

## POETRY READINGS

Sir,—It is in the field of the arts alone that self-appointed critics may do their work of destruction. Whatever reasons Anton Vogt may have had for his letter (*Listener*, May 11), does he seriously mean by that to stop my readings of New Zealand poetry? The quality of the work of the more recent New Zealand poets seems to me the most astounding feature of this country, and for the past nine years I have tried to make my audiences acquainted with it. (Within the course of a year I have spoken New Zealand verse publicly in Dunedin, Timaru, Christchurch, Blenheim, Wellington, Levin, Palmerston North, Tauranga and Auckland.)

In my broadcast over 2YC on Anzac Day the themes of the poems ranged from J. S. Bach's music to the work of the modern French painter Rouault. Is Mr. Vogt justified in calling these "simple descriptions of New Zealand themes?" Or do these poems not rather require a treatment as varied as any works of overseas poets, which Mr. Vogt considers I am perhaps capable of interpreting? I assure him that he himself is quite safe from my "distortions."

I am grateful that the poets whose work I value highly think otherwise. The late M. U. Bethell, who has been acclaimed by responsible critics New Zealand's first major poet, has honoured me with her handwritten MS of *Time and Place* after my first reading in Christchurch in August, 1943.

MARIA DRONKE (Wellington).

Sir,—I protest against "Eurydice's" suggestion that you conduct a survey to ascertain what poetry techniques listeners like the best. There must surely be room for all methods of presentation—at least we should not try to democratise verse-reading.

The experience of hearing a poet read his own work badly can be quite as useful as hearing a trained elocutionist do it even moderately well.

But by all means keep the request session methods out of the poetry programmes. VOCO (Wellington).

Sir,—I see we now have poetry on the radio menu. I see, but I do not hear; and why not? Because, for some obscure reason, known only to the programme organisers, poetry must only make its appearance in the lonely hours of the chill and stilly night.

There must be thousands of would-be listeners who, like myself find great enjoyment in hearing real poetry, clearly and feelingly read by a poetry-lover, and I'm glad that such features are now included in our broadcasts.

But why must they be included so late at night? Are they intended as a soporific to reduce the consumption of habit-forming sleeping pills? I don't really think their creators meant them to be used in this way. Why can't they be given a place of honour in the early evening, when we are not too tired to appreciate them?

So here's to early-evening poetry—no introductions, no analyses or inquests—just poetry.

S. McWILLIAMS (Taumarunui).

## MAORI PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—I was interested in R. T. Kohere's article on how to pronounce Maori. Right pronunciation of the vowels is essential, as he says, but I think it would help if we remembered

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that every syllable in Maori ends in a vowel. We should not then hear such atrocities as Rot-ter-rua. Also every vowel in a word is pronounced. Some English vowel sounds are not found in Maori, as a in what, e in Pete, i in pile, o in hot, u in mute.

Ng is also a stumbling block, especially at the beginning of a word. It is one letter and slightly nasal like the ng in singing, as ngorongoro, to snore. Bishop Williams gives the e sound as in fête (using the popular English pronunciation fayte) and also e in send.

Without a knowledge of grammar it is not easy to know when a vowel is long or short—as wahine, woman, wahine, women. However, with a little care we should be able to overcome most difficulties in proper names and place names. CAROB (Wairoa).

Sir,—Your correspondent J. H. Harvey says, "I am sure R. T. Kohere has slipped when he states that Maori names (for that matter, any Maori word.—R.T.K.) should be accented on the first syllable." I know some pakehas contend that there is no accent in Maori—evidently J. H. Harvey is one of them. On the other hand, I don't know of any Maori who agrees with them. It is true that often in ordinary speech the accent is hardly noticeable, nevertheless there is an accent on the first syllable. Take my own name, for instance. To glide over the Ko would not matter much, but it is more correct to accentuate the syllable. One great mistake pakehas make is to accentuate and lengthen the second syllable. They would avoid making the mistake if they consistently placed the accent on the first syllable. Bishop Williams does state, in his *Grammar*, that the accent is to be placed on the first syllable. To place accent on a syllable is not the same thing as lengthening it. R. T. KOHERE (East Cape).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

## OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER

Sir,—May I join with Audrey Cumming in her condemnation of A. R. D. Fairburn's derogatory statement about our pioneers?

However, I feel quite sure that had Mr. Fairburn been old enough to converse intelligibly with his grandfather (and my father), the late Edwin Fairburn, C.E. (born Paihia 1827); or had met his great-aunt (and my aunt), the late Elizabeth Colenso, he might have found out that his forbears were far from being a helpless lot.

ARTHUR FAIRBURN (Auckland).

## "LOOKOUT" SPEAKERS

Sir,—There must be many listeners who, like myself, welcomed the "Lookout" series of comments on World Affairs. Not the least enjoyable feature of these talks was the independent outlook of some members of the panel of speakers. I speak in the past tense, Sir, because some of the most able, and incidentally most independent members of the panel, appear to have been replaced so that now we hear in "Lookout" what we can read almost every day in the editorial columns of our leading dailies.

There must surely be room in this "best little country in the world" (I quote the politicians) for the free expression of varying interpretations of

world events. Perhaps the difficulty is that the radio has become the docile mouthpiece of the State. In any case I am, along with other listeners, disappointed that there is no longer room on the "Lookout" panel for those who do not share the lookout on world affairs which is popularised by the newspapers and adopted by the Government.

I respectfully suggest, Sir, that newspaper editors have more than enough opportunity to air their views. Let's hear some of the others—even if we sometimes disagree with them!

W. F. FORD (Mount Roskill).

(The practice since "Lookout" began has been to bring new speakers in from time to time. This means that former speakers have had to stand down, though some of them have returned, and others will undoubtedly return in future.—Ed.)

## INTERRUPTED MUSIC

Sir,—Your correspondent "Mercy on the Minority" protests (quite rightly) against the iniquitous habit of using severed portions of classical records to fill in odd moments. The official comment that this practice is not permitted doesn't mean a thing. Permitted or not, the habit flourishes.

A specific example occurred on May 1 at a minute to 9 p.m., when Station 2YA treated its listeners to an aggravatingly few bars of a Scarlatti sonata.

However, on second thoughts, perhaps even this is better than a similar issue of jazz band with the accent on percussion.

PIANISSIMO (Wellington).

## SPEECH THERAPY

Sir,—I have read the following words in your journal (April 27): "Any child with a speech defect may attend special clinics in the larger towns." This was repeated in a talk from 2YA on Speech Therapy. It is not correct. In every large New Zealand town children are constantly turned away from the speech clinics. These are the intellectually-handicapped children, many capable of being improved in speech, many educationally suitable for Education Department occupational centres, but not accepted at speech clinics.

AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT (Wellington).

## THE CRITICS

Sir,—Some criticism of the Critics' 1YC fortnightly session is long overdue. Aimed at offering a service of informed criticism on books, music, drama, films and other cultural activities in Auckland, the session scrapes low in the barrel when it presents the film *The White Tower* as a subject for discussion. As well as failing to maintain the usual standard of material, the choice of this subject shows a lack of co-ordination in programme planning. Surely the chairman of the panel knew that this film had been reviewed twice in that very same week from 1YA. Moreover, following upon a discussion of the play *Tartuffe*, in which the Critics agreed that it was better to tackle first-rate material with a doubtful degree of success, than to give a polished presentation of inferior stuff, the discussion of a film that was almost unanimously condemned, made its choice all the more open to question.

Apart from this lapse in standard, the session has generally provided interesting

listening. The only persisting drawback to full enjoyment of the session is the chairman's tendency to channel discussion along the lines of his own opinions. Why, for example, should he have been so eager to elicit favourable comments on the C.A.S. production of *Pygmalion* and on the Massey Collection of English Painting, when the Critics were performing a useful service in pointing up the inadequacies of each? A lighter and more discreet rein on the discussion would be more in keeping with the duties of a chairman. A.C. (Auckland).

## ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION

Sir,—The matter is not in itself very important, perhaps, but, in the interests of accuracy, I would like to draw attention to a *Listener* note on a recent 4YC broadcast of a Balzac programme of mine. The note said that I "claim that Balzac 'was an Existentialist without knowing it.'" Not only does such a phrase not occur anywhere in my script, but, on the contrary, part of the programme was devoted to demonstrating that, in contradistinction to modern Existentialist fiction, Balzac's novels show the inadequacies of Sartrean Existentialist concepts, and reveal Balzac as a great *Essentialist* novelist. The distinction is, I assure the writer of the note, by no means an unimportant one.

J. C. REID (Auckland).

## ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Sir,—Might I put in a plea for better programmes on Saturday nights for the old folk who are often alone, and who depend on the radio for their entertainment? The young people are usually out on Saturday nights, and surely it is not too much to ask that one station be reserved for music that is beautiful and harmonious, such as light classics and the songs of long ago. We would appreciate an hour or two of this type of music.

JUST GRANDMA (Christchurch).

## BAND RECORDINGS

Sir,—Recordings which were made by the National Broadcasting Service at the recent band contests in Wellington and at other contests previously have not been made available to the public. Bandsmen who participated are keen to have these souvenirs of their efforts. Why does the NZBS refuse to sell these records? Surely it would be more than worth their while to put them on the market? The NZBS cannot possibly expect to make more profit by reserving the rights of playing these recordings on a few widely scattered programmes.

I know definitely that these records would find a good market and I cannot see why they should not be released. Many bandsmen will back me up on this and are just as keen to have something done about it.

R.R.F. (Christchurch).

(The recordings made by the Broadcasting Service are made for broadcast only. That is as its contract with the contest authorities provides. Further, the Broadcasting Service is neither equipped nor authorised to make pressings for commercial sale.—Ed.)

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. H. March (Gisborne).—See page 8.  
T. P. Hogan (Christchurch).—Much too long.  
Linda Bennett (Palmerston North).—Anzac Day programmes are designed to conform to the spirit of the occasion. It therefore becomes necessary to suspend a number of regular features. This is true also of Good Friday.