

Misty Tower

I MUCH enjoyed the first part of *These Characters Remain*, a programme on W. B. Yeats (1YC). Alistair Campbell's perceptive, yet self-effaced review of Yeats's letters made some excellent points about the man and the poet, and provoked interest in the book as well as renewing interest in the poetry. But Pat Wilson's *Staying at Ballisodare*, a poem on his search for Yeats's tower in Ireland, rather took the edge off my enjoyment. The reading aloud of a long poem often exposes weaknesses which are not apparent on the printed page. Despite William Austin's impeccable reading, I found this lengthy piece hard to listen to, not because it was too long, but because of what seemed to me to be a flaccid quality in the whole work. The piece appeared inflated beyond the sustaining power of the initial inspiration. I have liked Mr. Wilson's other poems, but here wordiness and lack of real poetic energy made me increasingly restless. Would Yeats himself, I wonder, have been so long-winded about anything, even his strange little myths? But by all means let us have more programmes like this,

in which New Zealand poetry is submitted to the searching test of being heard.

Baker Street Myth

THE continued vitality of the Baker Street myth is, I am convinced, the result of the rich, thick, plummy atmosphere of the Conan Doyle tales, and of the personalities of Holmes and Watson. In themselves, the stories are not really very good detection. As if aware of this, the current 12B series goes out of its way to provide lashings of atmosphere—the sound of cab-horses on cobblestones, the wailing of Holmes's violin, references to the gasogene and London fog, the shag in the slipper, and so on—all a delight to the hearts of true Sherlockians, and eradicating the unhappy memory of films about a "modernised" Holmes, as out of place in a world of diesel engines, as Mike Hammer would be in Baker Street. It is hard to imagine a more distinguished duo for this series than the two knights, Gielgud and Richardson. Yet, in "The Blue Carbuncle" it was Richardson's wheezing, fruity, innocently awe-struck Watson who impressed me rather than Gielgud's rather cold and colourless Holmes. I realised, as never before, that if Holmes is Conan Doyle's wish-fulfilment of his sleuth-self, Watson is surely his more humane and lovable side.

—J.C.R.

Off the Sound Track

NOOSE, which I heard from 2YA last Tuesday (April 19) is an adaptation from the sound track of a film based on a play, and really this seems to be as good a way of getting a radio thriller as any other. It enjoyed the advantage of terse, nutty wise-cracking film dialogue, with the further advantage that one could hear every word, and the loss of visual action was no grave drawback since any reasonably experienced cinema-goer could use his mind's eye in these heavily-chorded intervals between bouts of dialogue. The only thing listeners would have found at all jolting was the extreme suddenness of the finish. Cinema-goers, of course, are used to unravelling the plot on the way home with the aid of another sheep's head, but radio whodunits like to be fed with a spoon rather than a *fait accompli*. And NZBS addicts may have been further bamboozled by having the baddie speak in one of those affable Cockney accents that we tend to associate with Harry Painter benevolence.

Not Without Prejudice

THE trouble with listening to a discussion on a subject close to your heart is that you tend to evaluate its worth in terms of ends rather than means. Since the Wednesday discussion of Women Drivers (April 20) reached

the conclusion that (a) Women are as good drivers as men, or (b) if they aren't, it's their husband's fault for not letting them have the car often enough, I should rank it as an excellent discussion. Mrs. Patricia Guest scored an outstanding success as Joan of Arc, her examiners being played (with more gumption than grace) by Messrs. Dickell, Gibson and Gilbert. I have seldom heard a more flagrant example of sex-loyalty than the chairman's opening remark, addressed to the traffic-officer on the panel, "You must have had some queer experiences with women drivers. Wouldn't you like to tell us about them?" and his subsequent attempt to head off the lady when she volunteered to tell some of her queer experiences with men drivers. Or am I perhaps being prejudiced?

—M.B.

A Wife in Padua

FOR vitality, high spirits and a fine rumbustiousness, I give you the New Zealand Players' production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Players were fortunate in having Barbara Jefford and Keith Michell to play again the parts in which they were so successful at Stratford last year. Richard Campion has made a most successful radio adaptation, which wisely omits the sly episodes and concentrates on the central

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