

"UNDER MILK WOOD"

Sir.—On Sunday evening, January 16, 12B presented *Under Milk Wood*, a Play for Voices, by the late Dylan Thomas. Nothing in *The Listener*, and nothing at the time of the performance informed us that what we were listening to was a very heavily edited version of the original BBC Third Programme production.

The play is roughly 1800 lines in length: the 2B version lopped off some 700 lines! This was done by omitting entirely one of the most delightful ballads, and by generally paring down most if not all the characters to meaningless proportions.

It would be interesting to know who was responsible for this narrow piece of editing. It would be interesting to know who made the decision that what was, at the turn of a knob, freely available to British listeners was unsuitable for their New Zealand counterpart. A 2B time schedule is hardly warrant enough for removing the whole core of a play; and, indeed, when one examines the excluded section—"earthy and ripe," as the *Times Literary Supplement* commented, but no more than that—one suspects that time was not the argument.

If the problem was one of "suitability" would it not have been better to have considered the play as a whole, to have expurgated it, rather than to have removed the apparently too solid flesh and then refrained from mentioning that what the listener was confronting was only a badly articulated skeleton. To play the magpie thus, to pick with a very suspect fastidiousness for the bright innocuous bits, is, I think, irresponsible and a little dishonest. An expurgated version of *Under Milk Wood* could hardly have had Thomas's approval—one only needs to read the whole play or hear the complete BBC production to know that.

Levels of appeal, grades of integrity—surely the problem found implicit recognition in the setting up of the YA-YD-YC system. Do then the Commercial stations have no relation to this; no other standard than what they think will go?

Silently to edit an author's work is to pervert his intention: that's surely no new truth. In the case of *Under Milk Wood* the editing or expurgating made mock and confusion of what is at least a very considerable work. One wonders what silent and nameless censor made these decisions; how he reached them; what he may be working on now—*Take It From Here*. I don't doubt.

MAURICE DUGGAN (Auckland).

(The version of *Under Milk Wood* broadcast by 2B stations on January 16—the only version so far available for broadcasting in New Zealand—was edited by the BBC for its Transcription Service.—Ed.)

HOPE AND GLORY

Sir.—It is difficult to believe that J. Malton Murray reperused his short essay into Britain's hope and glory. Had he done so he could not have missed some very obvious inaccuracies. To quote: "Britannia no longer 'rules the waves.'" I believe Britain is rated third after the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. by Jane's. But to quibble, I understand the song says "Britannia rule the waves," which is more of a hope than a statement of fact.

I find it difficult to agree that Britons are slaves. They fear, they are subjected to economic pressures and international tension, naturally. But their history over the last 14 or 15 years—to quote no others—is sufficient rebuttal of Mr. Murray's statement. Out of the rubble of World War II—literally, econ-

N.Z. LISTENER, FEBRUARY 4, 1955.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

omically, and internationally—Britain has rebuilt a secure, and to me, a more glorious place. She has not let her difficulties defeat her. She has the courage of her convictions in international relationships. Even within the pressures of Communist and Western blocs Britain can still evolve independent policies and act on them. Mr. Dulles no doubt would welcome a more servile attitude.

To say "The glory has departed" is sheer nonsense. In a world noted for its instability, its political and economic duplicity, the Commonwealth stands as a monument to international co-operation. No matter how Britain's colonies were acquired or maintained, the Commonwealth into which they have grown serves as an example in goodwill and understanding, political and economic co-operation second to none in the world today. I find sufficient glory in that achievement alone to continue singing "Land of Hope and Glory" and "Rule Britannia" with great gusto at each and every opportunity. We would indeed be slaves without it.

MARIE RAE (Christchurch).

"RADIO ROADHOUSE"

Sir.—May I ask what is so very laughable about the recent inquiry into juvenile delinquency? The revelations contained in the report make it perfectly clear that there are many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of our young people who are quite cynical about the subject of sexual irregularities. And there will be more and more young people just like them so long as the National Broadcasting Service sees fit to permit speakers to make game of the subject as they did over all YA stations in *Radio Roadhouse* on January 17.

The state of affairs which caused the Government to set up the Commission of Inquiry was, without exaggeration, a national tragedy. As far as I know, the NZBS did not find anything particularly amusing in other national disasters. What, then, is so side-splitting in the subject of juvenile delinquency? Is our national attitude to be that physical annihilation is a subject to be treated with respect, but moral corruption merely the occasion for a flippant jest?

T. (Wellington).

EVOLUTION THROUGH SEX

Sir.—Delinquency may be defined as the violation of some important precept of the moral law. From this it is obvious that a person's concept of delinquency will be determined by his views concerning the moral law, and conduct which a Christian regards as delinquent may not be so in the eyes of one who takes a purely naturalistic view of man.

T.P. suggests that people have come to believe that naturalism should be the basic principle in morals because Christian standards have become confused. If people do imagine that naturalism can be made the basis of a moral code, they are badly mistaken. Naturalism is the theory that man is simply a part of Nature, no more than a highly evolved member of the animal kingdom, an extremely cunning species of the class Mammalia. In this view of man, there is no place for a moral code of any kind, for man is as incapable of moral good or evil as a rabbit or a monkey, and it is as meaningless to speak of juvenile delinquency among human beings as it would be if one were discussing young monkeys.

Furthermore, Christian standards of morality are not confused, as T.P. says, but perfectly plain and well-defined. He is equally mistaken in his view that "Christians place all their emphasis on what is forbidden." The Christian moral code is essentially positive, since it lays down that man, being a son of God, must behave accordingly, in order to prepare himself for the vision of God in the life to come. It is summed up in two positive commandments—to love God and love our neighbour—and is set out in more detail in those parts of the New Testament which deal with the various Christian virtues. St. Thomas has expounded this moral code in systematic form in his *Summa Theologica*, showing how and why man must believe in God, hope in God, and love God, be prudent, honest, religious, respectful to parents, patriotic, obedient, grateful, truthful, liberal, brave, magnanimous, patient, persevering, chaste, sober, gentle, modest and so forth. Furthermore, commenting on the text of Scripture, *Turn away from evil and do good*, he writes: "Doing good is the complete act of justice, and, so to speak, the principal part thereof. Declining from evil is a more imperfect act, and a secondary part of that virtue." G.H.D. (Palmerston North).

"AMAH! AND THE NIGHT VISITORS"

Sir.—I was aware that your reviewer J.C.R. had seen a television performance of this Menotti opera while overseas. In fact, it was his glowing account of it some time ago which made me so keen to listen to it on Christmas Day. Listening again, he believes it to be a work of rare beauty, of true simplicity. He still found it engaging.

Listening for the first time, I found it unutterably boring, disjointed, and for the most part confusing. It appeared to me to be pastiche modern, and not very well done at that. Indeed, so boring did it seem that the only true adjective to describe this disappointing work is "Menottinous." D.G. (Wellington).

THE POETIC SPIRIT

Sir.—Your readers are grateful for much interesting matter in *The New Zealand Listener*. It must be a difficult task to select articles to suit all tastes, and you strive to do that, for the most part successfully.

There is, however, growing dissatisfaction with the kind of "poetry" published frequently in your paper. Perhaps in this brave new uncertain world, a new uncertain poetic spirit has been born. I should be grateful if one of its votaries will show me the points of beauty and merit in the following, published in *The Listener*, December 24, under the title "Spring":

Whatever the reason, buds bud;
Proliferate pale green—Oh Resurrection!
While the miraculous birds sing descant.
Guessing the season (for whatever reason) good.

"Lumme!" as a well-known radio commentator often so eloquently remarks. Lumme! Are we reduced to this?

D.R.R. (Otaki).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

UP FROM THE SLIME

Sir.—There are points connected with evolution which are seldom or never discussed. Man is gifted with common-sense and reasoning powers, but often fails to apply them. Much that is said and written today about evolution and kindred matters overlooks certain indisputable facts. First: The earth is at

least 2000 million years old; this is proved by the discovery of coal deposits at depths of over three miles. Since such deposits have been formed by the decay of vegetation which has sunk into the earth at a scientifically calculated rate of slow motion approximately to one inch per thousand years, the age of the earth can be logically determined.

This, surely, is a process of devolution—or evolution in reverse, which cannot be refuted. This being accepted, as it must, why reject the reasonable corollary of its upward manifestation?

Secondly: Astronomers have proved that space is illimitable, and that in addition to our own universe, with its sun in control of innumerable stars, there are more and still more similar universes at the back of beyond, each with its attendant galaxy of countless constellations.

Common sense tells us that among these starry hosts the existence of other worlds populated more or less like our own is extremely probable, and that at the present rate of scientific progress this probability may become fact very soon. The effect of such proof upon the traditional tenets of Christianity need not be stressed.

Thirdly: There is an astonishing lack of understanding in respect of the terms eternal, eternity, world without end, etc. Surely they indicate "everlasting"; but few people appear to realise this meaning. Obviously, that which is eternal, which has no end, could never have had a beginning. Some two thousand millions of years ago this earth came as an incandescent mass from outer space, and the process of cooling and subsequent development of vegetation and life generally upon it has been and continues to be the subject of interesting speculation. But the main point of interest is that *nobody knows*. Scriptural quotation does not help us logically, for it has been well said that even Satan can quote Scripture for his own purpose.

The human mind can never grapple satisfactorily with this, to us, insuperable mystery. What we can do, however, is to make the most of life here on earth, with all its beauties of Nature and Art, leaving the past and the future to the consideration of blind seekers after unattainable truth.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

F. E. MANING

Sir.—I have a battered copy of Maning's book, *Old New Zealand, A Tale of the Good Old Times*. It was published in Auckland, a second edition, dated 1863. On the fly-leaf is written: "Packer Martin, His Book, Auckland, N.Z., May, 1863." Then in a different handwriting, above Martin's name, is "Alice Evereste, from," and again, under the date of May, 1863, is written, "Alice Evereste, Wanganui."

Neither Packer nor Evereste are common names. It would be interesting to know if any reader of this letter can give any information about them.

BOX 19 (Manakau).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Square Leg (Whangarei): Many thanks. You are right, and the entry has been corrected. In all matches apart from the Tests, the team represents the M.C.C., which finances the tour. In a Test match, the team automatically becomes an English side.

Bruce Wightman (Auckland): See reply to Maurice Duggan. The records you mention are not available for broadcasting. You will see why if you examine the notices on the cover and the label.