untrue, and usually is. I should not, however, wish to imply that multi-plane work is a mere question of virtuoso technique or the uninhibited adoption of a fantasy-form. I have quoted in some detail from two works which *are* complex and which also make their own rules, simply because they are abundant in useful examples of how the medium may be exploited. But one can make as subtle a point with far simpler means. In *I Talk to Myself*, James Hanley used as the basis for his radio communication a monologue. There is virtually only one voice, that of the old sea-captain, alone in his room, in the sea of bricks. The script begins:

World Radio History

(*Silence.*
Feet pacing up and down.)

CAPTAIN JAMES: (*sotto voce*) There was no light. There were no sounds. No wind. (*Pause.*) And there were no trees. Nothing but grass, and I've seen it greener in my time.

The real world intrudes from time to time:

CAPTAIN JAMES: But I often dream now, yes, I often dream. I often think.
(*Strikes match.*)
Damn the pipe. (*Very suddenly.*) Yes, and I often hear things, too.
(*A gust of wind like an explosion and a squall of gulls.*)

The housekeeper buzzes from time to time—but she is extraneous.

CAPTAIN JAMES: The last ship I ever sailed lies close on my mantelpiece. Under glass she is, and I put her there myself. Sometimes I sit here in my chair——

MRS. TURNER: And you won't sit in your chair too long, will you? For I'll be in there to tidy you up soon, and a nice mess it's in, I'm sure, since it always is like a pigsty, so don't get glued too hard to the chair, Captain.

CAPTAIN JAMES: (*whispers*) That one again. Will I never see the end of her, never have any peace.

Then he reverts to his thoughts. The depth and dimension lies in Hanley's brilliant manner of using words to express the secret, unvoiceable world of a lonely, displaced man.

> I bother nobody, and nobody will bother me.
> I'm not afraid of anything, just myself.

This cannot be *read aloud.* Acted for the microphone (in this case by Leo McKern) it lays bare a man's heart.

In *Under Milk Wood* Dylan Thomas used yet another technique—a technique which in less poetic and gifted hands has provided us with a great deal of indifferent radio—namely, the

World Radio History

impersonal narrator linking a sequence of 'character cameos'; with Thomas's exuberance, wit and zeal inspiring it, it comes up as fresh as paint. The beginning could hardly be more conventional, technically:

1ST VOICE:	To begin at the beginning: it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobble streets silent. . . .

Gradually the poetry asserts itself, though it is some time before we realize that we are in the presence of anything other than a descriptive *tour de force*. Then suddenly we slip into the secret world of the inhabitants of Llareggub. The voice says, 'From where you are, you can hear their dreams', and at once we dream with blind Captain Cat:

1ST DROWNED:	Remember me, Captain?
CAPTAIN CAT:	You're Dancing Williams!
1ST DROWNED:	I lost my step in Nantucket.
2ND 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.
3RD DROWNED:	Hold me, Captain, I'm Jonah Jarvis, come to a bad end, very enjoyable. . . .
4TH DROWNED:	Alfred Pomeroy Jones, sea-lawyer, born in Mumbles, sung like a linnet, crowned you with a flagon, tattooed with mermaids, thirst like a dredger, died of blisters. . . .
1ST DROWNED:	This skull at your earhole is . . .
5TH DROWNED:	Curly Bevan. Tell my auntie it was me that pawned the ormolu clock. . . .

And the poet's fancy takes full flight. Words tumble over words as the binoculars swing effortlessly round the village square, and the citizens in their lonely rooms display themselves shamelessly for our entertainment and enlightenment. No holds barred. The twice-widowed Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard dreams of her two dead husbands:

World Radio History

MRS. OGMORE-PRITCHARD: Soon it will be time to get up. Tell me your tasks, in order.
MR. OGMORE: I must put my pyjamas in the drawer marked pyjamas.
MR. PRITCHARD: I must take my cold bath which is good for me.

The inhabitants of Donkey Street dream of:

DAI BREAD: Harems.
POLLY GARTER: Babies.
NOGOOD BOYO: Nothing.

And as dawn breaks, Mr. Pugh in the School House takes the morning tea up to his wife, whispering on the stairs:

MR. PUGH: Here's your arsenic, dear.
And your weedkiller biscuit.
I've throttled your parrakeet.
I've spat in the vases.
I've put cheese in the mouseholes.
Here's your . . .
(*Door creaks open.*)
. . . nice tea, dear.
MRS. PUGH: Too much sugar.

The profusion of invention in *Under Milk Wood* would be alarming if it were not so coherent and disciplined. With every second on the clock the writer exposes to our startled gaze an unpredicted character or an unpredictable facet of human personality and behaviour. And every word tells.

None of these works is a 'play' in the accepted sense (in spite of the fact that *Under Milk Wood* has been performed in the theatre), but each offers a special kind of vision to the listener. Each is 'well-made' in the sense that it does not waste words or emotions and works creatively and consistently within its own framework, but none has any relation to the 'well-made play', as we know it in the theatre. It is this very freedom of imaginative potential which has prompted some of the most gifted radio practitioners to turn to other—apparently unpromising—media for source material. Craftsmen such as E. J. King Bull, Henry

World Radio History

Reed, Lance Sieveking, John Keir Cross, have found in the novel, for example, a fructifying supply of radio material, in addition to whatever original creative work the medium may have evoked from them. I believe that this is partly because the novel, too, is a free and fluid form, and because, for successful reinterpretation, it poses fascinating problems to the interpreter. However, it is impossible to deny that, coexistent with the artistic appeal of creative reconstruction, the very practical fact that broadcasting is an industry whose public requires it to purvey a vast quantity of entertainment is a pressing motive force. Mass-production in any entertainment medium implies a proportion of near-misses and downright failures, and every week one is bound to hear radio plays and adaptations which are not 'good radio'. Clearly, under present conditions, the Drama Department of a broadcasting organization could not meet the enormous demands made on it without recourse to non-radio material; better a good stage play than a bad radio play (provided it can be adequately adapted) even if it is an *ersatz* kind of entertainment—although I would defend to the last the right to inflict a failure on the public provided it was a serious attempt to explore and extend the medium. In fact, the only way to succeed in art is to fail, or to appear to fail. But after all, from the practical point of view, when you are mounting four or five major productions every week (serials and small-scale pieces aside) you cannot expect each programme to be a major act of radio creation, nor even new—the most ambitious theatre management or film producer would blench. And this has been the practical and infuriating situation in British broadcasting for many years now, although there is hope at last of sanity; the burden of trying to do too much too quickly too frequently is being passed for the time being at any rate to television, and one does not envy them their task. The penalty of such a policy is that practitioners have to aim at a fairly respectable average instead of always at the best, and that the public is never sure, in advance, when it is likely to hear mere routine work or something more exciting—nor, in retrospect, is it pleased if it has chosen wrong. The mad illusion of the contemporary 'art-as-an-

World Radio History

industry' manufacturers is that there is an unlimited supply of good writers, producers, technicians, actors and musicians; the professions may be overcrowded, but unfortunately they are not overcrowded with talent. Indeed, if ever the amateur has had a hey-day it is now, in the middle of the twentieth century, when every medium of artistic communication clamours for anyone who can put two words together, speak a coherent sentence, play a tune with one finger on the piano, or give clear instructions to his subordinates. The diabolical results of this misplaced trust in the individual are to be seen everywhere we turn—in Sound Radio as much as anywhere. However, the pattern of public service broadcasting in this country is interwoven with countless minority strands; alongside the programmes of mass entertainment and enlightenment there is ample scope for the specialist writer to find a form of expression and an audience. This seems to me to offer positive hope for the future. Let there be background listening for those who want it; but those who are concerned with the development of radio as an art form have the opportunity of promoting minority tastes as energetically and constructively as they know how.

This seems to me the only possible basis for any future policy for a distinctive form of radio drama. Val Gielgud and Laurence Gilliam, who have steered B.B.C. Drama and Features past many hazards over the years, have, I am sure, no illusions about this. But the battle is complicated by the fact that the public itself is divided; it is unfortunate that many listeners are not interested in 'radio'. The truth is that it becomes increasingly ludicrous even to attempt in radio something which can be better performed in another medium. A stock answer to this statement is: then why so many adaptations of novels? Particularly as they are more difficult to adapt than stage plays? In fact, the affinity between stage drama and radio drama is superficial, though often misconstrued, because dialogue may be an important element in both. The stage play already has its own fully wrought-out dramatic structure and shape, which depends essentially on a counterpoint of sound and vision and which can probably be rendered only palely in terms of sound alone; indeed some of

World Radio History

the most successful broadcasts of stage plays have been of plays which rely too much on dialogue to be completely satisfying in the theatre—I think particularly of certain plays of Ugo Betti, Shaw, Strindberg. A novel, on the other hand, may have elements of drama and poetry in it which can effectively be re-synthesized in terms of sound alone. The problems of 'adaptation' are necessarily difficult; even the word is misleading. It may sound odd, but often the more 'unlike' the original, the more successful an adaptation is likely to be as a radio experience complete in itself. I do not suggest that the intention of the author should be wilfully distorted or ignored for the sake of a transitory technical brilliance; I simply mean that 'adaptation' is, or should be, interpretation, restatement in a different form, in terms of a different medium. This kind of restatement is likely to provoke antagonism among purists, but can hardly be dismissed for that reason. The final judgment must depend on the act of re-creation, not on the principle involved. It is, of course, more difficult to approach stage plays in this sweeping way, largely because their *dramatic* form is already set. One of the most successful radio-adaptations of a stage play I have heard was Raymond Raikes's version of *The Letter* by Somerset Maugham, I suspect because Raikes, a highly imaginative radio producer, decided to go back to the original story and to use, in his adaptation, narrative and descriptive material from it to enhance the stage play; the result was a vivid aural experience, not simply a reproduction. Why bother? Because although there is a healthy and growing nucleus of radio writers with an acute understanding of the medium, in general their technical resourcefulness outstrips their ability to conjure out of themselves sufficient new themes and subjects to satisfy the voracious maw; in novels and stories, there exist an infinite number of possible subjects, some of which cry out for imaginative reincarnation in terms of sound. The issue need not be clouded because some 'adaptations'—and I'm afraid one hears them—are little more than penny readings; the most expert production cannot disguise the fact, and they are only justified because they are often extremely popular and they pass the time. Such

World Radio History

adaptations are not 'radio': they are substitutes, just as much as a 'stagey' radio performance of, say, *Tamburlaine*. The cardinal principle in transposing any work from one medium to another seems to me to be to preserve the essence and at the same time to find a form which, though new, will seem true and unavoidable. Adaptations which achieve this, or come within sight of it, have proved to be some of the most exhilarating radio experiences of the past few years. I think especially of such broadcasts as *Lord of the Flies*, *All Night at Mr. Stanyhurst's*, *Moby Dick*, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, etc. Perhaps it is worth while making a distinction between this kind of adaptation and that involved in the Ivy Compton-Burnett broadcasts; there you have a novel which cries out to be spoken and which achieves a new layer of significance in the process; the transition from one medium to another does not demand any creative rehandling, but simply an act of interpretation by producer and actors—condensation, perhaps, but not 'adaptation'.

It is generally true to say that the motive force which impels a writer towards imaginative adaptation is usually the fact that an existing work of art has made so penetrating and disturbing an impression on him that he feels the need to involve himself creatively in it. A distinguished adaptor once suggested to me that the best kind of adaptation is also the best kind of criticism, since the imaginative reinterpretation reveals to author and audience alike a detailed and explicit assessment of the significance of the original. Certainly the adaptor must *make* this assessment if his work is to be worth doing. It is sometimes said that there is no point in adapting a novel for radio unless the adaptor 'adds something' to the original. I cannot agree that it is the adaptor's business to 'add'; rather to *extract*, not simply by selection but by discovering new means of expressing what has already been expressed. His aim should surely be to enrich appreciation of certain aspects of his original by a conjunction of his own intuitive response to it and his awareness of its susceptibility to interpretation in a different medium. The best kind of adaptation will stand comparison with its original; it will also exist as an entity in its own right, without relation to the

World Radio History

original. And it can only do this if it has been conceived poetically, in other words if the adaptor has hammered out an artistically satisfying form to contain what to him is the essence of the original. It follows that the kind of novel which is most likely to provoke a memorable radio performance is that which itself exists on more than one plane, which has overtones of atmosphere, emotion and meaning which will vibrate in a new way, given a fresh instrumentation. It is hardly worth a musician's while to re-orchestrate a trite piece of music. The parallel is not exact; but if the music itself is interesting, the relation between it and a sensitive transcription will be emotionally rewarding. A 'rattling good yarn' is the very least concern of an adaptor who is caught up in the creative impetus of his medium; it is relevant, not vital. One may extract the story and the superb dialogue from, say, *The Great Gatsby* and by skilful carpentry one may fashion a performable piece which will hold the audience's interest and attention. But the finished article will probably lack the poetry, the irony, the comment—explicit or implied—in fact the very qualities which raise this novel high above the level of the good, taut, dramatic narrative which it also is. And the result will do no service to author, public, or indeed to one's medium. If, however, Scott Fitzgerald's rich and penetrating poetic insight can be captured and highlighted by fresh symbols, one may serve all three. I suspect that the school which insists that it is immoral to adapt novels for performance has listened to too many 'hack' adaptations; it certainly ignores the fact that, given artistic integrity in all concerned, the reinterpretation need not be automatically worthless, nor even inferior. One might as well deplore a film in which a gifted director communicates his awareness of a given tapestry or canvas by carefully juxtaposed 'shots' of different sections of the whole. The film, utilizing its own flair for rhythm, drama, poetry, can—by means of close-up, long-shot, cross-cutting, tracking and panning 'shots', musical emphasis—make an unpredicted reassessment of a work of art which we know quite well. When we go back to the original canvas, we shall—if the film director is a man of genuine insight—be affected by the new interpretation; our

World Radio History

mind, will not react in exactly the same way as before; our own awareness will be enlivened by the reformulation, in terms of another art form, of an artist's perception. The analogy I have chosen comes perilously near to the cardinal sin of popularization, and perhaps adaptation in its essence is just that. The degree of sensitivity of the hands which remould is directly proportionate to the justification of the exercise. An adaptation cannot replace the original; it can enrich our understanding of it, and it can be stimulating, and even satisfying, in its own terms. And the original will continue to exist.

One of my own most rewarding excursions into the field of adaptation was the radio version of James Hanley's novel, *The Ocean*. The book is an impressive synthesis of poetry and realism. Five men adrift in the Atlantic in an open boat, their day-to-day hardships and pleasures, their tensions and hopes; around them, the ocean, the monotony, the fear, the loneliness. Implicit in this simplest of stories is the writer's deeply personal vision of humanity and the world. My summary is inadequate, but enough, I hope, to indicate that conventional, workmanlike methods of adaptation could only reduce Hanley's conception. It was necessary to evolve a form, and utilize techniques, which would communicate as intense a realization, yet which would not have the physical time or room for manœuvre of the novel. The novel manufactures its own form by the use and balance of dialogue, unspoken thought, descriptive prose, narrative, division into sections; from the whole comes something greater than the parts. Firstly, then, we had to decide on our convention. It must be essentially poetic, and it must be capable of conveying more than the characters, in this situation, are capable of saying; in a way, the dialogue must be only an element. Realism must have its part; since this is a real situation, we need authenticity in sound effects and characterization if it is to move us as it should. Yet we must also transcend the real situation; the form must allow of a certain stylization, both in sound and in the characters themselves when necessary. The balance of styles must be harmoniously maintained, in just proportion. We also need to convey comment on, and evocation of,

World Radio History

situations which the characters themselves cannot communicate, even when they are being managed non-realistically. Yet to import a 'storyteller' would break the convention we must establish. Perhaps a private 'voice', which can address each character individually—and all of them collectively—voicing what they cannot bring themselves to voice, may serve; it might be the voice of the ocean, though we must not commit ourselves to this interpretation; to some extent it must represent the detached *persona* of each character, his attempt to keep control within the situation and his fear that he will not succeed in doing so. We need a rhythmic framework which enables us to convey an impression of grinding monotony without, in fact, boring the listener. Within the uneventful unity we need to hold carefully the balance of seemingly important incident and tonal and rhythmic contrast. And somehow we must effect a final curtain —at a stage when all the characters have lost consciousness, and may even be dead—without any possibility of a theatrical *coup*; it will therefore have to be poetic, a musical cadence with possibilities of meaning attached.

Simple enough to evolve a device for dealing with each artistic problem as it arises; the difficulty is—at the same time as surmounting individual technical obstacles—to maintain a just and apparently inevitable balance, to construct, on the basis of all the elements, a new entity, which will be different in shape and in the manner in which it communicates, and which will simultaneously be true to the spirit of the original and seem equally spontaneous. The moment we see the joins or become aware of technique will be the moment of failure.

The problem of sound effects in *The Ocean* was comparatively straightforward. Having decided that a blend of realism and stylization was called for it was simply a question of how the two components should be related. First, when and how should realism replace, or be superseded by, non-realism; second, how exactly should one state the non-realistic convention. Orthodox music, however ingenious, would not have been suitable in this context; one could not have risked the extraneous associations of given instruments. It was therefore necessary to construct

World Radio History

radiophonic sounds, using as a rhythmic basis the real sounds likely to be involved—the lapping of water against a boat, the deliberate tempo of two men rowing, etc.—and evoking the possibility of maritime sounds, sirens, foghorns, etc. A simple rhythmic, but highly evocative, phrase could be used for linking scene to scene, and—because it could 'take over' quite naturally from the sound of rowing—could underline the soul-destroying monotony of life lost at sea, of the horror of 'rowing in circles', as realistic sound never could. This simple complex must also be susceptible of variation in quality; it must gradually become 'foggier', less precise, more lost. Other stylized sounds were also necessary; something to represent, of all things, silence—'the silence of the ocean, the silence of others'—an indeterminate, barely audible pulsation, the kind of illusion of sound one hears when one really starts listening to silence. And a sound to parallel the words, 'The world reels. Sky meets ocean, ocean leaps to sky.' In realistic terms, what happens is a thunderclap; what was necessary artistically was a devastatingly unexpected sound which would sum up in a second the slow build-up of black cloud, the threatening roll of the sea, the shrieking impact of the storm itself. Any attempt to achieve this realistically could only be a poor copy; but a stylized upheaval, timed to occur at a psychologically unlikely moment—e.g. three silent seconds after the preceding scene (which ends on a quiet, intimate note of doubt)—clinches the emotional jolt which prose can only attain in long sentences, poetry in many words. The principle underlying the use of radiophonic effects in *The Ocean* was basically this: they would be a short-cut, the quickest possible aural means of bridging reality and poetry, they would—by their blend of unfamiliarity and affinity with known sound—provide a kind of adhesive. Music can do this, too, and in many contexts could do it better.

The convention was established at once, within seconds (in the passage quoted earlier). First, the basic rhythmic theme; superimposed on it the disembodied whisper of the unidentifiable voice, almost a part of the radiophonic sound; the illusion brusquely shattered by the realistic sound of an oar falling with-

World Radio History

in the boat and the down-to-earth voice of the sailor; silence, and the sound of water lapping. The action begins, and we already have an apprehension of the various levels which will mingle and interweave for the next hour and a half, and also of the immediate, uncomfortable situation. The first scene will not only establish this situation clearly and the characters involved in it, it will also, by its tempo, its use of silence between the most mundane question-and-answer, register the significance of what is not said. The formal rhythm of the programme will rest on an alteration of three states of mind: eagerness to speak at all costs when the characters feel they must talk 'for the sake of talking' and the dialogue clicks like a cogwheel; reluctance to speak when words are purely functional and meaning is between the lines; and refusal, or inability, to speak. In the third case we resort, if that is the word, to soliloquy, or to poetically conceived patterns of thought, in which the characters, drained of their exterior personality, whisper into our ear ideas and feelings to which they would not—and could not—admit, even to themselves, in private. The first two devices are conventional enough, though none the less effective for that, when suitably juxtaposed; the third, when manipulated in such a way that the unspeakable thoughts of each character are balanced in terms of poetry rather than of realistic prose, can add a new layer of truth to the performance. On the other hand, it is asking for trouble to use such a pattern arbitrarily and without relation to context; the convention, however firmly established initially, must grow, take root, flower. When we leave naturalism utterly in the lurch, the listener must not even question the fact, any more than he must be conscious of artifice when he is suddenly snatched back to reality. At this point, it is of course impossible to separate writing (or adaptation) from production, performance, technical finesse; there must be perfect understanding between all members of the team, and perfect realization, in each, of their potential as a whole.

There were, to me, many exciting radio moments in *The Ocean*. The moment when the boy falls asleep over the oars: the voice of the sailor spurring him on grows fainter in his ears and we

World Radio History

move closer into his befuddled mind as his perfunctory responses to reality become more detached; his dream of himself as a child, afraid of cockroaches, is natural and inevitable to us, since we enter the world of dream with him; his sudden awakening—the cockroach which becomes a submarine and then a whale—moves us in reverse through the same stages. The whale itself—the supreme and magical event of the voyage—is magical for us, since it is never seen or directly described. In the final moments, the priest, presumably unconscious, vaguely aware of a rock and of a man signalling, voices his unvoiceable state of being for our inner ear; his soliloquy is capped by the lost, lonely, utterly *real* cry of a solitary gull, and music, poetry and actuality coalesce. The remote 'Ahoy, there,' of the man who may or may not be on the rock, who may or may not exist anywhere except in the imagination, is the final disturbing touch. I would not claim that the radio interpretation of *The Ocean* was in any way *superior* to the original; that is not the point. But I am sure that within its own terms—and the evidence of interested listeners bears this out—it evoked an arresting emotional vision, in terms different from those of the original. The purpose of the broadcast was to 'entertain' and excite, to amuse and move, those members of the population who might be responsive to Hanley's theme and attitude; to offer them an aural experience complete in itself, not a substitute or a simplified version. And the broadcast can only be legitimately judged *as a broadcast*. Does it, or does it not, succeed within its own terms of reference? Assuming that we are prepared to surrender our prejudices and give ourselves wholeheartedly to the dramatic experience, to *receive* it without fear or favour, does it make us believe in the illusion or not? For me, any radio performance which does not compel attention and belief, inevitably and irresistibly, is so much wasted effort. And better a thousand failures which try to explore new recesses of the medium than a dozen supremely competent reproductions.

World Radio History

Conclusion

British Broadcasting still offers entertainment for most brows and tastes. One can argue round the clock as to whether or not it panders to its public or looks down on it, gives it too much easy listening or too much 'culture'. You may choose your side; indeed, assuming that you have any interest in the matter at all, you have no doubt already chosen it. Yet, as James Thurber has reminded us, you can know all about art without knowing what you like; if you don't like the kind of experience which Sound Radio offers there is not much point in trying to get to know about it, and if you do, you probably don't want to know. For knowledge can be a propellent, sending the imagination into outer space, or it can burrow holes underneath it till it finally collapses. Perhaps the listener should simply listen and the practitioner practise, without more ado. Yet it is difficult to avoid having at least some concern for the medium in which one works. Most creative radio programmes—whether they are specially written for the medium, adapted from theatrical drama, from film, story or novel—are likely to exploit the medium's potential, at least fleetingly, to have at least a few seconds of uniqueness; one may hope that in time the seconds will spread into minutes. They will not expand into hours unless both listeners and practitioners *care.*

It is perhaps pointless to continue to bewail the fact that so much effort has been and still is expended on filling blank air, simply for the sake of filling it, and that so few reserves of strength have been left over for filling even twenty minutes excitingly or mistakenly. For the art as it exists is still sporadic; it

World Radio History

could easily disappear altogether, if it were not for the fact that a great many devoted practitioners are determined that it shall not. A year or so ago, one heard people saying that Sound Radio might even lose its broader audience, certainly its minority groups; present indications are that both audiences will remain. But only, I submit, if the medium is used creatively, and —at least in minority programmes—at whatever risk of unpopularity; if it rests on its somewhat faded laurels and refuses to contemplate a large proportion of failures in its search for individuality, if, in fact, should make a futile attempt to 'give the public something', however good, rather than concentrating on giving the public something *unique*, it would eventually be as dead a duck as it is commonly supposed to be.

Trends in the rest of the world confirm this view. I have no inclination to take too seriously statistical analyses (abundant though they may be) of the number of bathroom listeners in Copenhagen, the percentage of car-radios switched on daily in Kansas, or the proportion of the adult population which watches any given television programme *for at least three consecutive minutes* in this country. This modern mumbo-jumbo undoubtedly proves something to somebody, but is hardly the most reliable guide to action that one could wish. Unless, that is, one is primarily concerned with stocks and shares. In which case, one will, no doubt, have cast this book aside many pages ago. But it becomes increasingly clear that in the world as a whole there exists a solid core of people who find that radio at its best provides a special kind of aesthetic experience; these are the people who stimulate those who work in radio to better and more penetrating work—and there is no doubt that the standard of radio writing and production, certainly in Europe, has been raised in the past few years; for the moment, the United States may be lagging behind in practical achievement, but the demand there, too, is growing, and cannot indefinitely be satisfied by foreign imports.

In fact, in spite of the manifold encouragements we have to disbelieve in modern man and the modern scene, in spite of our quick and often justified cynicism about universal education,

World Radio History

culture, progress, what you will; in spite of our natural intolerance for everyone who does not think precisely as we do, it is difficult to evade the conclusion that the discriminating minority is the potent factor in contemporary life, or if it is not, that there is little or no hope for any of us. Let us be cosy and comfortable by all means, as long as we can; a dachshund could wish for no more.

The world of Sound Radio is a tiny world. Yet it is a microcosm. And the evidence, as I see it, is that the most valuable inhabitants of this world will influence the shape of the world in which they have their being—not because of their numbers, but because of their percipience and need for progress. In Europe—more particularly in France, Scandinavia, Germany—radio is an important facet of civilization, and its artistic standards are improving; in the United States, the demand for 'cultural' programmes has never been higher; in the United Kingdom, a great many people get hotter and hotter round the collar because the Third Programme of the B.B.C., in spite of its shortcomings, is not allowed longer hours of transmission. These facts may or may not be important in the long term. Personally, I should be as surprised to learn, in twenty years time, that there is not a single person who would want to switch on a radio set in order to listen to something he considered worth while as I should be to discover that no one is any longer going to the theatre or cinema, watching Test cricket or television, even engaging his fellow-citizens in conversation. The test is: *is* it worth while? The only way to keep your club membership up is to ensure that your club is a good one; the way to do that is to make it better—and not by transient, espresso-bar standards—than the club next door. It is possible that Sound Radio might survive because of its ability to do economically what the visual media cannot afford to do—thanks to lack of physical complication and expense, short rehearsal time, etc. It is more likely, if it does survive, that it will do so because it has discovered its own strength and has decided to rely on it, uncompromisingly.

World Radio History

World Radio History

Index

Action painting, 56
Adamov, Arthur, 109, 153
Paolo Paoli, 109
Adrian, L. R., 58, 64
The Passionate Thinker, 58–9, 64
Aeschylus, 153
Alain-Fournier, Henri, 71
The Milk of Paradise (*Le Grande Meaulnes*), 61, 71, 76
Anouilh, Jean, 97, 153
Aristotle, 93, 94
Arnhem, Rudolf, 105
Radio, 105–6
Arts Theatre, London, 48
Auric, Georges, 66

Bakewell, Michael, 77
Beckett, John, 69
Beckett, Samuel, 17, 18, 29, 47, 48, 85, 89, 97, 100, 133
All That Fall, 17, 27, 62, 85, 100, 133–51
Malone Dies, 47, 69
Molloy, 47
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 40
Betti, Ugo, 81, 88–9, 97, 132, 153, 175
The Burnt Flower-bed, 88
Corruption in the Palace of Justice, 132
Bolt, Robert, 45, 53, 56–7, 95, 97, 109–10, 130
The Drunken Sailor, 53, 56–7, 109–10, 126, 130–1
The Last of the Wine, 45, 95
Bradnum, Frederick, 87
Private Dreams and Public Nightmares, 87, 105
Brahms, Caryl, 64, 115
Look Back to Lytteltoun, 115
Bray, Barbara, 71, 91
Brecht, Bertolt, 31–2, 109, 158
Mother Courage, 32, 109
Bridson, D. G., 115, 119–20, 153
The Christmas Child, 119
The March of the '45, 115
Britten, Benjamin, 64, 68, 76
Brook, Peter, 86
Browning, Robert, 46
Burden, Hugh, 74

Campbell, Archie, 70
Cary, Joyce, 116
The Horse's Mouth, 116–17
Chopin, Frédéric, 41
Christopher, John, 76
The Death of Grass, 76–7
Churchill, Sir Winston, 47
Clayton, Freddie, 76
Cleverdon, Douglas, 87
Cocteau, Jean, 32, 60, 66, 81, 127
Les Parents Terribles, 81
The Typewriter, 127
Commedia dell'arte, 55
Compton-Burnett, Ivy, 176
Conrad, Joseph, 51
Cooper, Giles, 28, 52, 57, 76, 82–3, 97, 100, 117–19, 124, 158
The Disagreeable Oyster, 83–5, 117–18
Mathry Beacon, 76, 82c–3, 132
Under the Loofah Tree, 118–19, 158–63
Without the Grail, 52, 57, 100–1, 124–5
Cooke, Alistair, 50

World Radio History

Copland, Aaron, 41
Corwin, Norman, 81
Craig, H. A. L., 64, 97
Crommelynck, Fernand, 97
Cross and the Arrow, The, 61

de Ghelderode, Michel, 97
de la Mare, Walter, 71, 80, 91
The Return, 71, 80, 91–3
de Montherlant, Henry, 97
Devlin, J. G., 151
Dillon, Francis, 28, 64, 124, 153
Draper, Ruth, 144
Dulay, Arthur, 66
Durbridge, Francis, 82
Paul Temple, 82
Dyce, Hamilton, 117

Eliot, T. S., 31
Sweeney Agonistes, 17
Everyman, 169

Fabbri, Diego, 153
Faber, Max, 154
Faerie Queene, The, 169
Fallon, Padraic, 28
Faulkner, William, 63
First Stage, The, 61
Fitzgerald, F. Scott, 177
The Great Gatsby, 61, 76, 115, 177
Flaubert, Gustave, 63
Forbidden Planet, 86
Forsyth, James, 36–7, 76, 97
Christophe, 37
Lisel, 37, 76
The Pier, 36
Forster, E. M., 82
A Passage to India, 82, 112
Fortuin, H. B., 69

Gerhard, Roberto, 87
Gibson, John, 87
Gide, André, 108
Prometheus Misbound, 108
Gielgud, Sir John, 30, 40
Gielgud, Val, 174
Gilliam, Laurence, 174
Goethe, Wolfgang, 95
Faust, 95
Gogol, Nicolai, 69
The Diary of a Madman, 69
Golding, William, 37, 70
Lord of the Flies, 37, 70, 176
Pincher Martin, 37, 70
Goon Show, The, 83
Gorman, Herbert, 95
Graham, Billy, 47
Graham, John, 117
Granville-Barker, Harley, 93
Green, Henry, 104
Green, Julien, 18
Grenfell, Stephen, 76
Gurney, Peter, 61, 156
The Masque of Falsehood, 61–2, 91, 105, 120, 156
Guthrie, Tyrone, 25, 101
Squirrel's Cage, 101–2

Hamilton, Patrick, 82
Caller Anonymous, 82
Hanley, James, 97, 107, 114, 117, 169, 178
I Talk to Myself, 117, 169–70
The Ocean, 107, 114, 116, 178–82
Hansford Johnson, Pamela, 82
Corinth House, 82
Harding, E. A., 153
Hauptmann, Gerhard, 97
Haydn, Joseph, 100
Hazlitt, William, 47
Hitchcock, Alfred, 28
Rear Window, 28
Hitler, Adolf, 47
Homer, 104
Hughes, Richard, 58, 99
Danger, 58
Huxley, Aldous, 70
Antic Hay, 70

Ibsen, Henrik, 31, 39, 55, 60, 153
Ghosts, 154–5
Hedda Gabler, 55, 154
Peer Gynt, 60, 169
Ionesco, Eugène, 32, 97

World Radio History

Isherwood, Christopher, 104
I.T.M.A., 83
Ivan the Terrible, 66

John, Errol, 107
Small Island Moon, 107
Jonson, Ben, 76
The Alchemist, 76
Joyce, James, 48, 95
Finnegans Wake, 46

Kafka, Franz, 169
Kazan, Elia, 29
On The Waterfront, 78
Keir Cross, John, 173
King Bull, E. J., 28, 82, 115, 153, 172
Klee, Paul, 100
Kleist, Heinrich von, 97
Komisarjevsky, Theodore, 32–3, 56

Listener, *The*, 50, 156
Locke, John, 49
An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 49
London, Kurt, 66
Film Music, 66
Lope de Vega, 97
Lorca, Federico Garcia, 97
Lucas, Leighton, 76

Maclaren Ross, J., 120
MacNeice, Louise, 27, 38, 49, 60, 112, 163
Christopher Columbus, 49
The Dark Tower, 38, 60, 110, 163–9
Salute to All Fools, 112
Magee, Patrick, 47
Man at Night, 61
Manchester Guardian, 156
Mann, Thomas, 169
The Magic Mountain, 169
Marlowe, Christopher, 97, 153
Tamburlaine, 176
Maugham, Somerset, 175
The Letter, 175
McKern, Leo, 170
Miller, Arthur, 18
Molière, 44, 153
Mortimer, John, 97, 128
Three Winters, 128–30
Moscow Art Theatre, 158
Mozart, W. A., 40
Muir, Frank, 62
Musique concrète, 85–6

National Film Theatre, 66
Norden, Denis, 62
Nusich, Branislaw, 70
Wife of a Minister, 70

O'Casey, Sean, 29, 31, 48
O'Farrel, Mary, 151
Old Vic, The, 46
Olivier, Sir Laurence, 58
O'Neill, Eugene, 31, 48
The Iceman Cometh, 48

Pagnol, Marcel, 81
Marius, 81
Painter, George D., 108
Picasso, Pablo, 22
Pilgrim's Progress, *The*, 109
Pirandello, Luigi, 97
Poe, Edgar Allan, 53
Portman, Eric, 93
Poston, Elizabeth, 70, 93
Prokofiev, Sergei, 66

Rachmaninov, Sergei, 75
Raikes, Raymond, 64, 175
Ravel, Maurice, 148
Read, Sir Herbert, 26
Reed, Sir Carol, 68
The Third Man, 68
Reed, Henry, 88, 97, 172
Reizenstein, Franz, 76
Repair of Heaven, *The*, 115
Richards, I. A., 51
Principles of Literary Criticism, 51
Rogue Male, 61

Sackville-West, Edward, 41, 44, 64, 68
The Rescue, 41, 64, 68, 76

World Radio History

Saroyan, William, 77
Tracy's Tiger, 77
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 95
Huis Clos, 95
Savage, D. S., 72
And Also Much Cattle, 72
Scarlatti, Domenico, 41
Schaeffer, Pierre, 86
Schiller, Friedrich von, 97
Scofield, Paul, 69
Scott, Paul, 97
Scriven, R. C., 90
A Single Taper, 90
Searle, Humphrey, 69, 87
Shakespeare, William, 46, 54, 58, 60, 86, 95, 153
Coriolanus, 59
Hamlet, 53, 58
King Lear, 30
A Midsummer Night's Dream, 154
Romeo and Juliet, 54–5
The Tempest, 60
Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company, 46
Shaw, George Bernard, 50, 145, 153, 175
St. Joan, 145
Sherrin, Ned, 64, 115
Look Back to Litteltoun, 115
Sibelius, Jean, 68
Sieveking, Lance, 28, 70, 73–4, 112, 153, 173
Small Back Room, The, 115
Strindberg, August, 31, 153, 175
Studio d'Essai, 86

Tchekov, Anton, 27
The Cherry Orchard, 43
Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 46
Thomas, Dylan, 17, 48, 63, 97, 101, 115, 170
Under Milk Wood, 17, 61, 101, 115, 170–2
Thurber, James, 183
Tovey, Sir Donald, 40
Treasure Island, 23
Trewin, J. C., 153

U.P.A. cartoons, 83

Verlaine, Paul, 95

Watts, Peter, 115
Waugh, Evelyn, 73
Brideshead Revisited, 73–5, 81
Webster, John, 57
Webster, Martyn, C., 82
Welles, Orson, 29, 30
Whelen, Christopher, 70, 72
Williams, Tennessee, 18
Worsley, Francis, 83
Wyndham Lewis, P., 97

World Radio History