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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Play for Poets

A CERTAIN unwieldiness of construction was noticeable in *The Great Ship*, Linklater's fantasy of the Desert War, which was heard again from 2YA last Sunday. The action takes place, we are told, in the summer of 1942, before the defeat of Rommel, and swings in space and time between a small sector of the front line, where six men confront two German tanks, and a point some miles behind the German line where two survivors of an armed reconnaissance are struggling towards that amount of safety and security represented by contact with their fellows. However the transition from group to group was occasionally effected with devastating obviousness, by some un-fantastic announcement such as "We are now moving forward in time, westward in space." Moreover the central concept of the *Great Ship*, which began as a mirage in the mind of Grenfell, and from there inspired the theme which runs through the play, was inadequately woven into the lives of the six men facing the tanks. Yet one net gain from what seemed to me Linklater's lack of radio craftsmanship was his device of separating dialogue and description. He could, for example, say that the captain of the tank hung out of the turret like a half-opened jack-knife without having to put the phrase in the mouth of a simple soldier on whose lips it would have been incongruous. The use of two off-stage voices militated against realism but aided understanding. But these are minor points. The play gave unlimited

opportunity for Linklater's Elizabethan talent for words. The man who could fill a page (or is it two?) in *Juan in China* with lusty and riotous description of a belly can hardly be at a loss when he is free to pour forth in ordered disorder the images filling the brain in delirium. The rich spate of words flows over us, but not so fast that we cannot savour the beauty and strangeness of the concepts they carry along with them.

### O, Blood, Blood, Blood!

SOME critic has said that the idea of blood runs like a scarlet thread through *Macbeth*. From Duncan's opening "What bloody man is this?" to Malcolm's final reference to the "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" we are never permitted to escape from it. In this respect, if in no other, Jack Maybury, who covered the Bos Murphy—Willie Jones fight for 2ZB the other Saturday night, is another Shakespeare. First chord in the remorseless theme was struck in Act I, when it was mentioned that Murphy's nose was bleeding, there was blood upon his face. In the course of the next four or five acts frequent mention showed he was still badg'd with it. By Act VI, or thereabouts Murphy's skin was well laced with gore, which had even flowed on to his trunks, making the white one red. (We can picture the laundress on Monday apostrophising the spot.) An act or so further on we received with relief our commentator's announcement that the fountain of Murphy's blood was stopped, only to find it resuming its remorseless flow in the next. (Personally, we were surprised that the young man should have had so much blood in him.) By Act XII, we had decided that boxing was fit to rank with cock-fighting as a blood sport, but were infinitely relieved to find that Murphy was still sufficiently unbowed to mutter into the mike a few words about the best man winning, before being led off to have a little water cleanse him of the dead.

### Philippic

JOHN SPEDDING'S recent *Listener* article on American radio comedians was not enthusiastic. It might have been even less enthusiastic if he had decided to include Australasian products, for whether the fault lies in ourselves or in our stars the fact remains that our radio humour is not what it used to be. A recent session of the Jack Davey *Cavalcade* from 2ZB might have been better if he had included streamlinings of the seven basic jokes, or even one of the seven basic jokes, whiskers and all (after all, their longevity is proof of their vitality), but instead it was merely a dreary conglomeration of improbable puns. (Example: "I'm a pilot in a soap factory—they give me the soap and I pile it.") However, there is some excuse for a radio show which must take the air week after week with something new or at any rate suitably disguised. Script-writers have no bottomless well of wit to draw from. There is less excuse for the low standard of such sessions as 2YA's *Here's a Laugh: a Quarter of an Hour with World Famous Comedians*, which relies on recorded material. If the session cannot be changed for the better it's high time



Wilfrid Owen Ltd., 101-6 Victoria Street, Christchurch, and Sydney.