Between Two Worlds

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The Pre-History and Formation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop

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Richard Peter Hollingum

Contents

Abstract

In 1963, Delia Derbyshire took a music score by Ron Grainer, manipulated it through various pieces of electronics, cut and re-edited lengths of recording tape and produced what has arguably become one the most memorable theme tunes to a television programme: *Dr Who*. That Derbyshire and her colleagues had been able to produce such a series of sounds that were different, unworldly, and to the general listening public, so new, was interesting in its own right. That they were doing this as an official unit in a couple of small rooms at one of the BBC's studios is even more interesting. This was the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, a specialist unit that ran from 1957 until 1998, producing sound effects, incidental music and themes for BBC radio and television. This thesis makes a focussed study of the emergence of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, providing grounds for revision and expansion of the canonical history of the BBC.

The importance of the work that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop created is undeniable, as is its contribution to technical development, both in sound and in musical instrumentation. What has not been previously interrogated is how the Workshop came about, who the key players were in its origination, and how the BBC influenced and facilitated its establishment. Much of the impetus for the Workshop arose from the needs of the department of Drama (Sound) whose creative lead is central to this narrative. This thesis also shows that having created the demand for such a creative unit, it was another section of the Corporation, Central

Programme Operations that was in the position to physically create the Workshop.

Whilst the department titles provide an objective nomenclature, it is the people, the personalities who were central; these were personalities who pioneered the new developments of voice and sound recording and manipulation, and included engineers, scriptwriters and producers. These personalities are represented by an examination of Sir William Haley, Val Gielgud, Donald McWhinnie and Desmond Briscoe. The thesis also explores the impact of the new technology of tape recording, the convergence of institutional expectations and inter-generational creative drives that led to the exploration of the aesthetic possibilities opened up by these new technologies, and the cultural and societal influences upon these creative energies.

Introduction

The BBC Radiophonic Workshop is often regarded as a vital component of the British Broadcasting Corporation's cultural infrastructure, providing innovative sound design and music for a wide range of radio and television between 1958 and 1998. This thesis will make a focussed study of the emergence of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, thus providing grounds for revision and expansion of the canonical history of the BBC. This history will be confined to the period from the end of World War II leading up to the physical creation of the Workshop in 1958.

The BBC Radiophonic Workshop was established in the late 1950s. Its fame grew in the early part of the next decade thanks to the theme tune to the science fiction television series *Dr Who* (1963 – present). This theme tune is the one product most people still associate with the Workshop more than half a century later. In spite of this singular association, the Radiophonic Workshop produced much more in its forty-year life and it was only the advent of computer technology for all musical experimenters that led to its closure in 1998.

The importance of the work that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop created is undeniable, as is its contribution to technical development, both in sound and in musical instrumentation. What has not been previously interrogated is how the Workshop came about, who the key players were in its origination, and how the BBC influenced and facilitated its establishment.

This thesis demonstrates that much of the impetus for a creative sound-generating workshop arose from the needs of the department of Drama (Sound). This impetus was accompanied by similar drives from the departments of Music and Features but it was Drama that provided the creative lead and it was Drama that pulled the various strands together. This thesis also shows that having created the demand for such a creative unit, it was another section of the Corporation, Central Programme Operations that was in the position to physically create the Radiophonic Workshop.

There are a number of objectives to this research, as will be shown. To identify the personalities was central; these were personalities who pioneered the new developments of voice and sound recording and manipulation, including engineers, scriptwriters and producers. Of similar importance was an exploration of the impact that the new technologies of voice and sound recording and manipulation had on those personalities. Also of significance was to show how the convergence of institutional expectations and inter-generational creative drives led to the exploration of the aesthetic possibilities opened up by these new technologies. The study also set out to explore the cultural and societal influences upon these creative energies.

The study of the events, personalities and technologies that led to the creation of the Workshop has received little documented research, though there are a number of published documentary accounts of its work, especially regarding electronic music and the *Dr Who* theme. *The First 25*

Years of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop (1983) was written by Roy Curtis-Bramwell from conversations with Desmond Briscoe, who was a member of the original team, and later the Head of the Radiophonic Workshop. The book was written to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Workshop and in Briscoe's own words it was 'a bit cobbled' (Briscoe, 2002). It has some significant and comprehensive detail though it is written for the enthusiast and not necessarily the academic researcher. Louis Niebur's *Special Sound* (2010) takes a much more objective and academic stance, and looks at the legacy of the Workshop as well as the period of operation. Both texts also have some detail of the origins of the Workshop but Briscoe and Curtis-Bramwell only touch on it lightly. Niebur, whilst discussing the role that Drama played in the creation, does not interrogate the people in detail, and as his book covers the creation and operation of the Workshop throughout its life, it covers a wider time period than this thesis. The five volumes of Asa Briggs's *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom (1961–1995)* give a detailed picture of the history of the BBC, however in volume V, *Competition 1955-1974*, which covers the period of the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop, Briggs only refers directly to it four times, never referring to the events leading to its establishment. Burns (1977), and Briggs (1985) provide critical commentary of the BBC during the period in question, but do not mention the Workshop. A contemporaneous picture of Radiophonic effects and their usage in radio drama can be found in McWhinnie's *The Art of Radio* (1959) but again, no mention is made of the unit.

This study is concerned with the coincidence of the cultural, social and technological strands of development, and will show that this resulted in the formation of the Workshop. In the time frame covered by this study (1945-1958) the BBC was in the midst of a major period of technical development set against a backdrop of funding issues and a continual debate about the status of the Corporation. There were questions from inside as well as outside the BBC about its role in this technical development and its role in supporting the technical creatives. The debate included those who could see that television was the way forward, those who continued to push back the boundaries of production values in radio in response to the challenge posed by television, and those who were exceedingly sceptical about the ability of television to become a threat to the wireless.

The BBC came out of World War II as the nation's favourite and had earned international standing as a provider of quality news. Lord John Reith, the first Director General, had departed before the war started, and it was not until 1944 that the Corporation settled upon Sir William Haley, after a period of relative instability with three Director Generals in six years. Haley, who was a keen supporter of radio as a medium, engendered the Third Programme, a proposed apex to a pyramid of cultural aspiration for the masses to climb, to complement the reformed Home Service and Light Programme. He was followed, in 1952, by Sir Ian Jacob, in many ways the antithesis to Haley, forward thinking, forward planning; a man who not only had to deal with the competition facing radio, but more importantly, competition the BBC faced from Independent

Television – and from the financial pressures that had started to bite into the Corporation.

While the managers were trying to manage the finances and the competition, the engineers were developing better transmission systems. Television was expanding across the whole of the country, radio was introducing FM transmission, and within the radio arm of the BBC, Sound Broadcasting, a rolling programme of updating studios and control rooms had commenced, as most had not been touched since the start of the War. In the studios the technical staff were getting more involved in the production processes while the producers were getting more involved in the technical aspects of the work. It was from this scenario that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop was born.

This research accounts for the work of these pioneering technical creatives within this wider landscape. The study will identify and examine the cultural, social and technological conditions prevailing in which these creatives led the genesis of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. It is a media history rather than an institutional or technological study and its focus is on the role the policies, the personalities, and the growth of expertise each played in a relatively new area of technology. In particular the study examines how this group prepared the way for the creation of what was to become one the cultural icons of the latter half of the twentieth century, namely the *Dr Who* theme-tune.

The Workshop defined a uniquely British approach to the electronic creation of music, an approach that was as important as those made in Germany, France or Italy, and its work is still revered today, with recordings and stage shows revisiting the catalogue of sound and music created by Delia Derbyshire, Daphne Oram, Brian Hodgson and many others who had been involved in its operation. The Workshop provided the music and sound effects for *Dr Who* as well as for *Blake's Seven* (1978-1981) and both the radio and television versions of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978 & 1981), although producing sound and musical effects for science fiction was most certainly not its only role. In addition to these major programme contributions, the Workshop created effects for comedy programmes such as *The Goons* (1951-1960), and also many incidental pieces for news and general programme introductions.

This research necessarily omits discussion about some elements that contributed directly or indirectly to the establishment of the Workshop. Niebur (2010) thoroughly discusses music, particularly the drive that came with Daphne Oram. Similarly not explored is the role of the Entertainment department, who provided comedy shows, most significantly *The Goons* (1951–1960), whose call on Studio Managers for effects was extreme.

Possibly the most significant omission is that of the influence of the 'Space Age'. Among the technological developments that came out of the Second World War rocketry and the subsequent possibility of space travel intrigued and enthralled. Space travel had gripped the minds of many

readers for the past forty years or more (HG Wells' *First Men in the Moon* was published in 1901)) and science fiction books and films proved to be an expanding interest. In the early 1950's the ideas of space travel and exploration were high on the fiction and factual agendas and gripped public imagination. At the BBC Charles Chilton wrote and produced *Journey Into Space* (1953), which, according to the liner notes on the 1998 BBC Radio Collection, 'has been described as "the first really successful science fiction series on radio"' (BBC, 1998). In order to promote the acoustic of being in space, the soundtrack uses some effects, particularly distortion of voices and the sounds of an oscillator 'passed through the National Physical Laboratory's reverberation chamber for a lone and early venture into "spacey" sounds' (Briscoe & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 25). Oscillators had been used to produce sounds in broadcasting since the early days of the BBC though it was *Journey into Space* that gave their demand a 'fillip' (Brooker, 1965). Niebur discusses the interpretation and significance of these 'new' sounds when he defines

> two positions for electronic sound effects … sound as representation of "unknowableness," whether surreal, comic, threatening, or acousmatic (or any combination of these), and sound as coherent representation of a rational, logical but unknown technology, a synchretic *acousmêtre* (Niebur, 2010: 10-14).

The original production of *Journey into Space* predates the Radiophonic Workshop by four or five years but its soundscape is one that could have been easily associated with the Workshop. However, there has been a

conscious decision not to explore this strand in any detail within this narrative. As acknowledged above, space travel was very much on people's minds and it is accepted that productions such as Chilton's must have influenced the creation of sounds and the call for an in-house facility to produce them, but this narrative illustrates a particular line leading to the recording of *All That Fall* (1957), from the development of the Third Programme and through discussions about experimentation within the production team of radio drama. This narrative explores the relationship between the creation of dramatic productions, as opposed to (and what Gielgud might have referred to as) populist radio serials and it is clear that *All That Fall* is the focus to which strands point. It is also apparent through archival research that serials in general and *Journey into Space* in particular, were not on Gielgud's radar. That the role of sound creation for science fiction played a part in the larger story is without doubt. That role in this narrative though is not explored to the benefit of experimentation in radio drama.

Whilst these have been omitted, attention has been paid to the role that the institution itself played. There were, superficially, two opposing drivers in the Workshop's formation: the needs of the Corporation and the needs of those on the studio floor. This is the picture created by the official documents of an institution where everyone had their own job and was not permitted to stray out of that role; yet it became apparent that in the studio, it was slightly irrelevant what your role was, the simplest demarcation being drawn between actor and production team. However, what may be considered as binary opposition, upon investigation proves

not to be the case. Tom Burns (1977) points out that the Corporation was structured under Reith, based on a model of administration used in the Civil Service, a model that was still in place in the 1950s. Burns also notes that this model was copied by the non red-brick universities and still exists in those institutions. Within this system, it is entirely possible for the institution to have its own drivers whilst at a lower level, that of studio or undergraduate programme, another set of drivers appears that may be at odds with that of the parent corporation. However, as with the university model, it was also highly likely that interesting and cutting edge development work was being undertaken at department level with little or no intervention from senior management - until it is deemed necessary. Consequently, a quick, though not intentionally trite answer to how the Radiophonic Workshop came about, is that the institution functioned in a way that allowed departments to create innovative work, and during that period, where a production was concerned, it did not matter which department you came from, what mattered was the production itself.

Studying a project as identifiable as the Radiophonic Workshop, a collaborative enterprise within the BBC, requires a theoretical grasp of the dynamics and structure of the organisation and the development of an appropriate historiography. To this end a number of different resources was called upon and examined, comprising previous published histories of the BBC (including those commissioned by the BBC, and the BBC Year Books), documents from the BBC Written Archives and BBC radio output of the period, particularly from BBC Drama (Sound) Department (recordings, documents from the BBC Written Archives, published texts).

Resources were also called upon to identify the technical developments of the period that relate to the Radiophonic Workshop and to consider the formation of the Radiophonic Workshop in relation to the contemporary setting, the growth of the BBC, and radio technology of the period.

A major theme in this narrative is that of key individuals. The time, the place and the personnel had to be right for the Radiophonic Workshop to have been created. Engineering and Central Programme Operations would not necessarily have moved in the way they did had not William Haley launched the Third Programme, giving opportunity to the departments of Drama (Sound) and Features to create ever more ambitious productions that pushed the boundaries of writing, direction, studio management and sound. Nor might they have acted so if the Head of Drama had not run an effective creative department, or brought in Donald McWhinnie as his deputy who, in turn, produced Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* (1957). The Workshop did not just appear out of nowhere, and the elements that led to its creation were not isolated occurrences. It is not possible, though, to discuss these elements without considering the people that brought them about. A commentary on the institution of the BBC at the time provides a useful backdrop to how the infrastructure was set up, but it is equally important to understand the people who ran that infrastructure; it is the people who make things happen. Thus this narrative is about some significant people in the BBC during this period and their role in the creation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The two main examples are Sir William Haley and Val Gielgud. Both were strong characters; Haley had left the BBC by the mid 1950s whilst Gielgud, who had been there since

the end of the 1920s, continued into the 1960s. Each, in his own way, laid out part of the pathway to the Workshop. Interviews with key personnel, pre-existing or carried out during this research, have also provided a significant contribution. These afforded a personal view, which whilst not conflicting with other recorded histories, added some extra detail and background. In some instances they also suggested routes for further investigation that had not so far been visible.

The research methods and methodologies are discussed and defined in the first chapter. The empirical evidence of written records and audio documents is a central resource in this study, but documents by themselves are of limited significance. When the English historian EH Carr asked in 1961 'What is history?' he challenged any notion of the innocent selection and assembly of facts. Hayden White (1973) went further when he called into question notions of historical truth and objectivity, prioritising narrative and language in the writing of history. Both Carr and White suggested a certain form of relativism. However this study is sensitive to the constructed-*ness* of history while proceeding from the conviction that empirical evidence, appropriately theorised, is enlightening.

Primarily this study is a media history, as will be shown, but there are elements of cultural history, not just because the Radiophonic Workshop has become a part of the culture of the United Kingdom, but also because the research examines the culture of the day as a discrete strand in the narrative. The period under examination saw the rise of Cultural Studies

with the publication of key texts by Richard Hoggart (1957) and Raymond Williams (1958 & 1961). In order to take a view of the cultural landscape of the period, their texts, and others contemporaneous to the time have been read and reviewed. Indeed Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) offers two opportunities here, firstly that of gaining an insight to the period through the eyes of a founder of cultural studies, and secondly as an example of testing the academic validity of a resource. The theme of using texts of the period extended to other writers including those who have written about their reminiscences of the BBC. Much use is made of these and other resources, particularly the large quantity of archive material in the BBC Written Archive Centre. The very diversity of material used as well as the problems posed by some artefacts, particularly internal memoranda and oral histories, is explored and discussed in this first chapter.

As well as the examination in this thesis of the practical dealings at studio level and the institutional strategies, the world beyond the BBC cannot be ignored and is discussed in the second chapter. Britain in the 1950s saw some significant changes, socially, economically and technically, (Marwell, Judt, Hennessey, Sandbrook, Kynaston) which had corresponding influence and impact on what went on within the Corporation. The wireless was a major source of news and information as well as providing entertainment and education, the war having 'consolidated the advance of radio, making a radio set a necessity which practically every household had to have' (Marwick, 2000:194). The BBC was central to the cultural life of the country, as it had been since the Second World War, 'the BBC's

influential role is unparalleled elsewhere in the world; focussing the nation's interest on cultural and political concerns at home and abroad' (Chignell, 2008). It is important, therefore, to be mindful of this position, that as the minutiae of detail are discussed, it is done within this larger context. It is also important to understand that despite the appearance that events happened irrespective and independent of others, connections exist and these connections are crucial. For this reason, this research follows a path from the broad to the narrow, from the outside world to the internal workings of BBC Sound, particularly that of Drama (Sound), and as the chronology moves, so does the shift in emphasis, reflecting the shift in the narrative from one driver to another.

Within the institution, a number of developments existed that had a direct or indirect bearing on the creation of the Workshop. For such a unit to be created, and to provide those that created it with the climate to carry it out, the BBC needed to push things that way. Externally, technological and cultural developments were changing what was possible and what the audience expected. Internally, for the BBC, this was also true. After the end of the Second World War, the Third Programme gave ample opportunity for creativity and experimentation. It is the latter term that forms the theme for the third chapter, examining the world inside the BBC. The Corporation's call for more experimentation across its radio departments and services provoked a key meeting within the Drama (Sound) department, leading Val Gielgud, its Head, and the producers, to examine the work being carried out in their name. Using primarily the records from the BBC Archives, chapter three pieces together the

discussions regarding experimentation that were held at the time, and explores the increasing gap between the older, established work of the Drama department and the newer work promoted by the technical creatives.

The production of Beckett's *All That Fall*, broadcast in 1957, is the focus of the fourth chapter and it will be shown that this is the point where the strands all converge. The drive to offer content for the Third Programme was a gift to the more creative producers and writers. The fact that this play was produced by a team comprised of people, both technical and studio staff, who became the core of the Radiophonic Workshop, makes this production highly significant. The technical requirements of Beckett's script, as interpreted by the producer Donald McWhinnie, kept the Studio Manager Desmond Briscoe and colleagues busy, whilst demonstrating clearly the collective approach of them all. The story of the Radiophonic workshop did not stop there. Running parallel to the creative work in Drama (Sound) were the technical developments in the departments of Engineering and Central Studio Operations, the latter steering the development of electrophonic effects (later to become radiophonic effects) and eventually provided a structure and physical premises for the establishment of the Radiophonic Workshop.

Nothing is created in isolation and nothing exists as an object without there being a concomitant subject. That the BBC Radiophonic Workshop came into existence is easily proven. Where the starting point was has been much harder to deduce and indeed there will not have been one

single starting point; as a river may be traced back to its originating streams, so there were a number of streams that led to the opening of the Workshop in April 1958. This research shows that there were clearly numerous people contemplating a similar idea at the same point in time. Some became directly involved, others came in, added their contribution and moved off on another trajectory. Some may have had the ideas whilst others had the practical or the enabling skills to realise the ambition. Whatever the case, it is clear that the Workshop did not suddenly appear. Elements were developed in different places, the technology in Engineering and the creative ideas in Drama and Features. The all-important drawing together of these elements, the enabling, came though in Central Programme Operations, in a period of coalescence that continued for over a year.

This media history narrative proposes that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop could not have been formed without the will and the drive of a number of people, from different sections of the BBC. It shows that one of the key drivers came from Drama (Sound). It demonstrates that the impetus was provided by the Corporation's call for more experimentation, and this in turn had arisen from the economic and cultural pressures of both television and a changing audience. The Corporation as an organism continually grows and changes to meet new demands and to survive. In the case of the BBC in the second half of the twentieth century, its evolution was prompted by the stimuli of competition and technological development. This evolution produced a number of developments, including the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Chapter 1

Writing a History

This chapter discusses the research processes used in this thesis and debates the issues that arise from this discussion. This thesis is a media history but that simple statement belies the number of factors that have to be considered academically in order to provide a sound and appropriate basis for the research.

The first section is a review of texts that either discuss the BBC and the Radiophonic Workshop, or are called upon to support the wider context within which this history is written. Briggs' *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (1961–1995) and the small number of texts about the Radiophonic Workshop are reviewed, as are those books about the BBC that were written during the period under study. A wider discussion is undertaken about the nature of history texts, and the section includes an extensive review of Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957).

The period under review was an important one in the history of cultural studies and Hoggart's book is a text that has to be referred to in any history of the period that touches on the culture of the time. However, there are many interpretations that have been put upon Hoggart's work since its publication, not all of them necessarily as its author would have wished, and not all of them entirely accurate. Since this was, in the early stages of this research, an essential text and as his discussion on newspapers is set against that of Raymond Williams in Chapter 2: Examining the Cultural Landscape, *The Uses of Literacy* as an academic text is interrogated in the second section in detail.

The final section is about the methods and methodology employed in the research. It opens by trying to pin down what sort of history is being written, how has history as a discipline changed and why are such definitions important? Having established a firm ground on which to build the history, there follows an examination of writing in a narrative style, a style that readily suits the story of the development of the Radiophonic Workshop over a period of time. This narrative is built around archive material, oral histories and contemporaneous texts. These are all examined in turn and the important issues are discussed. The use of memoranda and other documents from the BBC Written Archives present their own problems but also provide an insight into some of the authors that is beyond the mere words on the page. More has been uncovered about two of those authors through the BBC Oral History Project, a project that prior to this research was not available to academics or researchers outside the confines of the BBC itself. Permission to have access to the material reviewed here involved the use of the Freedom of Information Act. Personal interviews were held with Desmond Briscoe, Barbara Bray and Dick Mills. The interviews with Briscoe and with Bray have both been used to illustrate the problems of transcribing speech and how the unspoken parts of speech can be represented in text. Both the Oral History Project and the personal interviews lead to a discussion on memory, a continuation in a way, of a discussion about the nature of truth. The interview with Dick Mills, whilst valuable background material for this research, offers nothing that is directly cited here. Mills joined the Radiophonic Workshop in 1958 after it had been operating out of Maida

Vale studios for about six months and had no first hand experience to offer to the narrative of the period being discussed.

Literature Review

The five volumes of Briggs' seminal work, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* give a detailed picture of the development of the British Broadcasting Corporation from its origins to 1974. A natural starting point for research in anything connected with the BBC, these volumes integrate that information found in the BBC Written Archives with interviews and written documentation from a variety of sources, not least Government papers. It is important to note that if only because of its originality (the first volume was published in 1961), its comprehensiveness and its breadth, it is a marker against which to judge other media histories.

It is also important to note that the author defends his work as '*a* history of broadcasting rather than *the* history' (Briggs, 1995: xvi) despite the use of the definite article in the title. Briggs said that he told Sir Ian Jacob, the Director General at the time (1958) that he would write the history on 'one understanding, which is quite clear between us – that it will not be *the* official history' (Briggs, 2004: 5). This desire to avoid the 'official' nature of the exercise was the result of reading AJP Taylor's commentaries on official histories of wartime diplomacy, agreeing with Taylor that 'the people who had written about it were really, in a sense,

apologists' (Hendy, 2008: 31). Yet there is an assumption easily made that these five volumes, if not 'the official history', are the nearest thing there is to it, and any academic or historical researcher into broadcasting in the UK that concerns the BBC would start with Briggs' opus. In fact, the debate as to whether or not it is the official history is rather irrelevant, given that there are no other histories of that depth and scope that cover the period from the time before the birth of the British Broadcasting Company to the Annan Committee gathering its evidence in 1974. There are other texts that touch on aspects of the Corporation, offering either commentary and discussion of the period within which they were written or written themselves as histories. However these have been few and far between and with respect to the period covered by this research, they can be counted on the fingers of less than one hand: *The BBC From Within* (Wythenshawe, 1953), *British Broadcasting: Radio and Television in the United Kingdom* (Paulu, 1956) and *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (Burns, 1977). There is a larger number of relevant texts that are useful covering the period, and specific texts for very specific areas, yet no single volume or volumes compete with those of Briggs' for stature. So, despite his protestations, there is an argument that says, until a contender comes along, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* is *the* official history. Even if this were not true, if Briggs kept himself faithfully independent, there is a discussion to be had about the objectivity of writing a history from the inside. There is also a discussion to be held regarding what has been included and what has been omitted.

In preliminary reading for this particular thesis it was apparent that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop did not arouse much interest (and thus was of little value) within the history of the Corporation. In Volume V, *Competition 1955-1974*, Briggs refers directly to the Radiophonic Workshop only four times, twice in relation to *Dr Who* (Briggs, 1995: 420-421; 925), once in connection to technological development of stereo sound (ibid: 830) and once as a passing reference to the supply of music for a radio series (ibid: 942). Given the important role the BBC has played in pushing technological developments, and the role the Radiophonic Workshop had played in not only *Dr Who,* but also in supplying music and sound effects for forty years, one might expect rather more detail from a major history of the Corporation.

This is not the only incidence of possible selective exclusion. In a 1961 review of the first volume, Peter J Pirie, writing in the *Musical Times*, said that whilst reading the book 'with great profit' he noted that Briggs tended to concentrate on the 'legal and social aspects' and was not much concerned with music (Pirie, 1961: 709). This volume, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (Briggs, 1961), covers the early years of the development of the wireless and the eventual formation of the British Broadcasting Company; it stops at the issuing of the Royal Charter and the creation of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Interested as he was, Pirie noted 'Very little is said about the fascinating electronic and technical aspects of the advance except as they affect the legal situation of the amateur constructor' (Pirie, 1961: 709).

To understand this omission better, the situation that Briggs was writing in needs to be examined. He was granted considerable access to the BBC's archives, to personnel, both past and contemporary, including the 'invaluable co-operation of Lord Reith' (Briggs, 1961: Preface). A noted historian, Briggs' approach to cultural and social history are not supported by all and, as the story of broadcasting in the UK unfolds, these volumes become more and more a reflection of the BBC and its role. Reviewing Volume V, *Competition 1955-1974*, Stuart Hood, writing in the *International Socialism Journal*, starts from that very standpoint, stating that it is misleading to call it a history of broadcasting in the UK as it is 'really that history as seen from within the BBC' (Hood, 1995), Lacey adding that the history is written 'mainly through metropolitan eyes' (Lacey, 2006: 5). Raphael Samuel's review of Volume V was published in 1996 in the *Times Literary Supplement* and later appeared in an extended form in *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain* (1998). Samuel at once praises Briggs but declares also that Briggs spends some considerable time building up a picture of an historian whose pedigree is sometimes complementary to the History of Broadcasting but at other times is not reconciled. Samuel concedes that Briggs 'has always been a modernizing spirit, forward looking and progressive' yet:

> Curiously for a historian who .... in other spheres has shown a particular interest in material culture and the small detail of everyday life .... Briggs BBC is top-down history of a very old-fashioned sort. (Samuel, 1998: 187-188)

Spanning forty years, the five volumes do change but as much as a result of the material and resources that are available as for the development of the broadcaster. However, there is always the knowledge that given a commission from the Director General, it was to that post that the author was expected to bow. This 'top-down history' is very much interested in the policy, and Samuel points out that this left 'little or no space for the initiatives which welled up from below, or which flourished on the peripheries' (Samuel, 1998: 188). Samuel underlines this point by noting that there is not a paragraph on *Blue Peter*, 'barely a line on Dennis Potter' and that earlier volumes did not discuss the stars of the day (ibid: 188). As has been shown, music and the Radiophonic Workshop can be added to this list. All these have in common the fact that they arose from, or were brought about by individuals at the bottom of the bureaucracy chain, the programme makers and the performers, the technicians and the producers. The recording of the policy was far more important for Briggs than was the recording of a programme. Perhaps it was this documenting of events at the upper levels without drawing any conclusion, the historian recounting the facts as they are found, that caused Burns to comment that Briggs' history was not as incisive as it could be (Burns, 1977: 18).

Consequently, when contemplating *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, it is to be considered as *the* history, in that there is no other, but also to be considered as the history of the policy, the legislation, Parliamentary Committees, the relationship with Government, all these and more, but a history that tells precious little about broadcasting; 'Not

broadcasting but policy-making is the true subject of this work, and the unifying thread of the five volumes' (Samuel, 1998: 188).

In addition to Briggs' volumes, great use has been made of texts produced during, or soon after, the period. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, some texts are, effectively, part of the archive, having content that contributes to the narrative, the obvious examples being the *BBC Yearbook* or *BBC Handbook.* This book – some years given one title, some years the other - was produced annually between 1928 and 1952 'to provide a record of the broadcasting year and supply useful information about the BBC' (Jacob, 1955: 7). After a two-year break, the new *BBC Handbook,* henceforth known only by that name, came into being. It aimed to

> provide a clear and reliable guide to the workings of the BBC, to survey the year's work in British broadcasting, and to bring together as much information about the BBC as can be assembled within the covers of a small book. (Jacob, 1955: 7)

The 1955 edition gives the researcher a lot of information about the broadcasting services, programmes and departments and a review of the year, including annual accounts. There is also a collection of information and advice, from transmission stations and their wavelengths, to weather forecasts, from the Reith Lectures, to how to get tickets for BBC shows. Much of this information is of great value to the researcher but, as Chignell (2008) counsels, caution must be present when interrogating the

texts and the tables as this is information provided by the Corporation to present the official corporate view, and not necessarily the view of its employees. Citing the 1959 edition as an example, Chignell notes:

> This handbook described Six-Five Special, an innovative youth programme and an important departure for the BBC as "a national institution equally enjoyed by the parents". But this glowing assessment contrasts sharply with the judgement of Cecil McGivern (Controller of Television) who is quoted as saying that the programme was "unacceptable" and "apart from the general chaos there were too many girls who wore very abbreviated skirts…." (Chignell, 2008)

For the broadcasting historian these handbooks provide a wealth of information, some highly useful commentary (given the precaution noted above) and add to the picture being built within the narrative, a picture of the people through what they do and do not say. As with the memoranda discussed below, the omissions, and what might now be referred to as 'spin' put on the passages in these books, the researcher can add to the picture that is being drawn.

There are three other texts of the period that have provided a different view to that of Briggs. Lord Simon of Wythenshawe was Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC from 1947 to 1952 and his book *The BBC From Within* (1953), pre-dates Briggs first volume by eight years. It does offer a good overview with most content written by Wythenshawe but

some sections are written by key personnel; of particular interest here is the section on the job of the producer, particularly those parts written by Val Gielgud for Drama and Nesta Pain for Features. The author's intention 'was to explain what the BBC is, how it works, what are its strong and weak points and why' (Wythenshawe, 1953: 15). Burton Paulu's *British Broadcasting* of 1956, also preceded Briggs. Paula was an American educational broadcaster who wrote a number of books about broadcasting in Britain and Eastern Europe (Hahn, 2003). His book was written at the point where the Independent Television Authority was beginning to get established and when the thirty years of broadcast monopoly had come to an end. Paulu also had the advantage to be looking from the outside, or rather, the researcher has the advantage that here was something written about the BBC that was not only not of the BBC but not of the UK, indeed right outside of the country. His account offers a good description of the beginnings of broadcasting in the UK (Crisell, 2002: 26). Burns' book, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, was published later, in 1977, but includes research that he first carried out in 1963. Although his research is after the period of this study, Burns' book has valuable commentary regarding the workings of the institutional hierarchy and how it affected the people working in the studio, as well as the managers.

Humphrey Carpenter's history of the Third Programme and Radio 3, *The Envy of the World*, (1996), played a considerable role in this research. As well as the important detail about the origins and early days of the Third Programme, it was Carpenter's access to the BBC's Oral History Project in the writing of the book that led to the application, under the Freedom of

Information Act, to access the oral histories of Val Gielgud and William Haley. Carpenter had also used some interesting interviews that either he or his researcher, Jennifer Doctor, had carried out but alas he disposed of all his research material once he had completed his book.

If Briggs' volumes are the first things to reach for when researching the BBC, then the first book to take up for any research into the relevant technical developments is Edward Pawley's *BBC Engineering 1922-1972* (1972). In many ways the antithesis to the expanse of Briggs, Pawley's book, still revered amongst BBC Engineers today – 'the ultimate reference on the subject', 'the Bible!' (BBCeng.info, n.d.) – focuses on the technological developments made by the BBC Engineering Division across the first fifty years of broadcasting. Concentrating on the 'facts of the operations' Pawley is meticulous in his descriptions and manages not to venture 'too far into the jungle of external events that so often influenced the action' (Sandell, 2012: iv).

Two other books of the period that are of value in this research are Val Gielgud's *British Radio Drama 1922-1956* (1957a) and *The Art of Radio* by Donald McWhinnie (1959). Gielgud's book is a good history, insomuch as it is as much autobiography, albeit unintentional, as it is descriptive of the growth of radio drama. Gielgud is an important character in this narrative and one might have expected some discussion within the final chapter of the book regarding the appointment of a deputy after twenty years as the Head of Drama (Sound), and to the concerns harboured by Gielgud about new theatre of the time, particularly the plays of Samuel Beckett. In fact

his deputy, Donald McWhinnie gets one mention - and that in relation to a series of plays, *Between Two Worlds*, produced in 1955 - and Beckett, along with a host of other writers of the period, does not receive a single word. McWhinnie's own book, *The Art of Radio* (1959), has been extremely important in the genesis of this research project. In the book, McWhinnie describes the producer's work, how, in the mid to late 1950s the new technology of the period was being put to use to create new, interesting and different soundscapes within radio drama. He particularly focused on his studio and pre- and post-production techniques. His description of the processes involved in the production of *All That Fall* was the inspiration for this research. There have been a small number of useful books published in the past fifty years that discuss radio drama and production techniques, but it is this text that set the standard, just as much as Lance Sieveking's *The Stuff of Radio* (1934) did over twenty years earlier.

Of a more general nature, there are biographies and autobiographies, which span the detailed life story, through reminiscences to a collection of lengthy anecdotes. Of the first type, Val Gielgud's three volumes of autobiographical writing, *Years of the Locust, One Year of Grace* and *Years in a Mirror*, (1947a, 1950 & 1965) provided useful material about the Director of Drama (Sound). At times fragmentary, often opinionated, how they were executed often said as much about the man as did the words themselves. The other key text of this category is DG Bridson's *Prospero and Ariel* (1971) which charts Bridson's involvement in the BBC from his beginnings in Manchester through to his role of Assistant Head of Features.

As with Gielgud, there is much learned about the man and his contemporaries, as well as about the practice of broadcasting. Leonard Miall's book, *Inside the BBC - British Broadcasting Characters* (1994) contains twenty-five short portraits of key people in the history of the Corporation, each one taken from his viewpoint of having worked with them. Another reminiscent book that is more anecdote than commentary is *Those Vintage Years of Radio* (1972) by John Snagge and Michael Barsley. Most of these books may contribute little directly to academic research but they do offer the researcher the opportunity to read about the people who put the broadcasts together, something that Briggs does not offer. Furthermore they offer the opportunity to know the people in order to contribute to an understanding of their actions and responses as perhaps observed in the official records.

It has been noted earlier that little had been written about the Radiophonic Workshop, and that any of the texts discussed above contained no comment with the exception of Brigg's four entries in *Volume V*. Briscoe and Curtis-Bramwell's book *The Radiophonic Workshop: The First 25 Years* (1998) is essentially Briscoe's reminiscences as Director of the Workshop, having worked in there since it started. The book was written to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Workshop and in Briscoe's own words it was 'a bit cobbled' (Briscoe, 2002). However it does provide some interesting detail. Louis Niebur's book *Special Sound* (2010) looks almost exclusively at the influence that the Radiophonic Workshop had on music, particularly electronic music;

nonetheless, his early chapters do cover the same pre-history period as this research.

Niebur's book came out of his PhD thesis. The only other thesis that was located that covered similar ground was *Trials in the Soundscape: Achievements of the Experimental British Radio Play* by Louise Cleveland. Cleveland submitted her thesis in 1973 and indicated that she had interviewed Donald McWhinnie as well as having assistance from a number of key personnel within the BBC. The thesis analyses a number of plays by Giles Cooper, Louis MacNiece and Samuel Beckett with discussion as to how these playwrights dealt with sound as well as discussion on the plays themselves. On being contacted in 2007, Cleveland had recently had a flood in her basement and all her papers were in storage in an unknown condition. Subsequent appeals for information were not responded to.

Another group of texts was those that dealt with the subjects of history and cultural studies. General histories of the period underwent a renaissance in the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, no doubt inspired or prompted by fiftieth anniversaries and the fact that here was a period which until then had not been under the historian's scrutiny. These texts were also a logical follow-on from the vast number that looked at Great Britain during the Second World War.

Arthur Marwick's *A History of the Modern British Isles 1914-1999* (2000) directly ties in the two world wars to the development of the modern British Isles. The tables and explanations thereof are extremely useful

particularly in explaining the narrow defeat of the post-war Labour government, an important detail often lost in some more general readers. Possibly of more importance as background to this research is Marwick's expansion of the notion of "total war", war as a cataclysmic event that not only includes the waging of war 'in the conscious decisions of generals and politicians … to subordinate flesh and blood completely to machines' but also includes the 'overall effects … on society' both during and after the war (Marwick, 2000: 9). Marwick and Emsley propose that these overall effects can be defined as ten areas of social change, areas that overlap, and include 'economic and technological change; social structure (including questions of 'class' etc)', 'high and popular culture; institutions and values' (Marwick & Emsley, 2001: 1). This research does not investigate whether there is a direct relationship between the Second World War and the events that led to the creation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, an idea that at first may produce some comment of admonishment, some criticism of relative stature. However, the fact that the technologies that led to the ability to distort old sounds and create new ones came out of technologies developed or created during the War does seem to indicate that the link may not be so worthy of rebuke. Similarly, there are issues of class, high and popular culture and institutions (namely the BBC), discussed in these pages. Additionally, as the First World War can be seen as the end of the Victorian world of order and culture, so the Second World War can be seen as the final throes of the Edwardian period, the end of the rule of those born at the start of the century. Perhaps most importantly for the culture of the United Kingdom,

this was the start of the period of social and cultural influence from the United States.

Tony Judt's *Postwar - A History of Europe Since 1945* (2005). examines the post war development across Europe and shows in some instances how similar the changes and pressures were from country to country. The demise of the Edwardian 'high-collared' attitude, a key point in this narrative, is shown to be mirrored across the continent, Judt exemplifying with the development of 'modern' cinema (Judt, 2005: 231).

Never Had It So Good (2005), written by Dominic Sandbrook, covers the period from 1956 to 1963 on the premise that the 1960s got all the attention but in fact it was the period preceding that had laid the foundations for the creative and economic boom. The chapters are based around themes that were important aspects of the period, from the Suez Crisis to Beatlemania. Peter Hennessy's *Having It So Good* (2006) mixed scholarly research with a comfortable writing style that led it to become a popular success and receiving many favourable reviews and the Orwell Prize for Political Writing. David Kynaston's *Family Britain* (2009) again covered a similar period, 1951 to 1957, but unlike Sandbrook and Hennessy, takes a different view and looks at the minutiae of everyday life through extensive use of the Mass Observation Diaries, the diaries and reminiscences of others, and newspapers.

For Hennessy, Kynaston and Sandbrook, these three books form part of a larger work by each author. All three are aimed at the popular audience,

though Hennessy and Sandbrook have a great many footnotes that aid the researcher but may impair the general reader's experience. This is not to say that these texts have no academic worth. On the contrary, they offer good coverage of the period and are cited in other works, such as Hennessy's *Never Again – Britain 1945-1951* (1992) acting as a source for paragraphs in Marwick's *History of the Modern British Isles 1914-1999* (2000). Hennessy has a narrative style that is similar to Briggs' *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom,* though without the almost obsequious use of referring to a character twice in one sentence, once in the name of the time and once in any subsequent honour bestowed, for example, 'David (later Sir David) Frost' (Briggs, 1995: 355). Hennessy tells the story of the period through the political activities of the time, describing in detail things that might or might not be relevant and, at times, perhaps paying more attention to gossip than to incisive analysis (Tomlinson, 2008: 515-517). Treading this line between meaningful historical research and popular writing for a mass audience with a thirst for history is difficult. The appeal of these is more based on the fact that the period under scrutiny is recent enough history for many readers to have been there, and that what is reviewed is either still a personal memory or part of a common or community memory. The end result is frequently a text that amasses information yet does not interrogate that information to any great depth, the scope of the history being much too large to provide any great detail, a criticism levelled at Sandbrook (Lowe, 2007: 163), but equally applicable to the other two as well.

Such populist or cross-genre texts as these have their place and do provide some background to this research. The Mass-Observation Diaries, much used by Kynaston, provide a particularly rich picture of lives in the period, for example Herbert Brush in November 1947, noted that on returning a loaned ladder to a neighbour, the neighbour's wife 'showed me her television set, and invited me to see it some evening when there is a good show on' (Garfield, 2005: 465)

Texts of this type are not necessarily that new. Harry Hopkins' *The New Look* (1963) is described as a social history of the 1940s and 1950s though it mainly deals with the time after the Second World War to the end of the following decade. A useful book today, in that like Burns' *The BBC Public Institution, Private World*, its proximity to the period makes it almost contemporaneous commentary, and for the researcher there is the double benefit of reading a history of the period that is written almost at that time. Hopkins was a journalist and took a lot of the material from newspapers and popular media, thus this social history is an intertwining of the media providing the information which is often about the media. It can, therefore, be seen as a logical conclusion to the rise in social importance of mass media, and how social history came to have a symbiotic relationship with cultural history.

This period, the 1950s, saw the rise in the United Kingdom of television, an addition to the mass media of newspapers and radio. As the influence of the media and the influence of the United States through these media grew in prominence, the roots of cultural studies were formed, growing

out of, or rather away from, the Leavisite approach to literacy criticism. Chief amongst the leaders of this new discipline was Richard Hoggart. His contribution to the study of post-war culture both in terms of content and approach cannot be ignored in this research and *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) was an effective starting point in researching the social and cultural aspects of the period. *The Uses of Literacy* was published in the midst of the 1950s, to acclamation that still continues nearly sixty years later. This acclamation, at times bordering on reverence, requires some investigation as further reading drew into question the validity of this text as perceived by other researchers.

The Uses of The Uses of Literacy

It has been established that while this research into the origins of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop is a media history, it has to take into account other, related, disciplines as well as research that would influence the historical interrogation. One such discipline to consider is the field of cultural studies, and as an examination of the cultural landscape of the period is an important strand of the research, a close study of *The Uses of Literacy*, and its author is relevant. Such a study of *The Uses of Literacy* provides an examination of the issues that affect the worth of Hoggart's book as a document in research of the cultural landscape of the 1950s, as well as simply providing a view of the period.

The *Uses of Literacy* is cited as one of the essential texts for popular culture students, and Hoggart himself has gained a revered status in some enclaves of academia. There is, however, a major inconsistency – if that is what it is – which must be considered before examining his depiction of cultural life in the middle of the twentieth century. The *Uses of Literacy* is concerned with the impact of popular culture upon the working-class, especially 'teenagers' (a 1950s creation) with cash in their pocket and time to spend it, and whilst Hoggart may attempt to qualify this central discussion by placing it firmly in historical and social contexts, it does not make easy reading now. His views of those he terms working-class are very much taken from the outside, having moved away from his own working-class upbringing.

Richard Herbert Hoggart was born in Leeds in 1918. His father, a house painter, died in 1920 of brucellosis; his mother brought him up, with his brother and sister, in a Dickensian 'stone cottage with a small yard and outside loo'. She managed 'with surprising skill' (Hoggart, 1957: 43) on £1 a week from the 'Guardians' an early form of local social security, some of which would be in the form of tokens that she could exchange in one shop for groceries (Wroe, 2004).

One day the eight-year-old Hoggart returned home from school to find his mother collapsed on the floor. She died of TB shortly afterwards and one of his few memories of this time is of holding hands with his siblings at her funeral, where he heard an aunt say that "orphanages are very good nowadays" (Wroe, 2004). But the children were distributed among

members of the family and he says he "got the best deal" in going to live with his grandmother, although for several years he had to share a bed with an uncle. At primary school he failed the 11-plus examination because of a poor maths paper, but the headmaster appealed, pointing out how good Hoggart's English essay was and arguing that the maths teaching was inadequate. He was awarded a grammar-school place and went on to win a scholarship to Leeds University in 1936.

Hoggart got the only first in English in his year (he was introduced to T.S. Eliot at the degree ceremony) and was offered a two-year scholarship to do a PhD at Cambridge, but within a week of graduating, he started an MA which he completed in nine months. In 1940, he was called up to the Royal Artillery and took part in the invasion of North Africa (Wroe, 2004). After the war he was appointed Staff Tutor at the University of Hull in 1946, Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leicester in 1959 and Professor of English at Birmingham University in 1962. In 1964 he founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and was its director until 1973. After Birmingham, Hoggart became Assistant Director-General of UNESCO (1971-1975) and finally Warden of Goldsmiths, University of London (1976-1984), after which he retired from formal academic life.

Hoggart has been a member of numerous public bodies and committees, including the Albermarle Committee on Youth Services (1958-1960); the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting (1960-1962); the Arts Council of Great Britain (1976-1981); and the Statesman and Nation Publishing

Company Ltd (1977-1981). He was also Chairman of the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (1977-1983), and the Broadcasting Research Unit (1981-1991), as well as a Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (1962-1988). He was also an expert witness at the *Lady Chatterley* trial in 1960, and his arguments that it was an essentially moral and 'puritan' work, are sometimes viewed as having had a decisive influence on the outcome of the trial. It is said that these words were merely repeated from those he had heard on a building site whilst on his way to the court.

The Uses of Literacy was published in 1957 but was originally submitted to the publishers in 1955, though some of the observations Hoggart calls upon took place many years before then. The book started life as a primer for tutors in adult education about newspapers and popular fiction (Gibson & Hartley, 1998: 14) but by the time it was completed it had become a commentary on the culture and the cultural changes of the working class. When Hoggart started on this book he was writing it as literary criticism very much influenced by the Leavises and he intended to interrogate newspapers and popular fiction. However as he progressed he became 'more uneasy' (ibid: 14). A text he refers to in a later interview, QD Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1939) made him particularly troubled: 'She talked brilliantly about popular fiction, but it was always distant from her as if she had a peg on her nose' (Gibson & Hartley, 1998: 14). Perturbed by this distancing, not from the object (the texts) but from the subjects (the readers) Hoggart changed the book and started to write

about the audience, the readers and consumers, the working class, something that he confessed he knew much about.

The first half of *The Uses of Literacy* is a description of working class upbringing and culture as experienced by Hoggart as a child growing up in a poor area of Leeds. This set the context within which he could now debate in the second section, the quality of the newspapers, the magazines and the books.

After submitting the manuscript Hoggart received a major surprise when the publishers' lawyers opposed the publication on the grounds that much of what he had written, and the names of the institutions and people he connected them with, would easily give rise to a series of libel cases (Owen, 2005: 148). One of the major pointers towards the tone of the text within was the original title, *The Abuse of Literacy*, the content purposefully intended to be a 'polemic against publicists' (ibid: 150), Hoggart's desire being to attack directly the newspaper editors, journalists and their proprietors, together with the writers of popular fiction, all as debasing the culture, especially the culture of the working class.

The legal issues were discussed between July and December 1955 (Owen, 2005: 149) in a series of letters between Hoggart, Peter Calvocoressi for the publishers Chatto and Windus, and Craig Macfarlane, the lawyer. Aside from the obvious candidates for defamation, a significant amount of argument appears to have been about whether the item in question was

legitimate literary criticism and he should thus be 'entitled to his judgements' (ibid: 150) or whether it was libellous polemic.

These debates appear to get a bit clouded, with perhaps the benefit of hindsight, as they appear also to depict a struggle between the conventions of literary criticism as practiced by the Leavisites and as yet the un-named, or, at that time, yet unknown, cultural studies. Hoggart believed that literary analysis could be 'applied to all other forms of popular culture' (Hoggart, 1993: 95) yet he found that the Leavisite approach was leading him to dismiss all of the reading matter that the working class were consuming as rubbish, something that, given his meticulous approach to studying this material, was too generalist. He

> studied his material carefully, made discriminating judgements and distinctions, discussed the way it was received and interpreted by its audience, and demonstrated that the products of mass culture as well as high culture were well worth studying for what they revealed about the interface between culture and society (Lodge, 2007: 32).

Once published it became an important text, achieving an international readership in the United States as well as in France where it was called *La Culture des pauvres* (*The Culture of the Poor*) (Gibson & Hartley, 1998: 16).

From the time of publication there has been a debate as to whether *The Uses of Literacy* is an academic text. Irving Lowens, in a short review in the American journal *Notes* referred to Hoggart's 'light-hearted attitude towards the impediments of scholarship' and found it 'rather refreshing' (Lowens, 1958: 575). An example of his evidence for this is the way the bibliography was 'thrown together higgledy-piggeldy' (ibid: 575); it was not in alphabetical order, thus forcing the reader to explore the list in much more detail than one might normally demand. Lowens saw this as possibly a good point and wondered if this was Hoggart protesting against the regimentation of academic texts.

Clearly *The Uses of Literacy* is seen by many to be an important text and one of the oft-quoted trio of volumes upon which cultural studies as an academic discipline was founded. Stuart Hall, possibly the academic antithesis of Hoggart and co-founder with Hoggart of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, was quite clear about the importance of the book, stating that it played a 'seminal role' (Hall, 2007: 39) in the cultural turn that occurred in the UK after the Second World War. David Lodge took a slightly different angle and saw *The Uses of Literacy* as a key work in the 'new kind of realism in English writing, responding to changes in English society triggered by the Second World War and the foundation of the Welfare State' (Lodge, 2007: 29).

The bibliography and its presentation may be a small indicator of Hoggart's approach to the presentation of his material. There are other indicators of this approach, including an agreement with the commission

brought in to report on the condition of the Centre in the late 1960s that students were 'too fond of abstract polysyllabic complicated language' (Gibson, & Hartley, 1998: 18).

The Uses of Literacy is often employed as an example of a book written at a fixed point in time, that time being associated with its date of publication. As already stated, despite being published in 1957 Hoggart submitted the original manuscript to his publisher in 1955. However, the observations from which he drew many of his 'contemporary' pictures were made far earlier than that. Recounting his early writing from the mid 1940s, Hoggart said that he saw later that these were all 'sketches towards elements of *The Uses of Literacy*' (Hoggart, 1990: 86) Indeed, his memories of his early childhood at the very least coloured the picture he painted of working class life in Section 1 of *The Uses of Literacy*, its 'locus classicus' appearing to be twenty-five years earlier (Taylor, 2007). For some, like DJ Taylor, its almost defined and restricted geographical area was 'uncomfortably narrow' whereas, as a piece of ethnographic research, it was probably about right though ill-defined.

It is nonetheless clear that the text has a status especially within cultural studies, and is still referred to over half a century later, as exemplified by the number of papers published in the past ten years, including those from Hoggart conferences, and a special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* published in March 2007. Many of these papers take strands of Hoggart's themes and evaluate them in a contemporary setting such as Joe Moran's *Milk Bars, Starbucks & The Uses of Literacy* (2006).

Moran takes Hoggart's account of the 'Juke Box Boys' (Hoggart, 1957: 202-205) and discusses it 'in relation to the broader historical shifts signalled by the development of milk and coffee bars in postwar Britain, and their more recent replacement by corporate fast-food and coffee chains' (Moran, 2006).

The Juke Box Boys was based on observations of a group of young men in a milk bar in Goole in 1950 where Hoggart had called in for a cup of tea (Hoggart, 1994: 74) 'most of the customers are boys aged between fifteen and twenty, with drape-suits, picture ties and an American slouch' (Hoggart, 1957: 203). This might be an easy picture to create. Here were a group of young men, proto-teenagers, hanging out in a café making a cup of tea or a milk shake last a long time, and putting what little spare money they had into the juke box. Their clothing was very much influenced by the American zoot-suit and the ties were what jazz performers were wearing at the time.

An easy picture maybe, but how easy to be misled. Robert J. Young in an article entitled *'Them' and 'Us'* in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies Special Issue: The Uses of Richard Hoggart*, discusses the Juke Box Boys but firmly places the music in the mid-1950s: Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Buddy Holly, Little Richard and Chuck Berry. Young then proceeds to say that 'Hoggart's comments on these awesome classics are wonderfully unenthusiastic' (Young, 2006: 61). However, the music that Hoggart would be referring to would probably have been a mix of the 'crooners' – Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Bing Crosby – some

American 'smooth' jazz such as Nat King Cole, big band jive and be-bop, music that led Hoggart to remark that 'Some of the tunes are catchy; all have been doctored for presentation so that they have the kind of beat which is currently popular' (Hoggart, 1957: 204). The cutting remark at the start of that quote suggests that there was a certain amount of jazz being played, possibly the new be-bop.

The point is, Young should have been aware of the date of the observation given, and that Hoggart himself drew attention to that detail in 1994 (Hoggart, 1994: 74). Surely if Hoggart's intention was to mention rock'n'roll he would have done this in some detail. (*Rock Around the Clock* entered the British pop charts in December 1954). At the time such events may have seemed to be of little import, a small step along a continuum, but with the hindsight of more than fifty years it is not unreasonable to expect a more detailed discussion; it is not only Young who fell foul of the problem with time. David Fowler, in *From Jukebox Boys to revolting students,* also published in the Special Issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* states Hoggart entered the milk bar 'around 1956' (Fowler, 2007).

Whilst these academic errors are important, for the researcher of the 1950s it is more important to note that whilst the book was published in 1957, the majority of it was written by 1955, thus the research had been completed earlier than that. It is also not what Hoggart wanted it to be, and in some places certainly did not give the direct message he had originally intended.

The depiction of the working classes in *The Uses of Literacy* is a problem for the researcher in the first decades of the twenty-first century. One of the fundamental strengths attributed to Hoggart with this book is that he was able to call upon his own upbringing in near-poverty in Hunslet, Leeds in the 1920s. His experiences and understanding of the working class afforded him a rare position to examine both the audience and the texts, yet when read today, how does this position present itself? Here we have a man who despite his early disadvantages had become a scholarship boy and moved into academia. In fact it is feasible to suggest that while he might have moved out of the working class he never really gained a seat anywhere else.

He argues that his view is a valid one because his own upbringing was one of working-class deprivation, both personal as well as economic. He uses his position of having been there, to tell us how the working class have been led astray by the bad mix of populist press, popular entertainment and money. Is he mourning the passing of his childhood version of working-class? Is he saying that he is glad he is out of it, and sees what a lucky escape he had? There is much of the reformed smoker-turned-zealot about this work that undermines the very scenery he paints for us from that time.

Hoggart did not want his descriptions of working class culture to be dismissive, yet neither did he want to appear patronising and, given that he was writing in a new style as Lodge pointed out above, did he manage it? The first section of the book, the description of working class life and

culture based, on his own upbringing is well written and enjoyable to read but does have that informality that many of today's popular histories have, the line between fiction and fact very difficult to discern. Additionally, returning to another point made above, the writing is not necessarily supported by the explicit manifestations of academic rigour. However, this is partly a fruitless argument, as Hoggart himself settled it in an interview in 1997 by stating that he always had in mind his audience being 'the intelligent lay reader' (Gibson & Hartley, 1998: 16). This is exactly the same audience that Peter Hennessy, Dominic Sandbrook and others probably have in mind today. Nonetheless, this does not allay the concerns the modern reader may have about Hoggart's manner when he refers to the working class. Here is a man who battled to rise out of that class and was, in 1955, standing outside looking in, commenting that 'working-class people are in some ways more open to the worst effects of the popularisers' [sic] assault than are some other groups' (Hoggart, 1957: 145). Commenting also that 'Working-class people are on the whole just not interested in artists or intellectuals; they know of their existence, but regard them as oddities rarely seen within their orbit, like snail-eating Frenchman' (ibid: 152); and that the working class 'are substantially without a sense of the past. Their education is unlikely to have left them with any historical panorama or with any idea of a continuing tradition….the teachers' best efforts tend to 'go in at one ear and out at the other' (ibid: 158).

These are dispassionate views, perhaps even unsympathetic, but are they objective? Obviously no longer one of Young's 'Them', Hoggart cannot do

much more than be outside; his studies of the people and the popular culture of the early 1950s being based on his observations and analyses and tinted by his memories. He was, we should also remember, adapting his skills of literary criticism to other texts, and to a specific audience. His interest possibly lay just as much with these texts as it did with the chosen audience, which did not stop him saying that the 'situation looks dreadful: sensation, fragmentation, over-simplification, unreality' yet he was surprised by how little that audience, the working class family, was affected by the 'endless rain of confetti-literature' (Hoggart, 1957: 198).

The Uses of Literacy was written at a time when there were clear class distinctions in the UK. Hoggart could see that the Americanisation of the press and other cultural forms, was gathering pace, and he was concerned that this would lead to a working class reliant on this cultural invasion and thus losing all the culture that had been theirs for generations. Admass, a phrase coined by Priestley and picked up by Hopkins, came to a country whose population had had American servicemen living amongst them for several years during the Second World War; a country that was in fealty to the United States. The almost bankrupt United Kingdom owed the United States for military support during the war and the subsequent recovery effort which was supported by the Marshall Plan.

This was also a time when having a regional accent and a manner of speech that owed their origination to the back-to-backs and the factory floor would not help one get on in life. The BBC had experimented with regional accents on its national radio stations and decided against it. This

was also a time of 'calling a spade a spade' and of not being afraid to voice prejudices; Hoggart is there with most writers of the period: the aforementioned phrase concerning 'snail-eating Frenchmen' (Hoggart, 1957: 152), was perhaps used as hyperbole, yet thankfully a phrase linking the writing of Hank Janson novels to 'about the same time as Nazism' was removed during an exchange with the lawyers (Owen, 2005: 171).

Taking these debates of Hoggart's approach to writing *The Uses of Literacy* and his discourse on the working class within, is this Hoggart having a dig at the constraints of academia of the period as much as he was prodding the cultural landscape - the scholarship boy forever at the friction point of two cultures? It is this friction point that causes the largest criticism of *The Uses of Literacy*. There is a prescient feeling here of the sketch from *The Frost Report* (1966) of Ronnie Barker looking up to John Cleese because he is Upper Class and down on Ronnie Corbett because he is working class. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart gives detail of his poor upbringing but quickly acquires a tone that gives the book a feeling that Hoggart is now on the outside looking back in – and not being afraid to suggest that the working class should pull their socks up.

With the caveat that this was written in a different time, this them-and-us approach, one that Hoggart refers to often, reads as if the classes, as described by him, are separate groups who could almost be living in another country; the ethnographer or anthropologist returning from a far off land, telling us that they namely, the working class, have 'survived the

change from a rural to an urban life' and that 'in the last half-century they have survived, and in large measure still survive, dangers just as great' (Hoggart, 1957: 269).

But what if they had not survived? Where does Hoggart at his most concerned have an answer to this question? The working class moved from the land to the factory floor, were decimated during the hiatus that was the First World War and their continuation can be seen in other guises, in the classless society of today. Did he think that they could be wiped out? That the translation from farmhand to cotton weaver would kill them off? Perhaps contemplating their demise was not the point, but having raised the question, it should be addressed. *The Uses of Literacy* is a rhetorical book that builds a picture of the replacement of traditional working-class activities by American-influenced consumerism. From a vantage point of more than fifty years later it is clear to see that this has indeed happened, not just to the working class but to society as a whole. However, in the mid-1950s this might have been seen as a threat to the very fabric of society – or at least to the working class society that is the focus of Hoggart's work, yet there is no clear discussion of the Americanisation of the middle classes. Whither commercial television and the middle class family? The car? The modern technology that was the domestic refrigerator and the washing machine?

It is clear that Hoggart's picture is very much restricted to the working class, the class that he was brought up in and the one that he could now afford to stand outside and look into. In his possibly unintentionally

patronising manner he is keen to state that the working class have survived this change before 'from a rural to an urban life without becoming a dull *lumpen-proletariat*' (Hoggart, 1957: 269); and, despite the two world wars (The National Archives assessed the Great War cost Britain 886,000 lives and injured 1.6 million) 'they have survived' (ibid: 269). Indeed Hoggart invokes Lear by commenting that '"The wonder is they have endured so long"' (ibid: 269). But what alternatives are there? Would they have shrivelled away and died, not able to cope with the change? Or did he forsee a potential revolution, an uprising? The answers may not be that important, but by raising the question of how "they" survived surely suggests that some consideration was given to other possible routes, possible sources of demise.

It has already been established that Hoggart was not necessarily interested in the traditions and rules of academic writing. His bibliography, his writing style and his desire to write a polemic, not an objective text, clearly indicate this. It also is demonstrated by his methodology. Again Hoggart is happy to put up his hand and say that he does things differently, not the way the academy would expect him to. He has expressed his mistrust of the uses of theory and defends the use of descriptive detail and the value of observation (Hoggart, 1993: 95-96). He has also been aware that there is a place for theory though he might not be the person to use it 'Stuart [Hall] has a much more theoretic mind than I have, or ever will have' (Gibson & Hartley, 1998: 18). Thus this may pose a real problem for the researcher of culture in the mid-1950s,

the researcher who reaches for Hoggart as easily as he or she might reach for Briggs.

Methodology

Tom O'Malley noted at the turn of this century that 'Historians at work in the UK in 1945 did not use the phrase 'media history' or 'communications history' (O'Malley, 2002: 155) to describe a particular area of study. Sixty years or more later and history of the media is well-established as an area of study. However, defining it as a subject and thus giving it a place in an academic field calls for some depth of discussion that can only be touched upon here, but is hopefully touched upon enough to give confidence to the reader that the research work in the subsequent chapters does sit – and sit comfortably – in the field of media history.

The notion of what is history has changed over the millennia, and there have been a number of different schools of thought over the past century, often such 'schools' being convenient umbrella terms for a number of not-necessarily linked strands. The Post-Modern historian, for example, could subscribe to the Linguistics of Derrida and Foucault, the Thick Description of Clifford Geertz, the Hidden Transcripts of James C Scott, the Orientalism of Edward Said, the revival of the Narrative of Lawrence Stone the Micro History of Carlo Ginzburg and Natalie Zemon Davis, not to mention Ethno-History, Gender History and Post-Colonial History. This list serves as an illustration that attempting to take a stand on one particular

point of historical research theory or approach is not easy, if at all possible. Or at least this used to be the case. Lynn Hunt suggests that while historiographical debates continue, historians are not so keen to position themselves in camps that make them adhere to one single approach and thus, by default, exclude others (Hunt, 2002). The reasons for this are linked with the changing nature of history's place in the academy: 'history is a hybrid discipline which owes its endless fascination and complexity to that fact that it straddles humanities and social sciences' (Tosh, 2006: 52) and the changing 'foci of history' (O'Malley, 2002). Hunt (2002) contests that most historians are 'treading water' and waiting for the next big thing to come along but there is also a feeling that the nature of history and its position in culture has changed.

The rise of popular history now makes 'history' available to all. This ascent can be ascribed in the UK not only to the National Trust and English Heritage, and their attendant magazines, but television, particularly Channel 4's *Time Team* (1994-2013), BBC 4's various history documentaries and the family history strand *Who Do You Think You Are?* (2004-present). Certainly *Time Team* had a sound academic team behind it, as do many of the BBC documentaries that have given a number of academics the opportunity to be in front of the camera as well. Such opportunities may present good career moves but, as Max Hastings noted, such programmes barely scratch the surface:

> Sixteen years ago, I wrote a book about the Korean War which was
> 150,000 words long. I then made a four-part television series for

the BBC based upon it, which contained about 25,000 words, many of which were those of interviewees. I still blush to remember how little information, and what fantastic simplifications, the series contained. This was partly a reflection upon my own limitations, but also I think upon the nature of television. (Hastings, 2004: 107)

An intermediate approach to history is offered, through books by writers and academics such as Kynaston, Sandbrook and Hennessey. These popular texts, aimed at a general audience, tap into a sort of intellectual nostalgia, dealing with the period post World War Two to the 1970s. It is this diversification that appears to have contributed much to the movement, in academic circles, away from camps and theories based on philosophical standpoint and towards a more fundamental form of enquiry. Both Tosh and Hunt suggest that popularisation of history has led to historians concentrating much more on the truth of their research than upon a Marxist, Feminist or Post-Colonial viewpoint.

This shift came sharply into focus with David Irving's unsuccessful libel case of 2000 against Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt. Lipstadt's contention, upheld by the court following testimony given by a number of academic witnesses, was that Irving's work was 'riddled with selective quotation and even falsification of historical evidence' (Tosh, 2006: 209). The academic – and legal – argument was that there was proof of non-truth, and that above all, the truth is the fundamental element of the legal case. It is, of course, also fundamental to the historical case, but in academic debate, there can be many truths.

It may appear that the terms of categorizing and theorising historical research have all been dismissed, but this is not the case and historians will take whatever tools are necessary to craft their findings. One thing that the Post-Modern historian has bequeathed to the next generation is the recognition that there are many truths and many perspectives on the truth. In fact the debate of 'truth' is still ongoing and, one may suggest, will continue to be so interminably. Ginzburg's view of truth and fiction, discussed below, led to a consideration that every piece of historical evidence needs to be considered from all sides, from all perspectives. The truism that history is written by the winner can be extended to suggest that history is written by the writer, and until such time as another history is written countering the first, the initial one has primacy. What is needed is a dose of healthy scepticism. Perhaps not as sceptic as the classical philosophical school, but rather upholding a belief that whilst the theory sounds good, the reader must also be aware that there are other, possibly as yet unknown, sides to any truth. This becomes an important consideration when considering the oral and written artefacts, central to this study.

That this thesis is a history is clear. To look for a suitable subdivision within the vast arena suggests placing this in the section marked media history, although there are some elements that some might suggest would sit more appropriately in social or cultural history. Somewhere there is, no doubt, a Venn diagram displaying the common ground between these three notional sections. And indeed, here is a history of part of the BBC that includes references to the culture of the period, as

well as to societal developments and this might make the boundaries between these historiographical sub-genres indistinct. Briggs was aware of the problem of exactly where a history of the BBC could be placed, his *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* having a clear emphasis on the political and economic aspects of the Corporation. In his single-volume *The BBC – The First Fifty Years* he noted that he would want to 'focus attention on the complex interaction of economic, social, cultural and political forces' (Briggs, 1985: ix). This view is echoed by Seaton, Briggs' successor as historian of the BBC, who says that one of the many 'purposes of writing a history of broadcasting is to examine the ways in which broadcasting conventions, markets, innovations, choices, values and perceptions of audiences themselves mutate' (Seaton, 2004: 143). Both Briggs' and Seaton's approaches are valid and decisions about the focus of the history have to be taken. In this narrative, the focus on key personnel as a central theme, linking other themes throughout the work, themes of technology, institutional administration, interpersonal relationships and class.

There are other approaches to this study, other history genres or themes that would be appropriate to follow but are not pursued here. Such a genre is that of gender, particularly relating to the role of women in the BBC in the 1950's. Any study of a large organisation during that period cannot fail to notice the role played – or not played – by women and how they were treated in that society. Any study of the BBC of the post-war period will inevitably throw up the names of women, so few but so prominent, as to highlight the ambiguous situation. During this time in the

1950s, Grace Wyndham Goldie started to make her mark in television, becoming Assistant Head of Talks, Television in 1954 (and Head of Talks and Current Affairs, Television in 1962); Nesta Pain wrote and produced programmes for Features; Joanna Spicer was Television Programme Organiser in 1952 and Head of Programme Planning by 1955. In this narrative, Barbara Bray became the Script Editor for Drama (Sound) and Daphne Oram was Studio Manager for Music. However, these women are few compared to the many men that worked and ran the Corporation. Bray and Oram, unlike Goldie, Pain and Spicer, did not continue their careers within the BBC. Bray left to live and work in Paris; Oram left in order to pursue her developments within electronic music. That these women succeeded to the extent that they did, given the general role of women in the 1950s, is interesting; however, this research can only acknowledge that this was a predominantly male-orientated environment and that women in positions of power, influence or creativity were more the exception than the rule.

Briggs' work and that of others, such as Scannell and Cardiff, Carpenter, and Hendy, recognises that there is a relevance and an importance to the discussion of media in an historical context and that since the end of the Second World War, the role played by media in all aspects of society in the western world have made it central to any history of that period. However, the term "media history" can be problematic, 'the relationship between "history" and "media" is one of exceptional complexity' (Cannadine, 2004: 5) in that it can be a history of a particular medium, or an aspect of a particular medium, or a history that examines how a

medium or media affected any other aspect of society, or it could be a study of a society through a study of a medium or media. This can lead, in turn, to a circular issue, a study of media relying as much on the media as a research resource as it does on other resources. (It is also just as likely to have histories of the post-war period that only use the media as a resource.)

This study examines the historical context within which the Radiophonic Workshop was conceived. The Radiophonic Workshop was a specialist unit of the BBC providing content for media output; the BBC at the time was a media provider, a broadcaster in both radio and television. If this study were about a specialist electronic unit serving the armed forces, then the resultant work would be classed as military history.

For the purposes of this research, media history is not a free-standing critical assessment of an item of media output (a radio play, a television programme, a newspaper, etc) but is a discussion and analysis of the historical context within which a production unit that created media artefacts was created. The formation of the Radiophonic Workshop, a media production unit within a large media corporation, came about as a result of a number of strands coinciding and this media history explores and examines some of those strands to provide the media historical context.

Briggs' work also calls upon the memory of those who worked at the BBC yet he clearly points out that whilst 'the interplay of particular

personalities … has shaped output, not all internal processes of the BBC can be treated in these terms' (Briggs, 1985: ix). This acknowledgement is important as Briggs' histories use the personalities as players, chess pieces constantly moving across the board but never rising in importance above the game itself.

The approach to this study is one of historical narrative. The examination of the events that led to the creation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop is set within a context of austerity and change, of notions of space travel and the reality of steam trains, and within the BBC of that time it was possible to find the equivalent of these changes and notions, albeit on a smaller scale. It is these apparent oppositions that provide the basis of the historical narrative.

However this does not make it an easy journey and this narrative is told through the use of archive content, biography, interviews, readings and analysis of radio output. Note that the use of the word evidence has been avoided at this point, as the validity of each category and subsequently each item in that category needs to be appraised in order for that piece of information to have a value within the narrative.

The value of the written history is in itself a matter of debate. Those historians whose position is 'that the only historical education worth the name is the study of primary sources' (Tosh, 2006: 146), hold a restrictive viewpoint that although valuable can lead to a limited understanding of the nature of the occasion, the context and the

connectivity with other items of information. In the study of pre-historic cultures it is often only the surviving artefacts that provide the historian with the opportunity to decipher the way of life of that period. With the advent of writing, in its broadest interpretation - to include, amongst others, the cuneiform of the Sumerians or the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, and to a certain extent, illustration, the primary source has become a subject for wider debate, with its interpretation demanding much more understanding than perhaps the use of a basic cooking pot might do. This may be a simplistic view but the objective is to illustrate that the more complex societies become, the more diverse their artefacts become, and the more multifaceted society's interpretation of artefacts therefore becomes. Historians who restrict themselves to the study of the artefacts will debate the genesis of the object, the role the object played in the society of the time and the value of that object today in telling of that time. This viewpoint, put forward by Galbraith et al is restrictive and it is important for the historian to use the artefacts to tell the narrative, 'Historical writing is essential to historical understanding, and those who shirk from undertaking it are something less than historians' (Tosh, 2006:147).

Having established the directive for historical writing there is a call for the writing to be more than mere description, and whilst there have been periods when historical writing has been influenced by contemporary creative writing, modern historians 'are less self-consciously 'literary'' but nonetheless capable of 'remarkably evocative descriptive writing' (Tosh, 2006: 148). The descriptive historical writer may paint the picture in

'remarkably evocative' terms but as such leave the reader to draw the strands together, if that is the intention. In some cases the reader may be encouraged not to draw conclusions but, as with the historian whose sole role is to interpret the individual source, purely to enjoy the moment.

The moment, though, does not tell the story. A collection of artefacts builds a picture and the links between these artefacts help build a larger picture giving the interpreter the opportunity to make wider assumptions about that moment. Nonetheless, one immediately moves from the moment to a succession of moments and this is the importance of such a narrative, the story of the succession of moments that create the dynamic, not the static, picture of the period under observation. In a key section of this thesis, attention is focussed on a meeting held between Val Gielgud, the Head of Drama (Sound) and the producers of sound drama; the subject of the meeting was to discuss the injection of experimentalism into the radio drama output, an injection called for by the Director of Sound Broadcasting, REL Wellington. In the early stages of the research, it was thought that this meeting was highly significant as the root that led to the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. The records of the meeting are memoranda from the producers, summarising their conversations within the meeting, and as individual artefacts can be enjoyed and studied as key primary sources. However this enjoyment and value of the moment when the memoranda were written (or more specifically dictated and subsequently approved), might give rise to interpretations possibly at odds with those should the researcher also take into account sources from the moment before and the moment after – or even longer periods prior

and subsequent to the event. To understand the 'place' of this meeting it is not sufficient to value the records that exist, but, to afford its true value, the before and after moments also require interrogation and understanding. The idea of experimentation at the BBC was not new. Indeed the very start of the broadcasting service arose from experimentation; radio drama came about through experimentation, and once established was, by the late 1920s, at the forefront of experimentation in technology, writing and production techniques.

This process of examining the context in which an artefact was created has shown that despite the original supposition, namely that Val Gielgud's meeting in 1955 was highly significant in the genesis of the Radiophonic Workshop, it was not as important as originally supposed. The meeting was a response to a demand from the management and the subsequent period of time saw the issues raised at that meeting dissipate, transfer or be over-taken by other issues. What the interrogation of such a meeting does reveal is the thoughts of the characters at that time, and as this study follows a chronological order, this fits in well with that time-line. It also shows the individual characters, and in some cases gives a hint as to who they were, how they operated, and possibly what were their opinions of other people.

As in any history, the main storyline can be recounted; there will be facts to substantiate the decision to create an Electronic Effects Committee, a decision to rename it to Radiophonic and then a decision to create a specialist unit, and so on. These facts are there for all to see. The

questions this research attempts to help answer are "why" and "how". With this in mind, the use and interpretation of written artefacts, memoranda, minutes of meetings, and oral history transcriptions all help to guide the researcher, and therefore the reader, to a conclusion.

The narrative approach thus allows the historical writer to tell the story by connecting the primary sources - the artefacts, in a form that relays the passage of time. The story of the origins of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop is one that has a number of strands, each with its own story-arc, to borrow a term from script writing; these strands come together at a denouement that is the production of *All That Fall*. Subsequently these strands, move on in their own direction. The merits of the historical narrative are: 'exact chronology, the role of chance and contingency, the play of irony and perhaps most of all the true complexity of events in which the participants so often foundered' (Tosh, 2006: 149).

The preliminary work for this thesis suggested that BBC Drama (Sound) took a key role in the creation of the Workshop and that the denouement of this narrative was the broadcast of *All That Fall*. Over a year elapsed between the original broadcast of the play in January 1957, and the creation of the Workshop, in its physical form, in April 1958. The importance of the play, discussed in detail in chapter 4, is that the production epitomised the demands being made on the team of people who were involved in its realisation. Yet it was not these people, nor even Drama (Sound) that brought together the various interested parties and

found them a home. Those were the departments of Engineering and Central Studio Operations.

The argument against the narrative approach is based on the perceived over-riding need of the historian to produce a sequential account that might be deemed blinkered or restricted. However, the analytical approach, whilst taking time to dissect the constituents of the event, may suffer from a lack of historical momentum precisely because of the time taken to analyse. The use of narrative to tell the story, to discuss the issues of the moment, to reflect on the moments before and after, is an appropriate method. It is how the writer approaches this narrative, how the writer is able to capture those moments and their relevance, whilst taking their antecedents and their consequences into consideration, that is important.

Tosh talks of 'new ways of deploying narrative' (Tosh, 2006: 156) and refers to the social historian's practice of engaging the reader with the issues through what Burke termed the 'micronarratives' (Tosh, 2006: 157) of people situated in the moment. In this study, key people, particularly William Haley and Val Gielgud and, to a lesser extent, Desmond Briscoe, are developed in more detail than certain others. Haley and Gielgud have been selected as both have significant roles within the narrative, and represent different levels of the BBC hierarchy. As has been previously stated, Haley was the Director General from 1944 to 1952 and it is through him that the Third Programme came into being, highlighting the Corporation's drive to maintain Reith's Matthew Arnold-style principles,

at the same time developing an outlet for diverse and experimental programming. Gielgud was Head of Drama and as such was in charge of the department that led the drive in experimental studio production techniques. Desmond Briscoe was a Studio Manager, someone who worked on the studio floor and eventually went on to lead the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. It is through the examination of these people, their role, their work and their interactions, that the events of the time have been given some grounding thereby allowing the reader to comprehend the period and the personalities. It is through the examination of these people and their activities that the reader learns that what took place on the studio floor, happened at times in spite of the hierarchy, and not necessarily because of it.

The sources available for this research include, as has been stated, memoranda and other papers from the BBC Written Archives, recordings of radio programmes from the period, writings contemporary with the period, histories about the period and both interviews from the BBC Oral History Project and personal interviews with the writer. All materials required examination in what Jordanova (2006) terms 'ways of knowing', the problem of knowledge itself. The historical researcher embarks on the study with the full understanding that the resultant work is founded on reliable research and not merely on some notion of the truth, some tenet that demands that the handwritten letter or the typed note is in fact truthful in content. The interpretation of human behaviour is rarely, if ever, going to achieve a high level of certainty (Jordanova, 2006: 90) and the historian is left only able to make what Hastings refers to as 'a lunge

towards truth' (Hastings, 2004: 112); lying, or not telling the whole truth or not interpreting the 'truth' as written or spoken, perhaps through not appreciating the ironic context for example, is not easy to prove (Jordanova, 2006: 90) but by the same token, it is not easy to disprove. Thus the historian's role is to assemble as many different versions of the 'truth' and understand the context in order to present a narrative of the moment – which may not necessarily be the narrative. The consideration of truth arises from the knowledge that the evidence, the archive material as individual narrative speaks 'less about the reality than they do about whoever constructed them' (Ginzburg, 2012: 3). Ginzburg was discussing in particular the truthfulness of written histories, yet this argument is equally relevant to the narrative as written concerning the artefact itself. To continue with the example of the radio drama meeting, the memoranda sent by the producers may record their thoughts from the meeting but will also include ideas that they might have had subsequently, and may not include all the points they had raised, may not reflect the passion, or otherwise, with which their verbal contribution had been made, and it is also possible that they may have forgotten something. Their written record may also hide, or suggest, allegiances and alliances, within the group of producers, between the producers and the Director of Sound Broadcasting, between the radio drama department and the wider/higher levels of the institution. It has also to be borne in mind that these statements are of the moment, therefore before or after that moment the writer of the memorandum may have held a different view. Consequently the researcher can only take the content of those memoranda as fact whilst having little surety. The 'fact' whether or not corroborated with

another item, often offers little when compared with the possibilities of what the author did not say, what he might have left out.

As stated, the main sources for a significant portion of this study are those lodged at the BBC Written Archive Centre in Caversham, Berkshire. The Centre is the repository for the paper-based archive material from the BBC and as well as minutes of meetings and 'wonderful memos' (Seaton, 2004: 150) it also holds scripts, production notes, *Radio Times* and various memorabilia. There is also a library of published biographies of both the institution and of its personnel. Access to the material is restricted to academic researchers and programme makers. The problem for the researcher when using such an archive is in knowing what is available and why other items are not. Some items, which may be catalogued, are restricted due to copyright reasons or because the content may still be deemed to be sensitive. Access to an archivist and an understanding of the catalogue system enables the researcher to make a start but once underway, it is the researcher who must make the connections, note the gaps and explore other ways of finding information. Dialogues via memoranda provide a useful tool in tracking the formation of ideas or debates on a particular subject, but seeking out the complete trail of memoranda on a given subject is not straightforward. Whilst the originator may have copies written by him or her on file, responses to those memoranda may need to be sourced on the responders file; at the same time comments from others on the distribution list almost certainly need to be sourced from their files. These memoranda can only be pieced together as a result of reading all the available material and having an

understanding of how the institution worked. Fortunately for the researcher, the BBC's administrative structure, as has been previously stated, was built on Civil Service lines and much documentation was therefore made to record the processes, outcomes and debates.

The 'Cult of the Archive' (Jordanova, 2006) and the accompanying 'Fetishism of Documents' (Marwick, 1993) are important issues to consider in any study of the BBC. Typically a researcher would reach for Briggs and then book time at the Written Archive Centre. Good sources of information though they are, they have their restrictions. Briggs has been discussed above, but the Written Archive Centre even more so than Briggs, is of the BBC; it is the BBC. Content submitted to the Written Archive Centre is gathered from the many offices, workers and filing cabinets and is submitted, one assumes, at the bequest of the 'owner' – the default situation, the passive involvement. The more active 'owner' is able to select those documents that should not be stored, that particular stories, or elements of stories should be removed. Once arrived at the Written Archive Centre, a process is followed that checks the documentation, then approval must be given in order for a file to be available to a researcher.

This study relied on these documents and was undertaken with the conviction that empirical evidence, appropriately theorised, is enlightening. The BBC's written archives alone present a wealth of information that can be called upon and the resulting paper trail recording events and processes can show the history of a department or an event or the development of a specialist unit. Lindlof (1995) proposed that such

artefacts can record what an organisation produces, how it certifies certain kinds of activities and how it categorises events or people. The documents also demonstrate how an organisation codifies its procedures or policies, how it explains past or future actions and how it tracks its own activities. Lindolf notes that these documents also show how the organisation instructs a readership (Lindlof 1995). In the case of this particular research, instructing the reader has proven to be a complex matter; consideration of what was being said and what was being written is illustrated in the following example.

Sometimes, though rarely, an original document is retained on file that was not sent. Such an example is that of a memorandum from Raymond Raikes (Raikes, 1955a) to Val Gielgud in response to one from Gielgud in which he criticised Raikes' cast in two episodes of a radio adaptation of *Cranford*. Raikes was obviously annoyed by Gielgud's comments and wrote a response that, according to a pencilled note at the bottom, was not sent. There are a number of interesting things about this particular memorandum that help define the usual memoranda of that period. The researcher can easily take for granted the process through which such memoranda are created. The member of personnel concerned dictates a message to the secretary who types it out on the official slip and may or may not give it back to be read and checked prior to sending. It might be supposed that at the checking stage amendments may be made that cause a second version be written and despatched, the first being consigned to the bin. The secretary files the copy (usually a carbon) and the recipient files the original. Copies to other recipients were usually

carbon, though other reprographic methods existed. Sometimes a memorandum was sent to one person via another. In response to the criticism that he received, Raikes constructed a memorandum which was typed by his secretary (JG) and then given back to him. On the document a number of amendments are made and the to/from/subject/date details are added in pen. The pencilled note at the bottom states 'This reply was not sent' and the researcher is left to surmise the situation.

This is of interest for this study because here is a producer, someone of some experience, being criticised by the Head of Drama. Clearly annoyed he may have dashed off a scribbled response for his secretary to type up, - perhaps he stood over her and dictated as she typed (hence the typing errors). On being given the typed document he then amended it to correct the errors and to make the sense clearer and perhaps to change the emphasis. It must be remembered that not only were the employees at the BBC well educated (many with a sound Classics background) but in the Drama department, the choice and usage of words would have been extremely important; every time they wrote a memorandum they were laying their skills before their peers who, no doubt, might always have been ready to pick up on any grammatical shortfall. Having made the amendments it is possible that Raikes reflected on the situation and decided that sending the response might be playing the game as directed by Gielgud; it might lay Raikes open to further criticism; it might lead to changes in a working relationship that Raikes did not wish for. It is also possible that Raikes was so upset that he went to see Gielgud and had it out with him face to face, or that Gielgud had apologised verbally for the

level of criticism before Raikes had the opportunity to send his memorandum.

So, as a part of the narrative this memorandum serves little purpose other than, when taken with Gielgud's original memorandum, it shows how Gielgud at times treated his staff and how they might then respond. It also underpins the difficulties met by the researcher in extrapolating meaning from a given document. Furthermore, and this is the real value to this study, it indicates the usually hidden part of the process undertaken in memorandum writing, and more importantly, sets the researcher to consider that the written word in the memorandum is not necessarily the voice of the writer, or the voice that the writer would use directly.

Access to a large repository of material is a great asset for the researcher but it must be handled judiciously. In the course of the research for this thesis over 800 photographs of documents were taken, mainly memoranda and minutes of meetings, and all from the BBC Written Archives Centre. Storing and more importantly retrieving this amount of information was imperative and a spreadsheet was created that carried a summary of the detail of each document, and a hyperlink to the relevant photograph. This proved to be of great use particularly in chapter 4: *All That Fall*, which is underpinned by a paper trail across a number of departments over a two-year period.

This research contends that creation of the Radiophonic Workshop was dependent upon a number of people, and this dependence was not just about their role within the institution but was about them, their creativity and their personality. In David Hendy's case study of Lance Sieveking, he argues that 'by turning our attention inwards', the opposite way from 'writing … about almost everything else that happened', by using biography, 'we will extend our historiographical horizons' (Hendy, 2012: 361).

In this case, there were a number of significant people who, to a greater or lesser extent, were the drivers behind the creation of the Workshop. There were, for example, any number of radio play producers who might have played a major role, but it is only those who demanded a different creativity for their productions that pressed for such things. So that these creative drivers could progress their form of experimentation there had to be people within the institution that allowed them this possibility. Bloch, quoted in Hendy makes it clear that the artefacts, the formal memoranda, the informal letters, the institution itself, are not 'detached from their founders' and that therefore knowing their 'founders' allows for the narrative to have a deeper perspective (Hendy, 2012: 361-362).

The 'founders' in this narrative are many, and decisions have had to be made as to who should carry the greater burden of biography to aid the narrative. In the course of the research the names of a number of candidates arose from the piles of files, folders and official documents, but of these, three became of primary importance for the route taken. William

Haley, Director General of the BBC between 1944 and 1952 was significant here for three main reasons. He was the head of the management of a large national institution that facilitated important creative work in the studio, he was the creator of the Third Programme and he had a well-known personal dislike of television. If ever there was a case for understanding the person and not the institution, here is one. The period of Haley's tenure was an important one in the history of television, but his reluctance to spend lots of time and resources on this went against what was happening in the United States, as well as what he was being advised in the UK. This reluctance to move on with television immediately post-war allowed radio to capitalise on its supremacy in being the nation's broadcaster, and allowed BBC Sound Radio to develop in many different directions, including the introduction of the Third Programme, since this service clearly called for experimental and new output in music, drama and documentary.

Having established that these factors are important to the narrative, it is necessary to understand the man behind them, particularly his aspiration for the nation to be culturally developed through what he presented as the pyramid of radio culture. An understanding of the man through biographical discussion gives more insight into his aspirations, particularly for the pyramid of culture, than a mere reflection of the actions themselves will afford. In the case of Haley, much has been drawn from his contribution to the BBC Oral History Project.

As part of his research for his book *The Envy of The World*, Humphrey Carpenter cited from an interview with Sir William Haley. The interview was recorded by Frank Gillard in April 1978 as part of the BBC's Oral History Project. From a researcher's point of view, what is important, and telling, is the fact that having recorded the interview, Haley asked for the transcript and 'corrected' it prior to signing (Carpenter, 1996: 380). The original transcript is unavailable.

The BBC Oral History Project was prompted by the imminence of the 50th anniversary of the Corporation in addition to the fact that many of those who had been around when it started would almost certainly not be available much longer. Gillard had joined the BBC in 1941 as a journalist and after many jobs including reporting on the Dieppe Raid of 1942, eventually became Director of the BBC Western Region, subsequently, as Director of Radio overseeing the start of local radio, and was responsible for the creation of BBC Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4. He retired in 1969 as Managing Director, Radio. In 1971 he

> persuaded the authorities to finance a large-scale oral history project whereby those who had played a significant role in the BBC's development were interviewed, either by himself or by a few others of us, and encouraged to record their experiences on to audiocassettes, as indiscreetly as they wished, with the assurance that the material would remain totally confidential until those directly concerned had died. (Miall, 1994: 69; 1998)

In the particular case of the Haley interview, the source has been declared and in fact referred to a number of times in Carpenter's book. However, requesting access to the BBC Oral History Project in general and the Haley transcript in particular was refused when approached via the services of the Written Archives Centre. A subsequent request to the Corporation under the Freedom of Information Act brought a response that led to a request to the Head of History at the BBC who approved access for a 'bona fide academic' (Seatter, 2010). This was not as straightforward as it had been hoped at that point. Access to Haley's transcript was still not granted at this point and was not made available until it had been cleared by person or persons unknown. The oral history file for Val Gielgud was available directly. There is currently no published list of those who have taken part in the Project and it is up to the researcher to request names and then to wait to see if those people took part in the project, and whether their files are available. Having access to these files does not necessarily lead to substantial evidence. In the case of the Haley transcript, Carpenter notes that it was 'corrected by Haley and dated by him on 4 April 1978' (Carpenter, 1996: 380) and so what he said in the interview and what is in the written version are not necessarily the same.

The BBC Oral History Project offers the opportunity to its subjects to discuss and comment on key moments in their career, including a say-what-you-want policy. In the case of Haley, it might be assumed that he did not approve of some things being on printed record that were said in the heat of the interview, which is somewhat perplexing, as he also imposed very strict conditions concerning when it could be made available.

It might be that the amendments were simply factual, or cosmetic, correcting his spoken English to a more appropriate written version. Both possibilities might fit the persona of a man who had been editor of *The Times*, Director General of the BBC and editor in chief of *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* For the researcher, the more fundamental question regarding the BBC Project is one of validity as oral history.

If Haley's role at the top of the BBC management was significant to the early part of this narrative, that of the Head of Drama (Sound) was key to the central portion. Val Gielgud had run the department since the early 1930s and by the time of this narrative, the mid-50s, he was clearly one of the important middle managers, the department heads. As head of a supply department he had a strained relationship with the heads of the broadcast stations; he also had a critical pen when it came to the work of his producers. What makes this interesting in the timeframe under consideration is that Gielgud, a man who actively promoted experimentation in his earlier days, had clearly turned into a much more conservative type, scorning creative developments in both writing and production techniques, and turning many of the demands for change, either from his producers or from the senior management, into an opportunity to debate the worth, or not, of a particular resource. However, this is not the complete picture as Gielgud clearly recognised his shortcomings in this period, a recognition that resulted in the appointment of Donald McWhinnie as his deputy. Consequently, it may be important that the Head of Drama (Sound) facilitated in some way the production of

Beckett's *All The Fall*, but it is more important to understand how Val Gielgud, the man, facilitated the production.

In the case of Val Gielgud's Oral History, there is no transcript, only a series of notes prepared for editing by Gillard, providing a resumé of the content of the various sections of the tapes. The interview had been a trying affair for both parties. Gielgud was very ill. He had had two strokes by the time of the interview and although he had a couple of years left to live (he died of a brain tumour in 1981), his memory was already going. Gillard found it testing as he was not getting the insights that he had hoped for; he also found it emotionally trying: 'I never submitted an expenses claim with greater reluctance. But the expenditure was incurred, albeit abortively, so the request must go in' (Gillard, 1978). He went on to say that Gielgud's decline was fairly quick, having still had active contact with his old department up to a few months before the interview.

> In the two days I was with him he only moved from his armchair to the lavatory or to the table. When we were not recording he mostly sat silent, in his dressing gown, by the fire. Although he had assured me that he had lots to say about every subject I had listed, when the time came his memory failed to sustain him beyond the first sentence or two. Then his eyes would glaze over, and his lips quiver, and he would pause and pause – and finally end up with some platitude or generalisation. It really was very, very sad. (Gillard, 1978)

The tapes must have had some useful content for the BBC Oral History Project as they were used in the early 1980s as part of a radio programme about Gielgud's life and work. For the researcher, the integrity of Gillard's notes, including those words he ascribes to Gielgud, must be weighed against Gillard's emotional response to the interview and his decision that the poor quality of the tapes would not produce a meaningful transcript.

For the researcher, oral history is a method that has to be interrogated prior to implementing. Questions arise about its acceptance within a discipline, about the methodology of capture and transcription and about the status of the record in an archive. Contemporary textbooks about the methodologies of historical research invariably debate the value of the sources and the manner of interpretation. The place and value of oral history often gives rise to one of the more contentious debates within these texts. There are numerous reasons for this, not least of which is that, as an academic research tool, it is relatively new, not coming to prominence until the late 1970s with the work of Paul Thompson et al. For an historian, the validity of the source material is important, and the use of oral history as a primary resource is often viewed with caution. Tosh makes it clear that there is a distinction between oral history and oral tradition, the latter being 'narratives and descriptions of people and events in the past which have been handed down by word of mouth over several generations' (Tosh, 2006: 310). Thompson does not make this distinction, seeing oral history as a researcher using the oral tradition for particular academic ends (Thompson, 2000: 73). This view is supported

by the use made of the recording of oral traditions in societies where the spoken word has primacy developed through anthropological ethnographic study whereby researchers submerge themselves in those communities and question and learn about them. This oral history approach has been developed in the social sciences and cultural studies disciplines; it is characteristically used in studies of small, often minority, communities. It is no accident that this approach burgeoned in the rapid development of cultural studies driven by Marxist theory. The communities studied were invariably working class and their way of life was often about to disappear. The *Oral History* journal continues in this vein, although the communities under research and the themes across the editions are arguably broader than they were at the time of its creation.

What is of importance here is a working definition of oral history and a discussion on the questions of validity and interpretation. Tosh talks of oral history as 'oral reminiscence' (Tosh, 2006: 310) fraught with all the problems of memory, personal interpretation on behalf of the interviewee, and influences on the memory after the event (ibid: 318-321). To differentiate the term oral tradition from that of oral history is to suggest that the former is the handing down of a community's history from generation to generation in an oral manner. The definition of oral history in this study restricts it to the recounting of history that the interviewee was personally involved in, ie not handed down memories from previous generations. This is the rule that the BBC Oral History Project has appeared to set itself, though one expects to come across cases of 'so-and-so told me that twenty years before I worked here…' which would

diminish the primary source nature of the record. Of greater concern to the researcher in this instance is the amount of 'directing' given to the interviewee. Whilst it is appropriate to set some objectives for the proposed oral history interview, how prescriptive should the interviewer be and how constrained therefore is the response? The Oral History Society suggests that the question regime is not too 'rigid' and should be used as a 'memory jogger' and not as a form of structured interview that might be appropriate on a news programme. The objective is to allow the interviewee time and space to recount, the interviewer guiding with questions when appropriate. In some instances, for example if one took a project to record the history of a factory, it would be expected that the questions would relate to that subject, but there might be things that were not considered in the preparation that might emerge during the interview that would be of relevance.

In the case of Gielgud's Oral History Project interview, Gillard had prepared a large suite of headings that he would have liked Gielgud to have talked about; the question for the academic researcher is how directed were these questions? Clearly there was an agenda from Gillard and he had a number of key points, thirty-two of them, that he would have liked Gielgud to have covered. They are in chronological order and refer both to developments of the Corporation and to Gielgud's own work and career. Gillard would of course have done his homework, and having already been working on this project since the early 1970s it appears most probable that he had a structure worked out, one that he would adapt for all such interviews. Is Gillard's interview oral history? It does

meet the criteria that the questions refer to times that the interviewee was employed at the BBC, and therefore to times within living memory. Is it oral history in that Gillard gives the direction but also the space to allow the interviewee to talk about the subjects? This is harder to answer, and in the particular case of this interview, is overshadowed by the poor responses from an unwell Gielgud. The broad headings, the first lines of Gillard's notes, are loose enough to be guides, but each theme is developed, sometimes to qualify the opening statement, sometimes to explore particular themes but sometimes to clearly direct Gielgud down a particular pathway. As discussed, Gillard may well have had a particular ambition for the Project overall and may not have seen these interviews purely on an individual basis. Gillard in his working life had been a renowned reporter, having reported the D-day landings for the BBC. As a reporter, it is highly likely that he would not have been satisfied with a loose collection of people's stories of life and times at the BBC, thus there may well have been some over-arching structure.

Consequently, when interrogating the veracity of BBC Oral History content as evidence, the motives of the project, the direction and lead given by the interviewer must be considered, as well as the ability of the interviewee to provide a coherent interview.

It has already been established that the usefulness of oral histories relies upon the ability of the interviewee to accurately recount the facts in order to provide a clear account of those aspects that provide the colour and the texture of the object of the interview. Oral history is a useful tool for

gathering commentary from people's own experiences, and it also provides a point of debate amongst researchers concerned with its value. Some (Thompson, Thane) are keen to make the point that there has always been oral evidence, that written documents are as much the product of memory as are oral histories. Researchers place a value on the document, a value that is not placed on the spoken word – perhaps even when written down. But is the oral memory any worse than the written one? At least the oral cannot be forged. One significant difference between the use of oral and documentary evidence is that the document is of the moment. Certainly in the case of memoranda and letters between BBC employees, they have been written at the time, of the time. An oral history takes a longer view. In the case of the BBC Oral Histories, some take a very long view, covering sixty years, and this calls into question the ability of the interviewee to accurately recall events at that distance.

Gleitman et al (1999) make several distinctions in memory, between long-term memory and working memory, between episodic memory and generic memory and between explicit memory and implicit memory. Irrespective of classification, in order to commit to memory and to recall that memory, the subject goes through the stages of encoding, storage and retrieval and at each stage, success depends upon a number of factors. Failure in the act of acquisition will not commit to memory, the subject concentrating on one aspect of the item to be remembered, the other aspects being relatively inconsequential or too complicated or too intricate, consequently, at the point of retrieval, an incomplete or impaired memory results. The retrieval of events at a meeting may be

subject to the level of attention of the retriever at various points in the course of the meeting, whether they were distracted or paying attention, whether they contributed or not, whether they discounted something at the moment as inconsequential, all have a bearing on the crystallisation of the final memory.

The storage stage adds the encoded record to the nervous system and then at the point of retrieval, the record is recovered. Records considered stored in the appropriate place may not be so placed. One might not, for example, be able to recall the name of the play *The Dark Tower* because the memory is prompted by a question about *Childe Harald* and not about Louis MacNiece, the information having been stored with MacNiece, not Tennyson. However, in terms of reliability, there appears to be little difference in the ability to recall after 9 months than there is after more than thirty years. Thompson, in a book that makes the case for oral history, gives examples of experiments that have shown that loss of memory 'during the first nine months is as great as that during the next thirty-four' (Thompson, 2000: 130-132). Gleitman's standard text on psychology similarly quotes research indicating that memories established at three years post event were likely to be there forever. The drop in the recall rate as the subject gains in age has more to with age-related degeneration and other factors. Gielgud's ability to recall, and to recall coherently, was impaired by the effects of his strokes and, no-doubt, by the brain tumour, and not by mere failure to recall. Whatever he was to remember about a particular incident he would have remembered as well as if were thirty or more years previous.

Assuming, at the moment, that the storage of the memory is secure, for the researcher the problem of the reliability of oral history lies at either end of the process. It has already been established that what is committed to memory is selective and that recall immediately after the event is usually very good but declines very quickly and continues to do so until nine to twelve months have elapsed, when whatever has been selected is stored. The retrieval of this memory is not a straightforward event. Prompts may need to be given, which in themselves may give a bias to the memory. The subject may be influenced by subsequent events and may thus give, at one end of the spectrum, a subtle nuance or, at the other end, considerable emphasis to an aspect of the memory, an emphasis that might not previously have been there. In the case of Gielgud, his relationship with some colleagues, and what he thought of them, is at odds with the notes that Gillard supplies after the oral history interview. It may be that Gielgud had a better or worse relationship with that colleague, subsequent to the date of the item being discussed, or that with the benefit of hindsight he considered himself in the right or wrong. This longitudinal view can also impact on the recall. The subject is able to review that particular memory in relation to other memories, of the time and/or before and after, placing the recalled moment in a context and then providing a verbal recall that reflects how the subject feels about that moment now, at the point of recall, and not at the time of encoding.

Consequently the value of oral history in the establishment of fact is no better than that of written documents. The value that is offered by oral history is that it capitalises on the reflection process, whereby the subject

is able to give an overview of the event in question, albeit from their own perspective, and is able to lead to, or establish links between, other items of evidence that the researcher is compiling. Oral history also has other qualities that make it valuable. Written documents give very little about the relationship between people. The memoranda in the Written Archives Centre are valuable documents in this research, but hand-written notes added to some suggest relationships that are not explicit within the typed memoranda. Nonetheless these documents were not produced in clinical conditions. The writing of the memorandum includes much more than the words. The Drama (Sound) department consisted of a number of people, mostly male, who were creative, well educated, passionate about their work and were, no doubt friendly with some colleagues and less so with others. There was also a hierarchy. All this implicit in the writing of a memorandum about how they saw the subject of experimentalism in drama. Oral history might prove helpful by providing the insight into those relationships, assisting the researcher's understanding of how people interacted; it might possibly indicate why certain decisions were made.

Having successfully recorded an interview as Oral History, the more problematic stage is that of transcription. Here there are two main issues: one of what to transcribe and one of the ability of the transcription to accurately relay the commentary. Listening to someone recounting a story, the brain filters and adapts what is heard so that sense may be made of the words, without necessarily receiving all the additional sounds. Speech is not merely a list of words uttered in an order that both the transmitter and receiver understand; it includes laughter, coughs, broken sentences,

fragments of words as minds are changed in mid flow, to name but a few. The task for the transcriber is to record, in written form, those changes of direction, those vocal amendments.

For the researcher, especially the academic researcher, the preferred method of submitting an extract of the oral history is in the form of a written transcript. This is the universally accepted method of supplying such data, and is one that can be easily referred to by the reader. As suggested in the previous paragraph, this method does not give the emphasis placed on words or phrases, does not indicate the pace of delivery nor the confidence of the subject in the recall of their memory. The transcript may appear disjointed, full of apparent interruptions (laughter, coughs, verbal tics, acknowledgements from the interviewer in the form of words or grunts, and so forth) and thus would not make easy reading; indeed, with the exception of those present at the time of recording, it might not necessarily make sense. Some guidance is available (eg Yow, 2005 and Thompson, 2000) but techniques are not standardised and do not cover all needs. For the transcriber, picking out the words is only part of their role. The representation of stops and pauses is important, perhaps suggesting emphasis, or placing memories into order, or reflection. The transcriber has, of course, the use of normal rules of punctuation - full stops, commas. The comma indicates a short pause, then usually three stops (…) to indicate a longer pause and a dash (-) to indicate a break in thought. But who defines the difference between the lengths of pauses? Is a full stop appropriate at a particular juncture? Human speech is not spoken in organised, grammatical constructs as

might be expected in writing. Some level of emphasis can be placed with the use of italic or bold or uppercase type or underlined text, or even a combination of these - though how much emphasis is represented by each one (Justham, 2009)?

The convention and expectation of providing a transcript is usually a requirement of university regulations, and whilst it is useful as a back-up to the recording, creating the transcript itself lacks convention. The technology that is available today allows the oral historian to record the interview digitally and edit it digitally using computer software. This is easy and simple to use and the oral historian will quickly learn to recognise speech patterns in the waveforms. The question is, can audio extracts be submitted instead of the written transcript? The audio extract will have all the nuances required for the point to be made, nuances that cannot be transmitted in the written version. David Justham from the University of Nottingham's School of Nursing, Midwifery and Physiotherapy presented a paper at the Oral History Society's 2009 Annual Conference advocating this very point, that 'oral history should be presented as oral accounts and not transcriptions of the accounts' (Justham, 2009). In an unpublished paper he illustrated how use of the International Phonetic Alphabet might aid capture of some of the dynamics but this is generally an unwieldy and difficult tool for the non-phonologist researcher.

In addition to the BBC oral histories, three personal interviews were conducted that were used here. The interviews with Barbara Bray and

Desmond Briscoe predate this research for a higher degree; the interview with Dick Mills was conducted during the completion of this project. The interviews with Bray and Briscoe arose out of research for a Masters award. By the time of the start of this project, Briscoe had died and Bray was not in a position to receive follow-up requests; she died in 2010. The interview with Mills, whilst illuminating, carried very little content that is of relevance to this particular research.

All three interviews were transcribed and samples are in the appendices; full transcripts will be available on request to the author. The resultant transcriptions reflect the issues noted above regarding oral histories. The first thing that is clear is that there is no indication of time, pace or emotion. The reader of a transcription has no idea as to whether the interview was conducted in a hurry or was a relaxed affair, an opportunity to explore points or whether there was a sense of pressing on to limit the time taken up with the interviewee. The instructions to the transcriber were to leave in as many cues and clues as was possible and certainly not to correct anything said. This resulted in a large number of 'um', 'er' and other filler sounds:

> DB   Um, yes, um, yeh that the famous memo, yes. But eh no uh it all, it all grew naturally, and an awful lot of it grew out of tape, there's no doubt about it, without tape it could never ha, could never have happened, that's really the thing. I mean, um, I was working for Drama department er as a sound man, but I'd also, you know, I'd adapted the odd thing and I'd also, always been involved with music,

ever since I was nine years old, sort of thing, erm and therefore um - and there were others, obviously, who were interested in what was happening on the Continent, and what was happening, people like Stockhausen, and um Pierre Schaeffer and er so on, and we listened to whatever we could lay our hands on. And the BBC was very slow to take to tape. And they first of all, it appeared on semi-professional machines as rehearsal recorders for Drama, and of course once we, we found their, the machines and what you could do with sound on tape, even if you - it was only turning the spools by hand, you know and this sort of thing, it was a whole new world.

This sample passage, from the interview with Desmond Briscoe also demonstrates that other words and sounds are used as thoughts are assembled: 'But eh no uh it all, it all grew naturally' and how many words, in normal speech, might be used to put across an idea. This does present a problem for the interviewer at the point of interview. A journalistic interviewer would summarise what has been said and say it back so that the point is made succinctly (in preparation for the printed article); the academic interviewer may do the same but is far more likely to revisit to ensure that the idea put forward is maintained. The oral historian approach is one of minimal involvement, of letting the subject tell their story with as few interruptions as possible. Encouragement of the subject and the story, however, is of course important:

DB   (Chuckles) Oh yes, and of course when, then, they fini... drama finished up there, in the studios, and using that erm staff - oh, some

staff were especially recruited, obviously, and and the drama producers, most of them came up, some stayed in London, the Features Department. I mean er, in theory also but looked at these, 'cos it was Features and Drama.

RPH Yes..

DB   at that time. But Drama Department, as such, um was certainly the more classical side of it, found its way back to London as soon as possible.

RPH Mmm

DB   ... Not surprising really, partly because of availability of actors and all that sort of.... But they the the .... making sound work, experimenting was never, in my experience, done for it's own sake.

RPH Mmm

DB   It was because of a need of a production. It could be quite simple, or it could, and sometimes it could be the result of happy accidents, because playing 78 rpm discs and just picking out one sound, and you know, dropping the needle... (chuckles) You had all sorts of extraordinary things happened as well. You couldn't record them but you could try and repeat them

RPH Yes

but the resultant words on paper suggest that there was a constant interruption by the interviewer voicing 'mmm' at certain points. In fact, when listening to the recording it is clear that these 'mmm's and 'yes's are voiced as the subject is talking as in normal conversation, and therefore should not necessarily be considered as interventions.

Another aspect of conventional spoken dialogue is when one party of the conversation predicts what the other is about to say. The following example also demonstrates the use of the negative as a positive affirmation:

RPH Unless you're given an insight in perhaps into how somebody intended it?

DB   Well, yes, but then er er...

RPH ...it loses its...

DB   Exactly....

RPH ... impact there...?

DB   That's right. No, so that's, that's and it s.. it started really from there and…

Referring to a transcript from a third party when the original recording is not available easily creates an impression of a well-structured conversation, yet when an original recording is heard the various other sounds that accompany it may easily put a different slant on that conversation. Even by transcribing as literally as possible in the personal interviews, the reader of the transcript may not comprehend the tone of the conversation which may indeed get lost amidst the fragments of speech as represented on paper.

These various issues regarding the creation and interpretation of a transcription add a further area of caution to be noted in the interpretation of sources. This media history has been written using these various artefacts. It has been shown that there are few books either from the period under study or subsequently, that contribute to the central point of the narrative, the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. Reliance on the source material and the interviews has been of primary importance, and the published texts have been able to provide the background, the wider context; interrogating these has been of equal importance. This is not to devalue their relevance to the narrative, it is to comprehend that the notions of truth discussed above may be equally applied to academic texts as they may to historical documents. When the researcher understands the context within which Briggs wrote his history of the BBC and that prevailing when Briscoe and Curtis-Bramwell wrote their celebration of the Radiophonic Workshop, then an automatic acceptance of their representation of the truth is avoided.

The intention of the writer here is to produce a narrative media history that primarily meets the demands of a higher degree, whilst also telling the story following a narrative path that at times requires the reader to pause and consider the antecedents of the moment as well as the result of the actions of that moment. The earlier discussion regarding the different types of history demonstrated that history has no clear boundaries, only those imposed by the researcher. In the case of this media history, *The Uses of Literacy* contributes to the scene and discusses some of the cultural issues of the day, thus providing a good starting point for an examination of the cultural landscape across the UK, and within the BBC. It also affords the opportunity to understand the context within which the book was written, and to see how others have used the book, particularly within the academy.

The story of the pre-history of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop starts in the next chapter. Here aspects of the wider cultural landscape of the period are discussed, providing a macro-context, particularly a view of music and theatre, which will, in turn, led to a micro-context within the world of the BBC and within some departments of the BBC in which experimentation and radiophonics took place.

Chapter 2

Examining the Cultural Landscape

In those years immediately following the Second World War the cultural landscape in the United Kingdom was on the cusp of transition in many different areas. The cinema had long succumbed to Hollywood, 'a modern phenomenon strongly associated with American culture' (Geraghty, 2000: 2). David Lean, Carol Reed and Michael Balcon, though, were promoting a sense of British-ness to combat the American hegemony and there were some distinctive changes on the horizon. *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and the 'angry young men', including John Osborne, author of the play, shook up the theatre. Osborne's play, a stark contrast to the existing and more genteel theatre of the time is still seen as a touchstone of modern performance practice, one that has passed its influence on to British television soaps in particular. Radio was on the wane after thirty years of being the first true form of mass-communication. At the start of the 1950s most people listened to the wireless, but by the end of the decade, more people watched television. The expansion of television saw the arrival of ITV and with that came commercial television, and competition for that institution that upheld all that was good about England, Great Britain and the Empire, the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The Second World War gave rise to much social change and in this chapter some of those changes, as described by Marwick and Emsley (2001) are discussed in relation to the development of the Radiophonic Workshop. These changes occurred in technology, in social structure, particularly relating to class, in popular and high culture and within the institution of the BBC. In this chapter, the wider cultural activities in post-

war Britain are explored as a macro-context, a backdrop to the cultural and technical developments within the BBC, which are expanded upon in subsequent chapters. In the following pages are discussions on various interpretations and definitions of the cultural trends of the day, with the aim to promote the notion that, for the BBC, this was a period of interface rather than subtle transition. The picture presented is one arising from the austere, Arnoldian influences of the senior staff with a middle-class heritage having met the adventurous and the progressive in a cultural environment that, beyond broadcasting, had moved from modernism to post-modernism; nonetheless, the Corporation was still firmly entrenched in the former camp.

The chapter contains four themes. The starting point is that of newspapers, the original mass communication, and in the 1950s still a highly significant method of gauging the public's cultural tastes as well as transmitting the news of the day. This section calls upon Hoggart and Williams, allowing the theme to be interrogated using contemporaneous texts. This theme naturally introduces a discussion about class, a topic that is continued in the final section when class is considered in detail (Arnold, Sinfield, Samuel, Orwell et al), particularly in relation to the BBC, again using contemporaneous texts (Burns, 1977 and Paulu, 1956). The second section brings together the advances in technology and music, paying particular attention to those combinations that are of importance for the narrative here. The consideration of these developments starts with the Festival of Britain of 1951, which serves as a focal point for the rate and types of change in technology in the immediate post-war years.

From here the developments of two key advances are discussed, those of VHF/FM transmission and tape recorders. Music follows naturally on from this point, in particular, the work of Pierre Schaeffer and musique concrète.

The third theme explores the arguments surrounding modernism (Childs, Nicholls, Sinfield) and the theatre, to give a background to the work of Samuel Beckett, whose play *All That Fall* is discussed in Chapter 4. The final theme starts with further discussion regarding class, in particular class within the BBC. This moves into a discussion about William Haley and the role he played as Director General in the post-war BBC. Haley's cultural pyramid, compared to Adorno and Horkheimer's triangle of high culture, is a key part of this narrative, both as a philosophy and in terms of the creation of the Third Programme. This theme draws upon the BBC Oral History records of Haley.

Mass Communication: Newspapers

Progress was the watchword for the period, particularly in the UK, and progress was heralded not least by the advertising copywriter and the press who searched the lexicon for inspiring and mobilising language, the post-war period mining the wartime propaganda thesaurus. Hoggart suggests that 'the leader-writers of the popular Press make great play with horizons, new dawns, broad highways, forward movements (marchings and floods) and forward-lookers' (Hoggart, 1957: 144).

Freedom had been won but now the battle being fought was to continue to keep Great Britain great, and to keep it a major world power. Against the backdrop of nationwide austerity (rationing continued well into the mid-1950s) the people were cajoled into thinking – perhaps even believing – that progress was happening, and that progress was the way out of the immediate post-war difficulties. This may well have been the case, but the contemporary view from Hoggart is very much centred on his view, his notion, of 'working-class'.

Hoggart attributes the rise of the materialist society not only to the increase in disposable income among the working-class, but also to the 'popular publicist' who placed temptation in front of these people so that 'a gratification of the self' led to 'hedonistic-group-individualism'; the 'physically and materially emancipated working-class' tempted 'to have a largely material outlook' (Hoggart, 1957: 144). It is a truism that education and health were now freely available to all, that the majority of the population were healthier and better educated and that everyone who wanted a job had a job. This latter fact, the one responsible for Hoggart's working-class to translate from simple sons of the soil with codes and mores of generations, to money-loving materialistic individuals, is interesting on two levels. Firstly, there is Hoggart's view that the opportunities in employment were dull but financially rewarding. He saw that mass-production had its good points, presumably all that is good about progress, but its bad points made it

harder for the good [points] to be recognised. 'Brute necessities', the more pressing hardships of working life, have been greatly lessened. Working-people are more free, but they also have the freedom of a vast Vanity Fair of shouting indulgences. It is hard to find a way through such a crowd, especially as the entertainers are adept at discouraging the subversive thought that outside there may be other, quieter regions (Hoggart, 1957: 145).

The "entertainers" were driven by those that wished to promote the feeling of 'never having had it so good', the population obviously wishing for a time when health, education and employment were of little worry, especially if they were bringing up their family in the decreasing shadow of the Second World War. Hoggart seemed to be looking at the darker picture because it suited him. Writing in the mid 1950s he did not wholly trust the pictures painted by the press, and was probably quite correct not to do so, but not necessarily correct to see it as a problem solely for the working-class. In fact his scepticism was well placed in respect of the fact that mass-production did have its bad points. What was not particularly clear then was that the success of the manufacturing industry in that period, staffed by just the people Hoggart was writing about, was due to the post-war development hand-in-hand with technological development that was leading to an industrial landscape of high technology and, eventually, low-employment. Hoggart's workers were working their way out of their jobs. Hennessy later posited that the 'mysterious and little-comprehended post-1945 boom' had 'more to do with catch-up, the wider application of new technologies at a time when technological advance was

still labour-intensive as opposed to labour shedding' (Hennessy, 2006: 58). Hennessy's point, developed from one by Professor John Saville, is one that can only really come with the distance and hindsight of several decades, and Hoggart, standing in the middle of the post-1945 boom, can see as far in front of him as can we (at the time of writing) peer forward into the fog of the worst economic situation for sixteen years.

These two strands, that of the working class, and that of enveloping materialism, come together in Hoggart's argument about the press and those who wrote for it, Hoggart accusing the press of what is now commonly referred to as dumbing-down. Newspapers, caught up in the mood of progress so prevalent in the post-war years, propagated 'new dawns' and 'forward movements' alongside a shift to 'highbrow-hunting' and the creation of what they saw as populist approaches. Hoggart cites many examples of headline grabbing stories that would not appear out of place on the Red Tops of today, with phrases that are designed to ignite the passion of the reader, such as the wasting of 'good public money', 'Bohemian lifestyles' and the spoiling of recreational activities by 'spoilsports or cranks' alongside the very public skittles of the arts and the BBC:

> Modern art will only be mentioned if someone has given an excuse for trouncing the odd. The Arts Council is a 'fiddle' by a lot of 'cissies' who despise the amusements of the plain Englishman; and the BBC is little better (Hoggart, 1957: 152).

He suggests that the column writers are themselves examples of 'plain man', 'aggressive', 'embattled' and 'low brow'. Whilst disdaining the columnists as such, some of his comments cannot fail but be attributed also to the group to whom the writers were aiming their copy.

But is this view correct? Were these low-brow or populist newspapers being read by the working classes? Were the working classes receiving the content that they had asked for? Hoggart's premise is no: they were receiving what the Press thought they would like to receive – or perhaps in some instances, what they should receive. If there appears a large portion of the population with disposable income, especially if they have never had such a thing before, then it is in commerce and government's interest to help them to dispose of it by encouraging them to buy things. However, it was not just the working-class that read these newspapers. Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution* (1961) looked at the growth of the popular press during the post-war period, and his findings suggest that Hoggart's hypothesis was slightly askew.

Williams takes issue with Hoggart's possibly simplistic, approach to a notion of working-class culture, perhaps even to the idea that culture can be ascribed to a class. In an article published in the *Universities & Left Review* in 1957, following the publication of *The Uses of Literacy,* Williams points to a number of issues, or perhaps flaws, in Hoggart's basic assumption that working-class culture was being subsumed or diverted into an American-influenced mass communication-led culture of pulp fiction, rock'n'roll and tabloid newspapers. Williams draws attention to

what Hoggart leaves out of his book, which, as has already been established in the previous chapter, was not meant as a definitive text. Nonetheless, this did not stop Williams expounding upon his views, and he puts forward some sound arguments. The working-class have had a culture of their own, or at least have had aspects of culture that pertain more to them than to the middle-class, the bourgeoisie: 'such survivals of folk-culture as, say, industrial ballads, trade-union banners, the music-hall' (Williams, 1957: 29). However, Williams points out that civilisations have a cultural mainstream, and that, as culture transfers from one class to another, there is a point at which that culture belongs to both classes (ibid: 30); this leads him to rail against the idea of separate cultures for separate classes. How can one class have a different culture to another? Williams instead suggests that the media is provided by the capitalist: 'these [mass distribution] techniques … passed naturally into the hands of the commercial bourgeoisie' (ibid: 30). The working class became consumers, though not exclusively, and therefore 'to equate commercial culture with working-class culture is … wrong' (ibid: 30).

Williams, using a 'rough classification' of Quality, Popular and Tabloid showed that the tabloid style of newspaper was making significant inroads on the consumption of popular dailies.

In Table 1, it can be seen that in 1947, the tabloids held 28.9% of the market to the popular paper's 62.4%; by 1957, the popular's share of the

Table 1

The General Expansion of Different Types of Newspapers, 1937 – 1957			
	1937	1947	1957
	% shares of actual sales		
'Quality' dailies	8.0	9.5	9.5
'Popular' dailies	71.7	62.4	55.5
'Tabloid' dailies	20.3	28.9	35.0
'Quality' Sundays	3.5	3.5	5.5
'Popular' Sundays	82.0	76.5	71.0
'Tabloid' Sundays	14.5	19.5	23.5

(Source: Williams, 1961: 211)

market had dropped to 55.5% to the expense of the tabloid increase to 35% (Williams, 1961: 211). Williams adds that this trend is 'even more important when it is noted that there has been a steady development, in magazines, towards the same kind of journalism' (Williams, 1961:211).

Williams goes on to suggest that it is not education that has led to this shift, indeed 'This does not even begin to look like the developing press of an educated democracy' (Williams, 1961: 211). So what is responsible for this shift, a shift that has continued to the present? Hoggart may well have had the right idea, the press were creating reading matter that they thought the masses would like to read, and then having lured them in, would keep them with material of ever increasing interest. Yes, Hoggart may have been correct except that he gave the impression that this was

unfair on the working-class as it took them in a direction that he felt they should not go – perhaps should not be led. This is not an exclusive situation. According to Williams (Table 2), the 'Popular' and 'Tabloid' press were not the exclusive reserves of Hoggart's working-class:

> the leading daily paper of the rich and the well-to-do is not *The Times* (which is in fact exceeded by the *Daily Mirror*) nor *The Telegraph* (which is roughly equalled by the *Mail*); it is the *Express* which of all the 'popular' papers is nearest the tabloid style (Williams, 1961: 212).

The Mirror had 16% of the market for AB class, 28% C1, 44% C2 and 39% DE; The Express held 36%, 36%, 32% and 28% respectively.

Williams' viewpoint is based much more on an examination of the facts and an attempt to interpret these in a meaningful manner; Hoggart seems prepared to make a point on a less than scientific interpretation of, say, selected newspaper headlines, comments and reflections from individuals, and his own almost elitist position by virtue of him having been working-class – once.

This debate was almost parallel to the debate Matthew Arnold instigated nearly a century previous regarding the rise in cheap, sensationalist novels. These were mainly devoured by the newly emerging professional middle classes as they stood on the platforms awaiting their train to take

Table 2

Social Distribution of Newspapers				
By 'Social Class'	AB	C1	C2	DE
	5,580,000	6,570,000	11,692,000	13,783,000
	%	%	%	%
Mirror	16	28	44	39
Express	36	36	32	28
Mail	25	20	13	12
Herald	4	9	18	17
Sketch	9	12	13	11
Chronicle	11	12	12	11
Telegraph	25	11	3	2
Times	10	2	1	1
Guardian	7	3	1	1
Observer	19	8	2	2
Sunday Express	47	33	21	17
News of the World	24	36	55	58
Pictorial	20	34	49	41

(Source: Williams, 1961)

them up to town for their work, their book newly purchased from the kiosks populating these stations. Williams (1961: 169) points out that in the observation of the rise of cheap books in the 1880s, the issue for Arnold was one of 'tawdry novels' that had become easily available on the railway station, presumably the domain of the middle classes, and how the better literature was being withheld due to its access only being gained through the lending-libraries of the period. The culture of the

middle-class was being offered the joys of literature, at a price, whilst being given unrestricted access to the pulp fiction of the day. This debate also serves to point out that newspapers were still the major mass communication media, being read, using Williams' figures (Table 2), by over 37.5 million people, compared to 15 million television and radio licences in 1960. The population of the UK in December 1960 was 52.37 million. Furthermore, debates about the popular appeal of the press and the stories it carried were also beginning to be held in the BBC with particular reference to the rival Independent Television channel and, eventually, the rise of Radio Luxembourg followed by pirate radio. The issue of class is returned to below, with respect to the BBC.

Technology & Music

The cultural landscape of the 1950s was one of distinct change. Some decades explicitly show the shift from one cultural style to another, but others hide theirs. The 1950s, a decade of seemingly minimal importance, definitely represents a significant shift in the cultural life of the UK. The 1945 election was a marker, set down by 'Britain's first national citizen army' (Hopkins, 1963: 20). They were demanding changes; the war on the Front had been won and home would be better for it. During the time spent in the Forces 'the social revolution and the scientific-technological revolution which were to form the twin themes and driving forces of the 1940s and 1950s declared themselves and demonstrated their potent and many-sided interaction' (Hopkins, 1963: 20).

This shift is set against a backdrop of regeneration and change, across a period that extended from the end of the Second World War through to the 1960s. Contemporary and near-contemporary accounts display many similarities between that period and the first decade of the twenty-first century. *Our Hidden Lives* (Garfield, 2005), calling upon the post-war Mass Observation Diaries, reveals a population who were concerned about the economy; rationing was beginning to bite, and was set against the shipping out of food to the needy in war-torn Germany. The population were equally concerned about the success or failure of the new Government, the need to make-do-and-mend, the lack of respect that young people had, and what the BBC broadcast. There were laments for pre-war meals, pleas for stability and the good old days, and concerns that the real enemy now (and possibly during the War) was Russia. Then there was the atom bomb. However, despite all these clouds the United Kingdom was a country attempting to rebuild its economy, realise and comprehend its position in the new world order and maintain a dignity commensurate with its place if not its stature in that order.

Hopkins' twin forces of the social and the scientific-technological revolutions were slow to develop immediately after the war. The economic standing of the country had yet to be re-established, rationing was still part of everyday life; industry and the home were still adjusting to the return of men to the factory and women to the house. Post-war euphoria was wearing thin, morale was drooping and the Labour government was losing its gloss. However, by the start of the new decade, the post-war straitjacket was not as tight. By 1950, Britain's export target had been

achieved and unemployment was below two per cent. Whilst there was still rationing and high taxation there was Family Allowance, National Insurance and the National Health Service (Marwick, 2000: 174-179). Marr refers to this as a period of 'paradoxes, the hope and the chaos' (Marr, 2007: 109), a view from over fifty years away but not dissimilar to that recognised at the time; Judt says that the country was in an 'ambivalent mood' but that the 'cultural commentators were absorbed by intimations of failure and deterioration' (Judt, 2005: 205).

One hundred years previously, the Great Exhibition (1851) displayed to the world the greatness of Great Britain, a country then at the forefront of technical and industrial development. The success that the Great Exhibition celebrated led to success in all matters of commerce and to triumph in occupying large tracts of the world. What better then, than to celebrate the hundredth anniversary with an exhibition that demonstrated the strength of the country, even after a world war? This was the message given to the country by the Labour government, though as Marr and others are quick to point out, the agenda had many items, the project many aims. The Festival of Britain was a political move that addressed a number of matters, albeit in many instances only superficially. As noted many times throughout this narrative, this was a period of significant change and, importantly, the population and the government were aware of this.

The commentary and placement of the Festival of Britain within popular histories written since the start of the twenty-first century is an

interesting reflection of its value as attributed by these authors. Hennessy's *Having It So Good* merely mentions it in a sentence, comparing its impact to that of the Coronation two years later, agreeing with Churchill that 'it [the Coronation] did trump the Festival of Britain in popular perception and memory' (Hennessy, 2006: 245). In his earlier volume, *Never Again – Britain 1945-51* (1992), Hennessy makes slightly more use of the Festival of Britain, but essentially as a peg upon which to hang a number of developments, as well as points that he wishes to make. This is not a critical comment but serves to indicate the value the event has now in the views of those writing about the early 1950s. Marwick in his look at post-war Britain refers to the Festival in terms of architecture and design and reflected that the event 'came over as very much a metropolitan affair' (Marwick, 2000: 197-198). This would, no doubt, have contributed to the general or mixed feelings, apparent from accounts written or recounted at the time. Diary entries for the period (Kynaston) display a mix of impressions but there was an over-riding feeling of dissatisfaction, or rather disillusionment felt by Noel Coward and Sir John Barbarolli; disillusionment also felt by eight-year-old Robert Hewison, who was disappointed to learn that the Skylon was not floating in the air (Kynaston, 2009: 5-12).

The commentary may be light and slight as a reflection of the event's impact at the time, but within this thesis the Festival provides a focus indicating, in more modern parlance, the interface between the periods of austerity and of prosperity, not just for household income but for industry, art, entertainment and society. It was also an interlude, an opportunity

for the country to pat itself on the back and have a 'year of fun, fantasy and colour' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1948). It was also an opportunity for the Government to make a visual statement by clearing the bomb wreckage of the South Bank and giving designers and architects the opportunity to produce something new. The event was to be eye-catching and entertaining and show that the country can be 'progressive, "forward-looking", "as modern as tomorrow"', sentiments which Hoggart says were 'desirable ends-in-themselves' (Hoggart, 1957: 158). The Festival was to be educational, providing many a challenge for the scientists and industrial engineers in supplying models and descriptions for anyone to read – all 'madly educative – and very tiring' (Kenneth Williams in Kynaston, 2009: 7).

The idea for the Festival came from Gerald Barry, who had been the Editor of the *News Chronicle* between 1936 and 1947, and it was taken up with some zest by the Labour government, particularly Herbert Morrison who was Deputy Prime Minister at the time. Barry became Director-General and Chairman of the Festival Executive Committee and he, along with the Committee was supported by the Festival of Britain Council Members. This Council was essentially a collection of representatives of industry and the arts, including John Gielgud, Sir Malcolm Sargent and Sir William Haley. Haley's inclusion was obvious. As Director General of the BBC he represented the communication network to inform the public of the Festival's proceedings; he provided access to a number of artists of all disciplines and was no doubt keen to be involved, if only to be part of the education of the public. The BBC also provided connected content, and,

during one week in 1951, the Third Programme devoted all of its output to recreating the year of the Great Exhibition, 1851 (Paulu, 1956: 151)

Festivals were seen as a method of showcasing up to date technologies, and many industries organised their own events. The radio and television industries were no exception, particularly as the post-war scientific developments included electronics and optics (Marwick, 2000: 188). In the ten years or so following the Second World War, the quality of recorded and broadcast sound had improved tremendously. The annual radio exhibitions held during the 1940s and 1950s showed an interested population what was available at the time, and what was to come. From a Government point of view, this was just the sort of public interest that needed to be developed, in order to boost public demand for goods that could help restart the industrial economy in the UK. Micro-groove records became available in 1950 with the $33^{1}/_{3}$ rpm Long Playing (LP) disk and tape recorders for domestic use were available from the following year. Wireless or radio sets were getting smaller and with the advent of printed circuits in 1954 and transistors in 1955, such sets were also becoming far more portable (Pawley, 1972: 341-342).

The biggest development of the period in home entertainment was television. The 'radio industry' was keen to keep active in both areas and whilst promoting television it was also keen to keep the interest in radio as high as possible, with the following advice to traders:

> Utilize [sic] the fact that television will attract people into the showroom. Ensure that the customers have to pass a lane of radio sets leading to the television displays. Judicious grading of radio sets along the lane is important and emphasize [sic] the fact that the price of radio compared to television is relatively low. (*The Wireless and Electrical Trader* in Hill, 1996: 180)

Not wishing to submit to the impending supremacy of television, the radio industry encouraged manufacturers to use technical developments to both improve the quality of the sound and also to make it portable as the wireless moved out of the sitting room to make way for the television, manufacturers concentrating 'more on improving performance, dependability and appearance rather than price-cutting, and in this respect the sets as a whole represent good value for money' (*The Times*, 1951). *The Times'* Radio correspondent also noted that companies were catering for the enthusiast with equipment that would 'do more than justice to BBC programmes' and that tape-recording had 'established itself as a domestic pursuit' (*The Times*, 1951). By the time of the 19th National Radio Show in 1952, radio receiver prices had started to come down whilst the technical design and capabilities still improved. Portable sets, both battery and mains versions, were now very popular, the Show demonstrating about forty new models (Hill, 1996: 183).

Radio reception in the post-war period was variable. The majority of radio broadcasts were made on the medium waveband and in the UK this led to much interference from European stations that were often more powerful,

especially in the evening and at night. Val Gielgud, the Head of BBC Radio Drama lamented that listeners to radio plays complained continually that this variable quality led to the point that 'the subtleties, and accordingly the basic possibilities, of the broadcasting of plays were too frequently wasted on a desert air' (Gielgud, 1957: 186).

There were also legal restrictions to waveband usage based on the 1934 Lucerne agreement on frequencies, but though it was recognised that this required attention after the end of the War, it was not done in time for the launch of the BBC's Third Programme in 1946. Five years later, in 1951, *The Times*' Radio Correspondent wrote of the BBC engaging in 'a series of comparative tests, using alternative systems of modulation, from two new high-power transmitters installed at Wrotham in Kent' (*The Times,* 1951a). Test transmissions had begun at Wrotham the previous year and the plan for national coverage of the Home, Light and Third Programmes on VHF/FM was submitted to the Government in 1951, though approval was slow and did not appear until 1953. The Copenhagen Agreement of 1950 allocated 243 broadcasting frequencies across Europe. By 1953 this had reached 368 frequencies and 762 individual transmitters (*The Times*, 1954a). However, despite the continual reduction in quality, the authorisation to implement the new VHF stations did not appear until July 1954 and Wrotham opened the first regular VHF/FM transmission on 2nd May 1955 (Pawley, 1972: 338-339). The advantages of VHF/FM transmission were not merely that less interference was experienced, also the signal was clearer.

As the decade progressed, the field of science and technology continued to develop new ways of doing old things, as well as new ways for new things. By the middle of the decade, radio and television technology was progressing apace. The Golden Jubilee number of *Wireless World* from 1961 displayed the high points of the day's technology, noting that in 1956 Shockley, Bardeen and Brattain were awarded the Nobel Prize for their work on transistors. Thanks to their work, transistors had replaced valves in 'hearing aids and some all-transistor "personal portables"', although valves were still performing better at higher frequencies; it would be a few more years until the transistor radio became readily available. 1956 also saw the rise of the tele-printer and the 'British television receiver was virtually standardized at last', the most popular size being the new 17-inch screen. This was also the year that Ampex announced a television tape recorder (*Wireless World*, 1961: 181).

The key technological event in radio studio practice during this middle part of the twentieth century was the development of analogue tape recording, in particular, the invention of plastic-backed recording tape. Morton (2004), Pawley (1972) and Street (nd) all recount the early development of recording devices from Valdemar Poulsen's patented Telegraphone of 1898 to the Blattnerphone and Marconi-Stille machines which were used to record radio programmes at the BBC until the advent of the paper-backed tape recorder.

Recording programmes at the BBC came late when considered in the light of other broadcast developments, as well as the existing methods of the

time. Pawley points out that in the early days of broadcasting, whilst the manufacture and recording of records was already 'an established industry' it was complicated, and not a suitable method for recording radio programmes (Pawley, 1972: 178). Lord Reith was kept informed of developments as the 'idea of 'bottled programmes'' was gaining ground particularly for the Empire Service so that programmes could be broadcast to different time zones in order that 'listeners could listen at convenient hours' (Briggs, 1965: 98-99). As well as offering pre-recorded programmes to the Empire Service, two other uses quickly became apparent: recording important events for posterity, and recording live events for broadcast. The first Recorded Programmes Executive, HL Fletcher, had been appointed in January 1934. Briggs notes that Fletcher was an 'imaginative person', one who was capable of seeing a direct link between 'engineering techniques and programme production', (Briggs, 1965: 99) an essential relationship that twenty years later would help the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. Fletcher's experiments included *Pieces of Tape* (1932), an experiment in sound using elements from a number of recorded Blattnerphone tapes. The programme included a recording of Amelia Earhart after she had flown across the Atlantic (Briggs, 1965: 99; Pawley, 1972: 179).

The development of recording at the BBC in the 1930s took three routes: the steel wire and tape system, recording to disc and the Phillips-Miller system, a method of recording onto film that could be played back immediately. At the same time, the German company AEG patented a paper tape with a powdered steel layer and in 1935 AEG Recorders

manufactured the Magnetophon, which started being used by German radio. Pawley recounts how he saw a demonstration of the recorder in Berlin 'but the tape frequently broke and the system would clearly have no application in broadcasting' until that had been resolved (Pawley, 1972: 193-194). In 1947 the BBC moved to standardise to the German Magnetophon system and whilst the engineers had to test and approve new equipment, it was important that the presenters and producers had a say. DG Bridson, who used the Magnetophon immediately after the war, whilst in Europe, thought that the machine had

> effected a quiet revolution in mobile recording techniques. For here was something which completely outclassed either wire or disc or film recording as I knew them, both in quality of reproduction and in the ease with which the tape could be cut and handled in the studio. (Bridson, 1971: 120)

Most recording was still being done on disc when, in early 1949, MJL Pulling, Superintendent Engineering, Recording, reported on an analysis (instigated by RVA George, the Head of Recorded Programmes) 'of those recording and reproducing commitments at present carried on the disk system at the various London centres which it would seem reasonable to transfer to the tape system when available' (Pulling, 1949).

Recording on to disk had been in use for some time and the next stage of that particular technological development was taking place with the

introduction of $33^1/_3$ rpm discs, which allowed for longer recordings. There was a distinction made between recordings and recorded programmes:

> Recordings may well be isolated excerpts inserted in a feature programme containing mostly "live" material whereas a "recorded programme" implies that the whole of the programme is being broadcast from disks, tape or film. (Ellis, 1955: 94)

This distinction had the practical ramification, as Pulling noted, of demanding more space (Pulling, 1949). Whereas the disc-based recordings were, in effect, fixed, that is, they were already in place prior to a programme being broadcast, the tape technology had the possibility of being used 'on the fly'. However, to make good use of the tape recorders, ideally, three of them would be needed, and their size at this period was not insubstantial. Five years later, in late 1955, when the Drama (Sound) department came to debate the notion of experimentalism in its productions, those producers that would have wished to develop the use of tape recordings felt that they could not, as no studio had more than two machines.

That technology served the purpose of industry, and therefore benefitted the economy was clear, but technology was also clearly of use in the arts, particularly in the experiments in music in the post-war period. Writing in 1977, Burns, considering the 'Reithian Ethos', suggests that when thinking of

> broadcasting in terms of costs and benefits: cultural, social, political and moral: then undoubtedly vulgarisation of the kind that has caused so much hand-wringing, from Matthew Arnold to Richard Hoggart, has to be regarded as perhaps the biggest item on the debit side. (Burns, 1977: 41)

Burns included the 'cultural, social political, and moral' yet is quick to defend the intellectual. His argument for 'vulgarisation' centres less on the dumbing down of programmes, though there were clear instances of this, and more on the 'homogenising effect' of creating output for the masses, whereby the selection of what will be put into the schedule is made by the few for the many (Burns, 1977: 41). This may not be entirely how the BBC saw it and, as will be shown later, there were those who thought that even a small audience - still in the tens of thousands - was important.

However, Burns does point out that the largest gain in culture from the BBC had been in music. Britain in the 1920s was 'a musically barbarous nation' but by the 1960s had a 'claim to be the musical capital of the world' (Burns, 1977: 42). Whether this claim referred to popular or classical music is hard to say. In 1920s Britain, Delius, Elgar and Holst were still alive (all three died in 1934); Arnold Bax had already published *Tintagel* (1917-19) and was turning his attention to more abstract forms whilst a young Benjamin Brittan was being inspired by Frank Bridge (Latham, 2002: 112 & 168). However, the popular music of the day was already beginning to take its lead from the jazz and vaudeville forms of the United States. By the 1960s Britain was clearly leading the way in

popular music, particularly with The Beatles and the Merseybeat sound, and little new work appeared in the classical music canon. It is a point to be discussed outside the confines of this thesis that the rise of popular music, in all its forms over the decades of the twentieth century, was a result of radio. Suffice to say that the use of music as a hook to draw people into the wireless was not lost on the early pioneers of radio. In 1923 the BBC started subsidising the British National Opera Company at Covent Garden and took over The Proms in 1927, as well as providing 'the tennis club blade' the opportunity to 'practice his steps to the strains of top-notch dance bands, broadcast live from a grand hotel' (Briggs, 1961: 275-276; Samuel, 1998: 178).

Music in Britain in the 1950s was in a state of flux. Heavily influenced by the American presence during the previous decade, be-bop jazz musicians and the crooners, particularly Frank Sinatra, were performing the must-have music at the start of the decade. By the middle of the decade rock'n'roll had appeared, first with *Rock Around the Clock* in the film *Blackboard Jungle* (Brooks, 1955), and then came the Elvis Presley phenomenon. This engendered a number of sound-alikes adding their voices to the popular music of the time, Cliff Richard being the best known British artist. In 1956, the year of *Rock Around The Clock,* the biggest sellers in the UK top twenty were Doris Day, Pat Boone and Frankie Laine. But this was not the full story. The teenager also had plenty of opportunity to hear live bands and listen to a varied collection of music genres, from Britain's revival of the folk tradition with skiffle to the

country's homage to the jazz from the early decades of the century with Trad Jazz.

Despite its mass appeal to the young, much of this music did not graduate to the sound waves of the BBC. Teenagers had to rely on foreign radio stations, the music press, word of mouth, jazz, blues and folk clubs, as well as record stores, to find out about the latest 'hot disc'. In the *BBC Handbook* for 1956, the Corporation's music policy was 'still aimed at serving the art of music and reflecting the musical life of the country' (BBC, 1956a: 75) through programmes such as *Listen to the Band* (brass and military bands), *Grand Hotel* (Light classical music), *Mid-Day Music Hall* (alternating with *Worker's Playtime*) as well as *Housewives Choice* (record requests). Teenage pop music was catered for by *Pick of the Pops,* which started in 1955 and was more or less the only show of its ilk on the BBC, until Brian Matthew's *Saturday Club* came along in 1957. Briggs notes that whilst there was talk of 'the creation of a specifically British contemporary culture in the realm of Popular Song', there was little attention paid to pop music, either because the perpetrators of 'crude protectionism' were 'unaware of or condescending in their attitudes towards contemporary culture in the making' (Briggs, 1979: 758).

Consequently, light classical music was still central to the music policy of the BBC. According to the *BBC Handbook* of 1956

> In the Home Service the Classics and Romantics are generously represented and present-day music not ignored. The Third

> Programme ranges from music of our own time to the discovered
> treasures of bygone centuries. The Light Programme carries every
> kind of light music, but also regularly gives its listeners
> opportunities of hearing the standard orchestral and symphonic
> repertoire (BBC, 1956:75).

This is not to suggest that the BBC were shirking their duty to the public, but it does seem odd, perhaps with the benefit of considerable hindsight, that the popular music to be heard on the national broadcaster had not moved on as far, nor as fast as it had in the record shops. The BBC were, and arguably are today, great promoters of music, and in the year to the end of March 1956 broadcast nearly two hundred first performances – some of them premieres, some first performances in Britain (BBC, 1957: 74). However, pop music was seldom heard and along with jazz and folk music, there was also little opportunity for composers of the avant-garde. The arguments to provide such programmes were countered by the three service system, each Programme, the Home, Light and Third, seeing itself as the inappropriate home of these minority interests (Briggs, 1979: 728-729). Some of these minority interests however, played a significant role in the story of the founding of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

In his book *Special Sound* Louis Niebur puts forward the idea that despite the acknowledged status of Paris and Cologne in post-war avant-garde music, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop was as big, if not bigger, an influence on the electronic music of today 'in particular a specifically English brand of music originating outside the sanctioned musical

establishment' (Niebur, 2010: 4). Ironically, the creation of this 'English brand' was in no small way influenced by Pierre Schaeffer, creator of musique concrète, but his contribution would not have been possible without the creation of the tape recorder.

Musique concrète is the exploitation of recorded sound, of musical or non-musical origin, to see what effects could be gained. This is done by using various devices for reversing or repeating the sound or varying the speed or pitch. From such material, compositions are built up which can be listened to either as pure music or as sounds to accompany film, ballet, radio or TV programmes. Pierre Schaeffer first used the term in 1948, to describe his studies in the electronic collection and manipulation of sound (Latham 2002: 820). Briscoe recounts the possibly apocryphal story that Schaeffer, broadcasting from an underground radio station during the Second World War, had a needle stick in the groove of an Edith Piaf record. On starting up again, the 'sound encouraged Schaeffer to pursue 'the music in between'' (Briscoe & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 12). Spurred on by this he began experimenting with sounds, recording them and then using them as building blocks to create collages.

Schaeffer's first official composition, *Etude aux chemins de fer* (1948), was a montage of sounds recorded at a train depot in Paris. The sounds included six steam locomotives whistling, trains accelerating, and wagons passing over the joints in the tracks. Although the composition is considered to be more of an experimental essay rather than a serious composition, it was significant in that it was a musical composition

produced by a technological process. Furthermore, the work could be played over and over, and, not being dependent on human performers, would always be presented with its quality unchanged, additionally, the elements of the piece were "concrete." At the time, Schaeffer was playing with disk recording technology. He created closed grooves that gave a continual sound, he played records at different speeds and he discovered that this not only affected the pitch and duration of the sound, but also the amplitude envelope. A number of pieces followed. *Cinq etudes de bruits* (1948) was first performed on French national radio on October 5th 1948. The reaction of the listening public was sharply divided. *Etude pour piano et orchestre* (1948) mixed the sounds of an orchestra tuning up with those of an improvised piano. *Etude au piano* (1948) had Pierre Boulez playing multiple styles of piano such as classical, romantic and atonal, which Schaeffer dissected and then tried to piece together as a cohesive production.

In 1949 Schaeffer was assigned two assistants, Pierre Henry, a composer, and Jacques Poullin, a sound engineer. Their first work, *Suite pour quatorze instruments* (1949), was the starting point for the syntax of musique concrète. His analysis of the nature of sounds led to his definition of *objet sonore:* the isolation of a basic sound separated from its context and examined for its characteristics outside its normal time continuum. He began to observe sound not only as a broad definition, but was also capable of finer analytical definition, such as filter and amplitude envelopes. The first public performance of musique concrète took place in 1950 in Paris. Schaeffer used a PA system, several turntables, and mixers.

The performance did not go well – creating live montages with turntables had never been done before.

In 1951, the French broadcaster RTF provided Schaeffer with a new studio. Up to then he had used the phonograph, but in the new studio he had tape recorders. One of the recorders had five-track capability and one, the Morphophone, had twelve playback heads, which allowed for tape echo and a pseudo reverb effect. Two other decks, known as Phonogènes, were designed to play pre-recorded loops at different speeds. One of these came with a twelve-note keyboard. Stereo sound was still in development, but Schaeffer had the means of playing up to five separate tracks with five separate speakers. With this system he could experiment with the spatial effects of sound and give effective public performances. Two speakers would be located in front of the stage on the left and right, one placed at the back directly in the middle, and one was suspended from the ceiling. The ceiling speaker allowed for experimenting with vertical sound placement as well as the usual horizontal placement. The fifth track contained an additional channel spread between the four speakers.

Some parties within the BBC were excited by these developments and as will be seen in the following chapter, these techniques soon found their way into radio drama but it was BBC Engineering that took the major lead on this and founded the Electronic Effects Committee in December 1956. The Committee was appointed to investigate

(a) The facilities required to set up a combined technical and operational 'workshop' to provide electrophonic effects as supporting sound for certain programmes.

(b) Subject to approval of the recommendations to direct and develop the output of the 'workshop'. (BBC, 1956b; 1956c)

The minutes of this meeting and of others subsequently are brief and allude to discussions and decisions that have taken place elsewhere for which there does not appear to be supporting material that is available to the researcher. There are, for example, two versions of a paper giving some historical background to *musique concrète* and other forms of music, one dated November 1956 and one the following May. Presumably these were submitted to the Committee meetings for discussion or information as both are archived adjacent to minutes from the meetings. The 1956 document is much more comprehensive and includes discussions on existing facilities, the type of equipment that might be needed for such a facility at the BBC and a list of further readings and suggested recordings (BBC 1956d). The later document contains only the historical perspective, events having overtaken the equipment lists (BBC 1957b).

Defining these new sounds and new ways of making sounds was important, certainly for the BBC who needed to categorise them for allocation to department and for copyright purposes. The earlier, 1956, document defines *musique concrète* and other forms of experimental music. Some of these were un-named, at least in this report, and all were related in some way or another. 'Incidental music' used 'the full technical

resources available from microphones, tape and other recording machines'; American experiments included the use of the songs of birds and John Cage's 'sonata form' of sound utilising four radio sets, tuned to different stations and fading up each in turn culminating in a 'finale made of all programmes together'. (BBC 1956d: 1). The paper also introduced 'Electronic Music' as 'entirely concerned with artificial ie electronic manufacture of sounds built up from sine tones' (ibid).

Attribution of these two versions of the paper is difficult. The later version has the initials DBL (though their identity is not known); the earlier is not attributed but acknowledges help in the compilation of the report from D Oram, TH Eckersley, D Cleverdon and A Almuro. Eckersley was Assistant Head of Central Programmes Operations with a remit for Recording; Cleverdon was from the Features Department; Almuro was a French avant-garde musical composer who worked with Schaeffer in the 1950s. Daphne Oram had been employed by the BBC during the War as a 'music balancer', however, her ambitions extended much further. She trained as an engineer and became Music Studio Manager, but her real interest was in experimental music. In 1950 she had submitted to the BBC *Still Point* (1950) 'a work for 'orchestra, five microphones, and manipulated recordings'' for the Italia Prize but it was rejected (Briscoe, & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 34; Daphne Oram Trust, n.d.).

Plays & Modernism

Such experiments in music may fall under the loose descriptor of 'avant garde modernism' and it is important for this thesis to look at the other strand central to the story, that of theatre, and also to consider this area in the light of modernism. Modernism becomes central to the intellectual discussion in this history, as it is the production of Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* (1957), that is pivotal in the events which led to the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. Beckett – or his work – is something of a conundrum when it comes to modernism, as is defining both the term and period that is modernism. Childs says that modernism is

> experimental, formally complex, elliptical, contains elements of decreation as well as creation, and tends to associate notions of the artist's freedom from realism, materialism, traditional genre and form, with notions of cultural apocalypse and disaster. (Childs, 2000: 1-2)

Tosh, briefly referring to the term as a way of introducing a discussion of the term post-modernism (a common occurrence), commits modernism broadly to the 'core beliefs which underpinned the evolution of modern industrial societies' (Tosh, 2006: 199).

Any attempt at defining modernism is soon thwarted by a recognition that there are a number of variables to be taken into account; chief amongst these is the fact that although modernism may be discussed loosely, it is

invariably in relation to a particular form – art, literature, architecture or music – and even within these definitions there may be elements of re- or micro-definition. There is also a general tendency to be distracted from defining what modernism is by defining when it was, as if the period would therefore illustrate the artefact and the meaning. In fact there is no instant start or stop date. Neither do cataclysmic events cause the immediate cessation of one style and the birth of another. In fact, it may be said that the use of the term modernism, as applied to different art forms, tends to represent different time periods, though they overlap and generally coincide with the last decade or so of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth.

A logical conclusion therefore, is that there is no clear period defined by modernism and the term cannot be clearly defined until enough time has elapsed between that period and the analysis. Such a definition will also be difficult to arrive at, given that as a movement spanning many artistic media, the term also covers different time frames and has many sub-movements within. Both Hoggart and Williams, writing in the middle of the twentieth century, have alluded to aspects of modernism, yet it does not appear as a term in their texts. However, from the 1970s onwards it has become a statement for debate, a descriptor for argument, and, for some, a term against which to describe other movements. For the purposes of this thesis, an acknowledgement of the ending of modernism is important, although not in order to firmly place the arts as presented and represented in radio of the period, through the BBC, as being an '-

ism', but to serve as another example of the interface, the transition that occurred during the post World War Two decade.

Modernism in literature had played itself out before the Second World War; in architecture, at least in the UK, the movement was still evident albeit a soft-modernism rather than the 'hard' modernism of Le Corbusier (Kynaston, 2009: 9); and in art, modernism fractured into a number of styles and strands; some of these dwindled whilst others grew. It is through discussion about art and modernism that Nicholls commences his book with the statement 'The beginnings of Modernism, like its endings, are largely indeterminate' (Nicholls, 1995: 1), and later succinctly sums up the end of the period, when, referring to surrealism, he draws attention to the ambiguity of 'the end or summation of modernism … without finality or closure' (Nicholls, 1995: 300).

It is with Beckett that the debate about Modernism becomes important with a need to discuss his work in relation to the accepted discourses. Childs uses Beckett's *Murphy* 'published in 1938, supposedly 8 years after Modernism started to wane' (Childs, 2000: 5) as an exemplary Modernist text and Fletcher and McFarlane put Beckett (with *Waiting for Godot*, written in 1952 and first performed in 1953) and Ibsen as representing 'the poles of Modernism, in time as in spirit' (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1976: 506). To them this is a problem, for it then begs the question: 'How to define an aesthetic which needs to embrace two such disparate figures' (ibid: 506). In the context of this research, it is Beckett the writer of plays with whom we are concerned, thus it may be unfair to bring together the

notion of modernism and radio drama, since he also appears in other 'categories'. Forty years before Childs - and many others - debated the issue of Beckett the last modernist or the first post-modernist, Martin Esslin (Head of BBC Radio Drama from 1963 to 1977) wrote his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, firmly positioning Beckett at the head of a group of writers that were

> searching for a way in which they can, with dignity, confront a universe deprived of what was once its centre and its living purpose, a world deprived of a generally accepted integrating principle, which has become disjointed, purposeless – absurd. (Esslin, 1961: 399)

In fact, attempting to compartmentalise Beckett is a difficult, if not a fruitless activity but there is a need for a structure to discuss, a defining sentence with which to compare – and contrast – this writer with others.

This inability of Beckett to be compartmentalised can in fact be applied to many of the playwrights of the post-war period. It is entirely possible for success to come from something that is not of the current vogue which may – or may not – set a new direction. In terms of plays for the theatre, the 1950s were certainly a period of transition, and even those productions that may not now be considered adventurous or challenging the norm of the day, were seen as such at the time. The BBC Sound Radio Drama department of the 1960s certainly recognised the preceding decade as having been an important one in playwriting and produced a

series of radio versions of plays first seen in the theatre. The series was entitled *From the Fifties*. In the introduction to the 1961-62 drama series, Michael Bakewell and Eric Ewens noted that when the plays were considered and compared across the decade it was possible to see that 'there occurred a major change in writing, both in style and content, which affected not only the play and the novel, but also the film and the radio play' (BBC, 1961:4). It is interesting to note that the radio play has often been better compared with film than with its theatre-based cousin since the engaged listener's imagination is unfettered by the stage set, taking over the role of the cinematographer. Whilst its production methods may be far simpler, the values and the depth and breadth of picture to be created are as large.

The plays in this series, selected for their individual qualities as well as for the overall effect of demonstrating the theatrical developments of the decade, commenced with Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (1949) and ended with Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1960). Restricted to UK and European writers, the list included plays by Sartre, Amis, Rattigan, Brecht, Arden, Beckett (*Waiting for Godot,* 1955) and Osborne. Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) is situated in the middle of the list, and in the middle of the decade, not so much as a turning point but rather as a clear indication or instruction that the changes coming from the start of the decade are well and truly here; The notion is conveyed that it is alright to do something different, something daring. It can be seen from this list that, at least as far as the BBC in the early 1960s was concerned, there was no clear demarcation between the various theatrical factions, between modernism

and post-modernism; in true, equitable fashion these plays seem to represent the decade and the listener may, if he or she wishes, be the judge beyond that.

This selection of 1950s plays, had been produced under the auspices of Gielgud's successor, Martin Esslin and this may perhaps have reflected a reaction against his predecessor. Gielgud's own reactionary support of the classical theatre and his dislike for the modern was well known. Yet this may seem a little unfair as the BBC Sound Drama department did appear to move with the times and certainly had done during the 1950s with the help of Donald McWhinnie. The Department also had a wider duty to its listeners as more people listened to radio drama than attended the theatre, and there would be a consequent demand for variety in the schedule of plays.

The theatre in the 1950s was not as well-supported as one might suppose, nor even as might have been thought at the time, 'only one in every two hundred people attended regularly' (Sandbrook, 2005: 186). However, it was seen as an important touchstone, indicating the state of culture. It was also a place to display, discuss and explore social and political issues and as such it 'took on a historical importance beyond its immediate appeal to an audience' (Sinfield in Sandbrook, 2005: 186). This was a period when things were not necessarily as clear-cut as one might hope when viewed in retrospect. There may be an argument for Beckett being the last modernist, yet there is a lot about *Waiting for Godot* that is post-modern. The theatre audience at the time watching the barren waste land,

the post-apocalyptic environment and mankind seeking for something but not knowing what, did not see it as post-modern, but clearly here was a play now interpreted as such. To them this was perhaps just a pared down method that Beckett was keen on, a stark, bleak theatre that might only be a passing fad. However this was not the case as shown by the arrival of Harold Pinter who seemed to combine the harsh reality of Osborne with the sparseness of Beckett's writing.

How important is this setting of categories? It certainly allows the researcher to assemble what might otherwise be disparate groups under one umbrella title, perhaps to promote a 'grand' theory, or maybe to conveniently describe a collection of concepts by seeking out common themes. It is possible that the arguments around the descriptors of modernism and post-modernism are, in fact, self-fulfilling. Having already observed that these 'periods' varied from art form to art form, and that even in one art form, there is a great divergence of style, content and presentation, it certainly raises the question of the use of such categorisation. Sinfield suggests that modernism, and more importantly, post-modernism, whilst not created by the Leavisites, were at least used by them, through such organs as *Scrutiny*, to promote their view of Englishness in literature and literary criticism, and thus a view of culture was conveyed that has permeated education and society in the UK since the 1940s (Sinfield, 2004: 207-210).

This position, the primacy of literary criticism over modernism, helps to explain the nature of theatre and hence the nature of radio drama. As

Sinfield says, 'Modernism' came mainly from Europe with Ionesco, Brecht and Beckett *et al* (the latter always seen as a non-Anglo-Saxon author and playwright), the 'younger literary intellectuals' seeing 'Modernism as a foreign fashion that had had its day' (Sinfield, 2004: 210). Thus, a shift in understanding the way that the literary and theatrical worlds were moving, helps one to take a different view of the output of radio drama during the 1950s. The original premise at the start of this research was that the BBC Sound Radio Drama Department was advancing at a different pace and in a different direction to that of the theatre, and the best way to understand this was to grasp the notion that whilst modernism had given way to post-modernism on the stage, the sound studio was still entrenched in the modern. In fact that was not the case. It could be suggested that the influence of literary criticism had given rise to a perception that this may have been the case, but in fact the Drama (Sound) department continued to do what it always did – follow the trends if appropriate, whilst offering the familiar and the classical, as well as the new. It could afford to gamble on the new thing perhaps better than could the theatre; it was certainly able to offer a bigger, wider more colourful picture than the stage and it had the potential for far larger audiences. Also it did not have to run night after night for weeks, months or even years at a time. The problem seems to be more of one of picking out the new, the creative, the play that reflects the issues of the day as well as the concerns for the future.

Inside the BBC: Class and William Haley

Hoggart makes numerous comments about the working classes but the BBC was, to all intents and purposes, made up of representatives of the middle class. The middle classes have been a major, if not the, dominant force in UK society, since the 18th century (Williams, 1959; Seed, 1992; Day, 2001; et al), and, as Forster said, 'the character of the English is essentially middle-class' (Forster, 1936: 3), This statement was certainly still true in the middle of the last century. Forster goes on to point out that at the heart of the middle-classes is the public school system, an institution where the central tenets are 'old-fashioned virtues of house-dining and playing for the house, about belonging to a friendly extended family - about being part of a story that they themselves are still writing' (Rugby School, nd). At the time when most of the personalities in this research were at school, the influence of Dr Thomas Arnold, Head Master of Rugby was still prevalent: 'First religious and moral principle, second gentlemanly conduct, third academic ability' (Rugby School, n.d.). However it was Thomas Arnold's son, the poet Matthew Arnold, who had a greater effect on the education of those who came to run the BBC during the first thirty years or so of its life.

Marwick points out that the disruptions of war in the twentieth century 'had some effect on class and class relationships' (Marwick, 2000: 166). Just as the First World War brought about changes in the differences between the working class and the middle class, resulting, suggests Day, in a transition from the working class being defined by production to one

of being defined by consumerism (Day, 2001: 176), so the Second World War brought about further changes. Whilst Day says that the changes in the inter-war years were not really clear until the late 1950s (ibid: 178) there were a number of others making a commentary earlier; Hoggart was notable amongst these, insomuch as he offered a view of post-war working-class life and culture; Williams similarly discussed the period. Despite discussing Hoggart and *Pegs Paper*, Day jumps from the late 1930s to the 1960s only briefly stopping at the end of the previous decade. He does, however, point to a way of understanding the notion of working and middle class at the time, its impact on culture and its impact on the key players in this narrative at the BBC. Day also has the benefit of writing with the hindsight of forty years from the period, unlike Williams, Hoggart and Hopkins.

The BBC's role in maintaining, indeed taking control of the notion of Britishness, or rather Englishness, is clear in many ways. The BBC is as synonymous around the world with Britain or England as is Manchester United with England. Due in no small way to a presentation of a homogenised view, this perception of the English-ness of the BBC was not restricted to the lands away from these shores. Samuel makes the point that the 'BBC cast itself in the role of elocutionist to the nation' (Samuel, 1998: 181), 'a way to bind a nation through sound' (Hendy, 2013: 288) setting up the Advisory Committee on Spoken English in 1926 with a result that the population had 'increased familiarity with a standardised diction and a greater vocabulary' (Jennings & Gill cited in Samuel, 1998: 182). Later, particularly during the war years and just after, some catch-

phrases from popular programmes, phrases that did not necessarily bow down to the god of received pronunciation, became part of 'common speech': 'from 'Can yer 'ear me, Muther?' … "Right, Munkey!"' (Hoggart, 1957:28)). Speech was but one method of this homogenisation of society. The line between 'Educate, Inform and Entertain' and nationalising the culture of the country, was very fine indeed. Even for all the right reasons, the BBC was London-centric with some departments even showing their disdain of the Regions by comments in their internal communications. Again, as Samuel points out, the Corporation carried out this 'nationalisation of the arts' in order to bring the best to their audience, to popularise 'good' works of art – literature, plays and music – and to provide the autodidact with their 'cultural cues' (Samuel, 1998: 182). Where did this come from, this attempt at uplifting the cultural and social standing of the population? How were the nation to learn that conduct and moral principle should win over academic ability and that their standing in society would by defined by their knowledge and understanding of the works of Chesterton, Tchaikovsky and Shakespeare? This is certainly an interpretation of inform, educate and entertain but to have the idea that the BBC aimed to educate the population to become middle-class, is to miss the point.

The point is that the middle-class people running the Corporation either wanted to share the benefits of their education, or to impose them in a seemingly benign manner. The interface referred to above, the join between the pre- and the post-war within the BBC was just as relevant outside its portals, and whilst one aspect of this may have been the clash

of cultural values of the older generation versus those of the new, it was not one of class values clashing, at least not class in the terms of working and middle class. The class system, during the post-war decade, was largely static, albeit laying down the foundations for a supposed classless society by the end of the twentieth century. The proportion of middle-class occupations had hardly altered over the first half of the century: '24.7 per cent in 1911, 25.4 per cent in 1951' (Glass, 1954, cited in Samuel, 1959: 47). Certainly in terms of income and standards of living it was not until the end of the 1950s that people in the UK could say that they had 'never had it so good'.

A detailed examination of the debates around the nature of middle-class identity and culture, particularly the middle-class of the 1940s and 1950s is outside the remit of this thesis. The economic and political aspects of the class-based society are important, but of interest here is the approach to arts and culture by the middle-class, or the defining of a person as middle-class because of their cultural profile. Sinfield (1997), discussing the nature of class, cites Toynbee (1948), Pryce-Jones (1956) and Orwell as explaining that culture in that post-war period still depended upon the middle classes (Sinfield, 1997: 44-45) Therefore, whilst not excluding the working class, by consuming 'culture', by creating a cultural artefact, that consumer or creator takes on the mantle of middle-class-ness. A simple example would be Orwell's assertion that the educated working-class person 'writes in the bourgeois manner, in the middle-class dialect' going on to deduce that 'so long as the bourgeoisie are the dominant class, literature must be bourgeois' (Orwell, 1970: II–58). Ergo, if you write in

the bourgeois manner you must be bourgeois. There is a problem of semantics here. Many interchange the use of the term middle-class with bourgeois, (Orwell, Sinfield, Samuel) perhaps to add a political edge to what could be an academic social descriptor. The semantic problem does, however, help clear the air, in that if we (temporarily) ignore definition of a group by 'class' or by the term 'bourgeois', and concentrate on what the people of that class do and do not do, it may help to consider the interface.

Hopkins has a similar view to Williams citing the 'advent of "Admass"' as having helped speed 'Britain's fastest growing industry, the industry of public diversion' (Hopkins, 1963: 231). Admass was a term invented by JB Priestley to describe

> the whole system of an increasing productivity, plus inflation, plus a rising standard of material living, plus high-pressure advertising and salesmanship, plus mass communications, plus cultural democracy and the creation of the mass mind, the mass man (Priestley & Hawkes, 1955: 51).

Not only did this advance the blurring of boundaries between news and entertainment, and give momentum to the rise of the 'world of electronic personalities' it also saw the shift of power, particularly in the newspaper industry and other forms of culture, from the press barons to 'the managers, the financiers, the technicians, the accountants. Particularly the accountants' (Hopkins, 1963: 231-233). Unlike Hoggart, who

considers his version of (Americanised) Admass to have engulfed the culture, especially of the working-class, and Williams who suggests that there is more of a discussion to be had around the provision of culture in the case of the financial power and class behind its provision, Hopkins has a broader and more optimistic view. Admittedly he is writing seven years after Williams, nearly ten since Hoggart completed his book, but Hopkins does propose that the Admass-influenced culture of the period was countered by the education system, a system introduced in 1944 which provided an extension of the 'highest common factor' to balance against the 'lowest common denominator' of the popular press, film and broadcasting (Hopkins, 1963: 246). With particular reference to the BBC, Hopkins points out that even on the Light Programme it was possible to hear 'serious programmes, such as the daily half-hour of foreign and domestic reportage', *Radio Newsreel* (1940-1988) which had maintained a good sized audience 'running into millions' (Hopkins, 1963: 246-247). The public of the time, he said

> was not guiltily aware of any laws of intellectual miscegenation. Being a fan of "*The Archers*" on the "Light" did not exclude a taste for Ibsen on television or prove any impediment to the enjoyment of the incisiveness of a radio talk by Bertrand Russell. (Hopkins, 1963: 247)

One might therefore be forgiven for equating the BBC with an archetypal middle-Englishness. Given the backgrounds of the managers and those that grew the Corporation, such an outcome would not be surprising. Lord

Reith's vision was very much influenced by that of Matthew Arnold (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991: 9). However, this is not the full picture.

The *BBC Handbook* of 1956 states that in March 1955, the BBC employed 13,524 people, of whom 7,961 were men and 5,563 were women. Staffing was allocated across the Directorates (Table 3). Television and Sound Broadcasting also used personnel from Engineering and Administration, 'the total number of staff in the different Directorates engaged exclusively on work for the Television Service is about 3,000 and on work for the External Services is about 3,800' (BBC, 1956a: 104).

Table 3

Staff at the BBC 31st March 1955	
Directorate	Numbers of Staff
Sound Broadcasting	2,769
Television	888
External Services	1,917
Engineering	4,636
Administration	3,403

(Source: BBC Yearbook 1956)

The *BBC Handbook* does not give a figure for those working in Sound Broadcasting, though Paulu suggests that mathematically, there were approximately 6,700 working in that directorate (Paulu, 1956: 105). It might not have been possible for the BBC to work out this figure as it had been able to with the other Directorates, but as Sound Broadcasting was

still the main area of activity and thus employment, it is highly likely that there were many more people involved, given the three home services, the Empire service and the various foreign language services. There would be a number of administration staff not connected with either broadcast areas, (for example, Finance) and similarly a number of Engineering staff that could not be securely placed in Sound or Television who might be involved in research and development work or transmission. Paulu does make the correct point that these figures do not include freelancers – writers, producers, actors musicians and so on – as they would be contracted at department, or even production team, level (Paulu 1956: 105).

Inevitably in such a big organisation, people only get to know those with whom they come in contact. On a national scale there were a number of regional departments and their links with London were often remote, the BBC, or at least some of its staff, having distinct views about the regions. But even in London, it was clear that there were factions. Tom Burns' book *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (1977) uses the outcomes of two studies that he conducted to try and understand how the Corporation worked. His first survey was in the early 1960s and the other in 1973, where he interviewed about 300 members of staff. In the section on social settings, Burns explores the isolation felt by some staff, and the club-like nature of certain groups, and it is interesting to note that key production staff felt isolated from their crew. One interviewee remarked that there were 'Different people - classes – in the studio' and that the technical people were 'very inclined to stay as a group – in the canteen

and between rehearsals'. Working in studios often meant being cut off from what was going on elsewhere with staff feeling 'isolated from fellow staff carrying out the same job in a different studio'. One floor manager said that he could not 'really speak about floor managers in general. That's a thing you might note, that floor managers don't know other floor managers terribly well' (Burns, 1977: 82-83). Burns found this 'disconcerting' and as he went from studio to studio, from department to department, 'and even from group to group within departments' he found that he was 'shifting from one closed system of personal relationships to unconnected others' (ibid: 83), systems so closed that although different groups used the same building and facilities, even the same corridor, there was no interaction.

The BBC at the start of the 1950s may not provide an accurate reflection of the cultural life of the country. Despite resigning in 1938, 'when a dictator even more powerful than he was about to take over' (Hopkins, 1963: 226) the vision of John Reith was still etched into the minds of the members of Broadcasting House and through them his vision was broadcast to the listening public. The war had opened up the BBC, removed the starch from the dinner-jacketed presenters and it became 'absorbed into the national life', becoming 'every man's third ear' (Hopkins, 1963: 227). Broadcasting had been an important part of life for a generation and became firmly entrenched in the national psyche during the Second World War:

In terms of the quality of life for the nation as a whole, broadcasting had become a crucial ingredient, as potentially unifying as it was universal. Radio had come of age in the war producing probably the single greatest cultural change in the country since the development of railways a century before. (Hennessy, 1992:176)

However, the demise of radio's role of being the sole broadcast medium was being planned before the war was over, though possibly without the end that came about. In 1943 Lord Hankey was appointed to chair a committee 'to consider 'the reinstatement and development of the television service'' (Briggs, 1985: 242). The Committee met thirty times 'before reporting on 8 March 1945 that after the war, television should be restored to the 405-line system with the BBC in charge (ibid: 242). Television re-commenced broadcasting on June 7th 1946 yet despite its potential and its popularity - there were 45,564 television licences issued in 1948 a figure which more than doubled in the next year to 126,567 (ibid: 243) - Briggs, echoed by Hennessey, points out that the man at the top, the Director General, William Haley was very much a radio man.

William Haley was born in 1901 in the Channel Island of Jersey, where he attended Victoria College but left at 15 or 16 (accounts vary) to become a radio operator on a tramp steamer (Saxon, 1987). In 1922 he joined the *Manchester Evening News* as a reporter where, by the age of 29 he had become the Managing Editor and a Director of Manchester Guardian and

Evening News Ltd. Between 1939 and 1943 he was a director of the Press Association and Reuters. In 1943 Haley joined the BBC.

Haley's role in the history of the BBC is important as he filled a vacuum left after John Reith's departure in 1938. Although there were others in the post during those years, it was Haley who was seen, in hindsight (Briggs, 1979; Miall, 1994) as the next important Director General. Yet his rise to this position, as Miall points out, was 'through a complicated series of events' (Miall, 1994: 79). These events were in fact a series of poor appointments following the BBCs having been 'torn by internal conflict' in 1939 (Briggs, 1979: 28). In the ensuing years there was a lack of firm guidance (Wythenshawe, 1953: 59) until, under the eventual leadership of Robert Foot, Haley was appointed as Editor-in-Chief in 1943. On Foot's resignation the following year the Governors, seeking some stability (there had been four Director Generals in two years), made Haley Director General, despite the fact that he had only been at the BBC for seven months. (Miall, 1994: 84). To some this move provided a welcome return to a 'sense of mission and a belief in its [the BBC's] cultural and educational purpose' (anon, 1958).

Haley recalls that his first day at the BBC as Editor-in-Chief and his first day as Director General were both testing times. The tester was Sir Richard Maconachie who

> bowled me a fast one. I found afterwards it had been quite
> deliberate, to see what I'd do. Well fortunately I fielded it and on

> my first day as DG he bowled me another fast one, well by that
> time I was ready for it and I dealt with it and that I think,
> everybody knew DG had fielded that, so that established something.
> (Haley, 1978: 50)

Haley had been brought in to provide a balance to Foot's administrative ability, as someone who could look to programming, and in this period of war someone with a background in journalism was highly appropriate. One of Haley's first jobs was to visit the war front in Italy and sort out a problem between the BBC correspondent in place and General Alexander. This done, Haley went on a tour of the troops and returned to amalgamate the General Overseas Service with the Forces Programme, to form the General Forces Programme, the service that after the war would become the Light Programme. During his tenure he also oversaw the creation of Foreign Correspondents around the world, the growth of television and the creation of the Third Programme. His disdain for television is well documented, though he later confessed that he made 'serious mistakes' with this (Haley, 1978: 50). Haley was very much a radio man and those promoting television's cause were 'exasperated' (Briggs, 1985: 243) by this 'austere Victorian … one of the straightest men in British media' (Anon, 1958 cited in Hennessey, 1992: 177). Importantly for the time, he was 'more interested in securing the full potential of sound broadcasting than in switching to television, which he believed would encourage passivity and lead to a surfeit of entertainment' (Briggs, 1985: 243). On seeing a demonstration of television at EMI in 1944 he told the Managing Director that he would not have a set in his

house (Cock, in Beadle, 1963: 41). It was however the creation of the Third Programme, seen by many as his main achievement whilst at the BBC, which is of most interest here.

Tracey refers to Haley's background as 'lowly' (Tracey, 1998: 67). Despite having left school in his mid teens, and not attending university, Haley was exceedingly well-read, with an 'omnivorous' voracious appetite (*Time Magazine*, 1952), 'spending the greater part of his evenings and week-ends…reading and remembering the great books of the world' (Wythenshawe, 1953: 56). Haley spoke of himself as a fast reader and would consume books on every, and any, sort of subject. Tracey (1998: 68) makes the point that Haley was an exemplar of the influence of Arnold on the education of his generation, that late Victorian and Edwardian generation that populated the BBC, many from the middle class, most educated at minor public schools and some, as in the case of Haley, autodidactic. Haley's approach to the BBC stemmed from this background; it also gave the rise to his vision for the role he believed the institution would play in the society of his era, and on into the future. Haley as Director General also appeared to be a paradox, a man with austere Victorian values, blind to the progress of television, but also running a modern mass-communication system that was technically, and in most other ways a world leader, a corporation that was continually striving for excellence and one that recognised the need to continually develop. Notwithstanding this paradox, Haley was well respected. *Time Magazine*, on his appointment to the Editorship of *The Times*, describes his period at the BBC as one where his 'every murmur was a command' (*Time*

Magazine, 1952). These characteristics clearly show that he took over Reith's position easily, and quite possibly to the relief of many of the employees. His values may have been grounded in those values of his parents' time yet he clearly saw the need to maintain communication with the masses, and if this meant popular entertainment then so be it (The radio comedy *Its That Man Again* (1939-1949) was a personal favourite of his). But there was an aim to this, an aim he often referred to in the numerous speeches he gave in person to various groups around the country and, of course, on the wireless.

Recurring themes in these talks were of the power and the responsibility of broadcasting, of maintaining a neutral ground in politics and of cultural responsibility and obligations to education. Running through these themes was the thread of truth, a word that was 'for him a 'Living Law' against which broadcasters must measure and judge their work' (Tracey, 1998: 66). This sanctity of truth came, no doubt, from his upbringing, but also from his years as a journalist. Did he find this living law was his motivation for this work? Did he see the road that Arnold tried to explore, the balance between the need for personal freedom and the checks to avoid anarchy, similar to the road he travelled in his pursuit for the truth, or the maintenance of truth, in broadcasting? Clearly he saw the responsibility of the BBC to the cultural landscape of Britain; he also saw that an important role of the BBC was to provide for all strands of society and to assist society in bettering itself (Haley, 1948). Briggs records that Haley was 'fascinated' by and embraced the charge of 'designing a lively pattern of post-war broadcasting' yet Briggs also emphasises the aspect

of Haley that is common across all references, that he was 'deeply conscious' of his responsibilities as a broadcaster (Briggs, 1979: 28). It is this responsibility, this accountability that marks Haley out as the natural successor to Reith, the impassioned man with a clear set of values which he was driven to spread among the citizens of the United Kingdom and the rest of the world through the BBC.

Driven by his responsibility to provide appropriate broadcasting to the country, Haley wrote that 'The BBC must provide for all classes of listener equally' (Haley quoted in Briggs, 1979: 28). Briggs considers this statement as magisterial, which may be the case, or it might be that as this was in the period of Haley's role as Editor-in-Chief (he had been in that post for just four months), it was Haley as editor, as the man coming from a successful Fleet Street career, who had been a director of the *Manchester Evening News*, the *Manchester Guardian* and latterly of Reuters, who had a very clear idea of what people should be entitled to. Given the major changes he brought about in those early years, both as Editor-in-Chief and as Director General, he clearly felt that as a news organ the BBC could and should play a major role in the dissemination of fact throughout the country. These important developments of the news service and the wartime programme structure, well-documented in Briggs' third volume of *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (1970), set the ground for Haley to take a long view of the post-war structure of the country's radio service.

It was against this backdrop, of a traditional BBC in a new and unfamiliar post war world that the events that led the creation of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop occurred. It is important to understand the background, the environment, that those people responsible for the Workshop's inception were working in. The BBC was an institution that had grown up around one man, Lord John Reith which, after a period of instability found another of similar quality in Haley, and the BBC that entered the 1950s was as much a reflection of Haley as the BBC that entered the 1930s was a reflection of Reith. A significant backdrop to the call for more experimentalism occurred when the Reithian/Haley ideals and passions were brought up against the harsh economics of the period under Hayley's successor, Sir Ian Jacob. However, at the point of the commencement of his tenure, Haley's vision of three services, three Programmes for the nation, did not take long to come into being. Despite sceptics, including the Government, suggesting it would not be done, within ninety days of the end of the war he had the new services planned, and mostly up and running:

> I made a public commitment before war ended…in a speech to the Radio Industries Council's dinner…and I promised them they would have three programmes after the war…they said "how soon are you going to do all that" and I said, well we don't know when the war is ending but I will guarantee that unless something completely unexpected happens in 90 days after the war, peacetime broadcasting will be in (Haley, 1978: 62).

This is precisely what happened, except that it was completed in under the ninety days. This post-war reorganisation included the regional programmes and Haley was very keen to keep these, despite knowing that 'the people wanted the London programme because they were better' (Haley, 1978: 50). The Home Service was the main service 'the mass vehicle of the Corporation for everything in the Charter, education, entertainment, information' (Haley, 1978: 51); the Light Programme was seen as light relief after the 'ardours' of war; the Third was a new venture. The idea of a third network had been discussed in the Corporation for some time and the main reason it had not come along before the advent of the war was the lack of available wavebands. However, the aim was to launch the Third on a disused frequency, disused since the Latvian radio station that had once used it, had ceased to exist. All went well for the launch until the Russians, who occupied Latvia after the war, declared that they would be using that frequency. This blighted the first few years of the Third and resulted in comments from the residents of Mayfair who complained that if they wished to hear a broadcast on the Third Programme they would retire to Switzerland where reception was particularly good. Whilst this might not have been very good for the listening figures, it was certainly excellent for the BBC's reputation in Europe, the Third Programme receiving many accolades from broadcasters in France, Italy and Germany.

Haley viewed this triumvirate of Home, Light and Third networks as 'forming part of a cultural spectrum', the central Home Service 'flanked' by the other two networks where 'each Programme would 'shake into' or

'merge' into each other' (Briggs, 1979: 76). It would be possible to find plays, music and talk programmes on all three, but whereas in the pre-war years the BBC had been accused of being 'didactic, arbitrary and something of a governess' by plunging the listener directly from low-brow to high-brow content, Haley wanted to 'lead the listener on to more serious things rather than just fling him in to them' (Briggs, 1979: 76). Haley said later that he always believed that the cultural and educational aspirations of a civilised nation could be represented by a 'pyramid with a lamentably broad base and a lamentably narrow tip' (Haley, nd: 56). To his critics this appeared as 'stratifying or segregating listeners into classes' which, he agreed was what he was doing, but only as a means to an end. This segregation into classes may have been, for Haley, one of intellectual classes but at the time this was likely to be viewed as synonymous with the traditional class structure. Haley's lower tier, occupied by the Light Programme would count Hoggart's working-class as its main audience, 'people…rarely interested in theories or movements…they are enormously interested in people…though not so as to put them into a pattern (Hoggart, 1957: 89). Haley's hope was that the listener would progress, that through 'many years' the listeners would slowly move from one strata of this pyramid to the next (Haley, 1978: 56), a view at odds with Hoggart's notion that the working-class person was quite happy and settled among his or her own kind. (Hoggart, 1957: 279-280).

Haley has described this progress by using the example of *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss (Haley, 1978: 56-57; Briggs, 1979: 76). Listeners to the Light Programme would enjoy the waltzes, the Home

Service would provide an understanding of the texts of the arias, and the Third Programme would offer an opportunity to listen to the complete opera, in the original German. He was quite clear that he did not see this triumvirate as hierarchical; the Third Programme was cultural reinforcement. An examination of the relationship between these three parts of the BBC's radio output provides a backdrop to the impetus for the demand for 'more experimentation' discussed later, leading to the production of Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall*, and the subsequent creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. However, by the middle of the 1950s, the Third Programme had become the elitist service that Haley had not wanted it to be. In some ways it was also a maverick, fighting against time constraints and regular programme slots, and offering opportunities for experimental and radical programming, though not necessarily from Drama (Sound).

A similar pyramid can be drawn from the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer and it is pertinent to compare this with Haley's triumvirate. Writing at the same time as the creation of the Third Programme, Adorno and Horkheimer viewed culture not as responding to the individual but to the economic needs of the organisation. The development of culture is a response to, and is beholden to, the availability of funding and the development of technology. Culture is seen as an industry; the sameness of culture and cultural artefacts is seen as a response to a demand from the population, and because the population wants to participate, so organisational structures are provided. It follows that the need of the population is therefore governed by a standard based

on consumer needs, though the veracity of this perceived need is questionable. There is a 'circle of manipulation and restrictive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger' (Adorno, & Horkheimer, 1997: 121).

Driven by a desire to equate culture with high art, and influenced by their exile in the United States during the Second World War, Adorno and Horkheimer saw a triangle of tension between high culture, the cultural industry and the entertainment industry. Distinctly hierarchical, high art occupies the apex, whilst the culture and entertainment industries occupy the opposite corners of the base of the triangle. The distinction between these two industries may be small but it is important, possibly explained as being opposite ends of a continuum. The culture industry is culturally driven. It seeks to promote the availability and development of culture and this imperative creates the opportunities for artists to work, as much as it creates opportunities for the population to consume the art work. Although using the word 'culture' throughout, Adorno and Horkheimer are clearly at times referring to 'the arts' whilst at other times citing 'film, radio and magazines'. In either sense the triangle model works, with perhaps the emphasis being heightened if film, radio and magazines are seen as products of the cultural or entertainment industries and not as high art. The culture industry does not do this to the exclusion of all else and there are other imperatives that drive it, including that of technology. The pre-war development of television was as much driven by the need for a 'cover' to develop suitable screens for the nascent radar as it was for the development of a new form of cultural distribution.

The entertainment industry can be seen as being the antithesis of the cultural industry. Here the imperative is clearly commercial, the need to make money through the entertainment of the population. There is still an ideology, a background of culture but this is over-ridden by what makes the money. Audiences are given what they want – or rather what they think they want, as it is packaged in a way that entices them to pay. Linked by a gradual shift of priorities, and by a drive from technology, these two industries are still connected to the high culture at the apex. The aspiration is often present in the population, but it is the industries that provide the product. As you climb the triangle, the commercial imperative should fall away and the intrinsic and individual nature of the cultural artefact should take precedence.

This aspiration to attain the purity of culture, pure in its own intrinsic value as well as pure in its own quality, is also to be found nearly a hundred years previously with Matthew Arnold. Arnold's view that culture is 'a study of perfection' is one that has been prevalent from the time when Arnold penned Culture and Anarchy in the mid nineteenth century, to the mid twentieth:

> culture is considered not merely as the endeavour to see and learn
> this [knowledge of the universal order], but as the endeavour, also,
> to make it prevail, the moral, social, and beneficent character of
> culture becomes manifest (Arnold, 1882).

Haley's view of culture, and his drive to offer the listening population the opportunity to improve themselves had two things working against it. Firstly, this came at the time that popular culture started to be accepted as both an academic term and as a recognised and acceptable occupation either as a recreational activity or as a method of employment. In fact Haley's own organisation had played an important part in bringing about this revolution in the UK. The introduction of the Forces Network during the Second World War, playing popular American and American-influenced music served only to give the population what it most wanted; this was a lesson that the film industry had learned some decades previously. Secondly, Haley believed that it was possible to move easily from entertainment to high culture, from Frank Sinatra to Cesar Franck. For some, that might be true, but generally Sinatra won, and these two aspects of culture rarely came together. Richards' view of the 'high or elite' and the 'popular or mass culture' is one of separation where 'for the most part the two cultures are out of synchronisation and sealed off' (Richards, 1985: 41).

Whilst it might be expected that the political right took up high culture, and the working class masses subscribed to the popular, this as with newspapers, discussed above, was not the case. In 1930s Britain high culture was remorselessly hostile to the public schools and the British Empire, yet these institutions were regularly endorsed by popular culture. This was an era which saw the landslide election of a largely Conservative national government, joyous royal celebrations like the Silver Jubilee of King George V and a revival of respect and affection for 'Victorianism'. In

these circumstances, it is the films of Gracie Fields rather than the poems of WH Auden or the novels of Virginia Woolf that give us the best insight into the 'mind-set' of the age. (Richards, 1985: 41)

The mid 1950s appear to have been similarly situated. Popular culture and the teenager saw that the entertainment industry never wanted for a consumer and despite any concerns over the possibly loosening morals of the under twenty-ones, those of voting age returned a Conservative government three times following the short-lived Labour governments of the immediate post war years. The Conservatives won in 1951 with 51.4% of seats; in 1955 they won 54.8% and in 1959 they won 57.9% (Kimber, 2012)

Beyond the BBC, the general public were already working against Haley's ideal, with their interests lying elsewhere. In many cases just achieving the sought-after listeners was the major driver. The BBC was not the only station on the air, Radio Luxembourg was gaining in popularity. During the post-war decade it built a stable of acts that had become superfluous to requirements at the BBC, or performers who felt that the BBC was too restricted.

Having set up the Home Service and the Light and Third Programmes, Haley proceeded to allow the three Programme Heads to have absolute control of their Programme. For the head of the Light Programme control meant that the 'measure of success was always the listening figures' (Haley, 1978: 57). In spite of having a very clear view of what the three

Programmes should be doing, who their audiences were and what the BBC ought to be doing for those audiences, Haley felt that is was important to 'laydown [sic] the principles for the Corporation' by setting the parameters, ' a general feeling' of what the BBC should and should not do. He also set himself the rule of never stepping in and controlling, any programme. This, he confessed, did not lead to the result that perhaps he had wished for:

> the idea that we would slowly narrow this pyramid and get the base smaller and smaller and the middle and peak larger and larger was obviously against the interests, as they saw it, of the programme heads and therefore they never really got down to a very active co-operation in working with each other. (Haley, 1978: 57)

Getting programmes on the air, across all three national programmes, the regions and the Empire Service, called upon the services of 800 producers. Reflecting on this period in his *BBC Oral History* interview with Frank Gillard, Haley accepted that mistakes would be made but that this was fine, this was the 'price of freedom', particularly if the range and diversity of people and programmes was important: 'the education idea went some way but the people did not start moving through the pyramid upwards to any great extent' (Haley, 1978: 58).

The Third Programme opened on Sunday September 29th 1946 and Sir William Haley had written an introduction that was printed on the front cover of *The Radio Times*. In it he expressed the ambition to provide for

'all classes of its [the BBC] listeners' and to provide the greatest in classical repertoire from music and theatre, and where appropriate in broadcasting terms, from literature and the other arts. He went on to explain that whilst the Home Service and the Light Programme would provide a mixed fare, the Third Programme would be seeking to do something 'culturally satisfying and significant' every evening. But, whatever the ambitions for the Third, and the other two services, he stated that these three services 'must continually seek to experiment, to innovate, and to raise the general broadcasting standards in its particular field' (Haley, 1946). He held to these standards throughout his life; in 1948, in a series of talks on the *Responsibilities of Broadcasting* he spent some considerable part of the first talk concentrating on the cultural responsibility of broadcasting, saying that 'The written requirement upon the BBC to be a means of entertaining, informing, and educating the public is no stronger than the unwritten one to be a means of raising public taste' (Haley, 1948: 9).

This chapter has considered the wider aspects of some of the key strands in this narrative, strands that would lead to the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. The Workshop was not created in a vacuum, and as the narrative moves towards its goal, the broader view needs to be taken, to understand the ebb and flow of the gross factors that would influence the decisions that were to be made at a more local level. The subsequent chapters that look at radio drama and experimentalism and at the actual development of the Workshop, can only be viewed within the wider context to explain the decisions taken, the reasons why, and how it

was that the threads of technology, creativity and institutional opportunity came together at one point in time to allow the Workshop to be created.

The drive towards more technical control and greater use of technical skill and creativity can be seen in the context of great developments in these areas, particularly that of VHF/FM transmission creating a need for better quality production, as well as the advent of the tape recorder that opened up a whole new way of manipulating sound, as exemplified by musique concrète. Having these technical tools available gave rise to an increased demand from the creative personnel in radio, particularly Drama (Sound) and Features, a demand that called for manipulating sound in way that had not been available beforehand. That any of this innovation and adventurous programming should go on in the BBC is indicative of both the way that the institution worked and the way in which it was perceived by those from the outside. Clearly it still had that air of a privileged club about it, markedly so in the management, made up of middle class men (with one or two very rare exceptions), educated at public schools and the universities of Oxford or Cambridge, but this was not the entire picture of the period. Paulu's figures and William's commentary give some description, but in the Drama (Sound) department, run by Val Gielgud very much as it had been in pre-war days, there were producers from different backgrounds and different experiences. There is a sense of a much freer grouping amongst these people, some, such as Lance Sieveking, who had been with the BBC since the corporation's early days, and some who drifted into radio drama production from other activities, much as Gielgud did himself. Then there were the newcomers, those

joining after the war, of which there were two types: those who were embarking on their career and those who had been in the war and were now ready for a new challenge. The old-boy network was disappearing and along with the new boys and girls came the desire to challenge existing ways of doing things, to dispense with the usual routes of commissioning plays, to develop ways of building a sound picture, and, importantly, an 'all-hands-on-deck' approach in the studio, with actors, producers, script editors and technical staff all contributing, sharing their jobs and their skills. This was a big change, a shift from demarcation to inclusive cooperation; the play was the thing.

This change in the studio did not happen overnight but was still fairly rapid. For Drama (Sound), the two key points of change were the appointment of Donald McWhinnie as Assistant Head of Drama (Sound), and the call for more experimentalism, discussed in the following chapter. Two years elapsed between these two events and neither event would have occurred if the institution had not allowed it, or called for it. The institution in that period, the first five years of the 1950s, was still in the image of William Haley, and his influence across the BBC at that time cannot be ignored. His role in setting up the Third Programme, the pinnacle of his cultural pyramid, and the fact that he was staunchly a radio man, is extremely important. Haley's influence set the scene for the call for more experimental programming, including plays, and the stipulation that radio should continue to strive for both audience share and for quality, despite the rise of television.

Thus, this period can be seen as one of transition rather than interface. There are no major dates that can be indicated, dates that might show that at such and such a point the old stopped and the new began. As with looking for a definition of modernism, dating the beginning and ending of these transitions is futile. Culturally and technologically, this was a period of change and should be recognised as such. The huge economic changes that occurred later in the decade had their roots in the technical developments of the earlier years. This may have been a period of 'catch-up', but catch up the country did. These changes also brought about significant transformation to the perceived class system. The working class were clearly moving up in terms of income, even though the numbers engaging in working class occupations had not changed for several decades. The result of this was that their new-found disposable income shifted the focus and the working class became consumers. Buying things became important, and those items purchased were not only the essentials, they also consumed popular culture and entertainment, and, in particular the television. Defined more by what its component parts do in terms of consumerism than in terms of occupation, the make-up and cultural thirst of the population was changing. Transition was everywhere and if this was so at this 'gross' level of country, culture and technology, then it must be expected that there were changes at the institutional level, transitions taking place inside the country, and also within the institution.

Chapter 3

Between Two Worlds – Experimentalism in Radio Drama

In this exploration of the pre-cursors of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, the general institutional environment of the BBC and the technical developments taking place have already been discussed. A more specific and significant role was played by the Drama (Sound) department. It was the Drama (Sound) department that commissioned Giles Cooper, Henry Reed and Samuel Beckett. It was the radio production of the plays of these three men, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, that brought into the studio the elements that directly influenced, and led to, the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop.

Drama had been an important part of the BBC's output from its very early days. The first drama broadcast consisted of scenes from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *King Henry VIII* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. They were produced independently in either February 1923 or the previous September 1922, according to Val Gielgud. The 1922 broadcast took place in Marconi House whereas the 1923 one was from Savoy Hill, the first home of the British Broadcasting Company as it was then (Gielgud, 1957a: 17). Whilst others have examined these dates in more detail, in particular, Alan Beck in *Invisible Play* (n.d.), it is clear that the Dramatic Department was created in 1924 under RE Jeffrey, who was keen to make an impact by 'introducing greater realism into radio sounds' (Briggs, 1961: 201). Eager to make effects realistic, he started with a gunshot 'And to the dismay of the staff spent his first few hours firing a shot-gun over the banisters into the well of the staircase. He did not succeed: the noise sounded like flat champagne (BBC Yearbook, 1930: 169).

This early foray into special effects for radio obviously proved harder than anticipated. In November 1924 A Whitman joined the staff as 'effects man' (Briggs, 1961: 200) and the journey to the Radiophonic Workshop began. The technical detail of this journey is examined in the preceding and subsequent chapters; suffice to say at this point that the role of the effects person is still relevant today, even if the studio manager, the producer and even members of the cast, now carry out these actions. Significantly, however, the arrival of the Dramatic Control Panel in 1927 enabled the drama producers to think creatively about their productions in a manner that allowed them to develop a language and methodology that was purely radio-based.

This chapter explores the call for experimentation made in 1955, and how the BBC Drama (Sound) department responded. As stated previously, this department was central to the development of the Radiophonic Workshop, and the meetings and discussions that resulted from this call clearly illustrate the key thoughts of some of the producers regarding technical developments, as well as discussions regarding scripts, actors and funding. In order to understand how the creative drive came from the Drama (Sound) department, it is necessary to understand its head, Val Gielgud. At this point in the narrative he had led the department for over twenty years, and was still very much in charge, yet he had appointed a deputy, Donald McWhinnie, and it was through McWhinnie that the period of experimentation crystallised.

Val Gielgud and the Drama (Sound) Department

When RE Jeffrey left the BBC in January 1929 his position was taken by Val Gielgud. To date his career had not gone as he might have wished; after coming down from Oxford he had been an unsuccessful actor, out of work until his first job at the BBC. This was with the *Radio Times*, gained through 'an open door' with the help of Gladstone Murray, the man in charge of public relations at the time (Gielgud, 1978: 1). Gielgud started by editing the letters page, including letters he wrote himself complaining about radio drama, and then moved on to writing articles which included a series on the 'fatuity of war' with the then editor of the *Radio Times*, Eric Maschwitz.

Gielgud came from a stage family: Ellen Terry was his great aunt, there was a connection with the dancer Isadora Duncan, and his younger brother John would become one of the country's leading actors. He was not averse to making his heritage known; Etienne Amyot, the first Planner for the Third Programme said of Gielgud 'if you have a famous brother, you want to show your hand. And if we had an idea, he would rather squash it' (Carpenter 1996: 21). By the time of his death in November 1981 Gielgud had not only run the Drama (Sound) department for nearly thirty years but had also written twenty-six mystery or detective novels, one mystery story collection, two historical novels and seven non-fiction books, some of them autobiographical, others about playwriting. He wrote nineteen plays and four screenplays; he directed six plays and appeared in six as an actor. He wrote and appeared in *Murder at Broadcasting*

House, a 1934 film that is of interest to the BBC and radio historians in that it is set around the recording of a radio play. This was the time of the dramatic control panel and it is clearly seen in use in the film. For his services to radio he was made an OBE and a CBE.

Born in April 1900, his early life reflected that of many others in Edwardian middle-class families. He was the second child, and his elder brother Lewis was everything parents could wish for and expect, winning a scholarship to Eton and then a 'demyship' to Magdalen College, Oxford. Val, six years his junior, could not help feeling that his role was 'little more than a form of insurance against the possibility of disaster affecting the eldest'. Nonetheless Lewis became his idol. Val learnt about the manners of the day in clothing and food; he learnt 'the delights of Sherlock Holmes, of translations of Greek plays, of minor military tactics, of keeping a diary'. Against Lewis's clear achievements the Gielgud parents and Val himself set the standard; alas turned down by a succession of public schools, Val eventually managed a 'minor history scholarship at Trinity, Oxford' via Rugby (Gielgud, 1965: 23-24).

It was from Lewis that Val also learned the basics of military tactics. Born at the height of the Second Boer War (Mafeking was relieved three weeks after his birth) he said that he 'wondered whether it may have been some queer pre-natal influence' of that war that led to his 'fascination' for all things military (Gielgud, 1965: 40). His time at Rugby was enhanced by a friendship with another boy who had similar interests and they spent much of their time discussing campaigns and re-telling stories of war

games held in the holidays, columns of lead soldiers traversing the landscape of the country garden in the friend's case, the bare floorboards of the top-floor playroom in Val's. As for literature, he declared that his reading was the norm for his generation. Having started with Beatrix Potter, he quickly moved on to *Don Quixote* and 'the vast red volumes of *With the Flag to Pretoria'*. By the time he reached adolescence he was reading Wells, Kipling, Galsworthy, Conrad, Rider Haggard and Matthew Arnold. (Gielgud, 1965: 40-42)

Arnold's inclusion in this list is not a surprise, being standard fare for the reader of the middle classes of the time. What is of import is that Gielgud includes Arnold on this short list. All the other authors on this list were born in the second half of the nineteenth century and lived well into the twentieth. Arnold was of a generation before them, but still carried weight. Indeed Williams, in *The Long Revolution* (1961), lists Arnold as no less important than Tennyson, Browning and Rossetti (Williams, 1961: 55). The importance of Arnold here is not just as a writer and poet, though assuredly that is how the adolescent Gielgud would have seen him. Arnold was also important because of his views on the society and culture of the late Victorian period which permeated the education system well into the twentieth century. Much of Arnold's writing on these matters was based on the people and scenes that he met on his travels around the country in his role of schools inspector. His essay on *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) clearly resonated with subsequent generations; it is his influence that led William Haley, Director General of the BBC after the Second World War, to

create the pyramid of cultural development that gave rise to the Third Programme.

The role that Arnold's writing and values would have played in the education and psyche of students from a middle-class background during the early years of the twentieth century cannot be dismissed. The debate in *Culture and Anarchy* is often illustrated by the differences between two extremes. Sometimes these are seen as absolute, the middle-class, for example, 'a body swaying between the qualities of its mean and of its excess'; sometimes they are two 'cardinal points', two ends of a line where there is no judgement of either point, just an acceptance that that is how it is (Arnold, 1869). This critical examination of the culture of the period, especially from Arnold's self-confessed middle-class viewpoint, clearly appealed to the nation in the early years of the twentieth century. At least it appealed to those for whom education, in all subjects, from classics to culture, was important. This middle-class appeal, and its longevity, may have as much to do with Arnold championing the middle classes as with his championing of an appropriate education system.

It was these standards that Val Gielgud and his generation of BBC employees received from their upbringing and their education. It is a sense of class and knowing what to aspire to, and during his time as Head of Drama (Sound) he clearly wanted to retain these standards, preferring the classics and the classical to the tawdry modern. This may be rather general and there were occasions when he played to the mass audience, certainly in his own writing, but then this is the paradox by which most

live their lives, aspiring to heights, whilst working on the level, and indeed at times having to lower that level. Working as the head of a high profile department in the BBC would demand a different viewpoint than one of sitting at home and turning out detective fiction. One may enjoy, direct, and promote Dostoevsky without having to write like him.

Today this might sound merely like snobbery, but in the early and mid-twentieth century it was a question of values. These values were to be seen everywhere; the BBC itself did much to develop and instil them across the country by educating, entertaining and informing, in dinner jacket and evening dress, on the wireless. It is important to take into account the different emphasis placed on these 'values' in the middle of the twentieth century compared to the values of sixty or so years forward. These were the values that Reith brought with him to the British Broadcasting Company and which he bequeathed to the Corporation when he left. Arnold was 'one of Reith's major intellectual influences, the source of Reith's beliefs regarding broadcasting's moral obligations' (Avery, 2006: 13) and from Arnold, Reith 'conceptualised culture itself and the new cultural form, broadcasting, as allies in a fight against "doing as one likes"' (ibid: 15).

Val Gielgud was a man brought up to be aware of the differences between the culture of the working class and the culture of the middle class, between literature and cheap fiction. Until the end of the Second World War, his working colleagues were generally from the same background. Their preferences and dislikes, summed up perhaps by a single comment

about a person's hair style or dress code, were, in themselves, indicators of the fact that that person was not on the same level. They were well-educated, able to use language to say one thing and mean another, and they were, at times, not afraid, again judged by twenty-first century standards, to be explicitly prejudicial. In his interview with Gillard, Gielgud notes that he heartily disliked Hugh Carlton Greene, the Director General from 1960 to 1969: 'C[oul]dn't bear that he liked going out drinking w[ith] engineers. Being faintly a snob myself I had no use for that. All this so called democratising of the org[anisation] [was the] greatest poss[ible] mistake' (Gielgud, 1978: 16).

However, the world for this generation was changing. The Second World War had been the making of the BBC, and the institution emerged strongly independent, with a clear audience base that was keen to listen to good radio, but for Gielgud and his contemporaries, this meant more variety, more entertainment, more appealing to the lower classes. In this context, Haley's attempt at improving the cultural lot of the nation by his aspirational pyramid to the Third Programme, may be seen more as a final attempt at halting the inevitable slide that British culture was taking towards Americanisation than as a progressive and logical extension of the radio network. British culture had already absorbed the music, films and language of the GIs (Hoggart, 1957, Hopkins, 1963); this was destined to continue; also, significantly, the War had become a line drawn between one generation and the next. The Edwardians were moving aside for those that became known as the New Elizabethans (Hopkins, 1963).

The role that Gielgud assumed in his move to radio covered all aspects of variety, from serious drama to music-hall. In 1933 a re-organisation separated Radio Drama from Variety, with Gielguid heading the former, and his former editor at the Radio Times, Maschwitz, heading the latter (Briggs, 1965: 91-93).

Gielgud had clearly disliked his predecessor Jeffrey, and the work that he was responsible for. The letters he faked for the *Radio Times* were often directed at Jeffrey (Crook, n.d.; Beck, n.d.) and though he expressed an interest, even a keenness for radio drama, there is an apparent tension represented by his keenness to disrupt it, albeit through anonymous criticism. In his interview with Frank Gillard in 1978, as part of the BBC Oral History Project, Gielgud could only recall that Jeffrey had 'smoothly brushed hair' and had hated Gielgud's 'guts'. Jeffrey moved from the BBC to Movietone News and left the drama department in what Gielgud considered 'a shambles' (Gielgud, 1978: 4). Gielgud's rise was quick. He had been at the *Radio Times* for six months when the Director General John Reith and the Director of Programmes, Roger Eckersley 'took the longest of long shots' (Gielgud, 1957a: 35) and appointed him Head of Variety, an appointment that must have caused consternation amongst some. Eckersley is reported to have advised Reith that he came from a good theatrical family, whilst Reith commented that as Gielgud had been very rude to him during rehearsals in an amateur dramatic production, he could be rude to actors – evidently an essential quality to run the BBC Drama Department (Gielgud, 1978: 4).

As he moulded the Drama Department to his own vision, he took a very clear stance over a number of issues, secure in the knowledge that management realised that he was competent, and that he had a free hand (Gielgud, 1978: 9). Many of the early, pre-Gielgud era productions were of the feature style, not direct adaptations or new work of a purely theatrical nature. Those earlier productions were a problem to Gielgud who felt more at home in the theatre; once in post it was from the theatre that he tended to recruit both the content and, at times, the actors; his links with the Garrick Club were well-known and at times despised (Bray, 2002).

To separate the dramatic from the looser collection of poetry readings, dramatised documentaries etc, a discrete Features Department was created under Laurence Gilliam. Briggs (1985: 127) dates the separation to 1936, when Gilliam was appointed, although it remained under Gielgud's responsibility, with Gilliam running it, until 1st August 1945. The blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, or the interpretation of fact and fiction, had become a controversial point and was laid out in a memo from RJF Howgill, then Acting Controller of Programmes in July 1945. Advising staff of the separation of the two departments, he listed the allocation of responsibilities as:

Drama:	Features:
Stage plays	Literary features
Specially written plays	Documentary features
Novel and short story adaptions [sic]	Actuality features
Serials	Historical features
Poetry readings	Features for special occasions
	(Howgill, 1945)

Gielgud lamented the split and felt that 'wider horizons' had been taken away, and while finding Gilliam personally 'amiable', he nonetheless observed that the Head of Features 'loved riding whirlwind, loved directing a storm' (Gielgud, 1978: 10, 15). Features quickly developed a name for producing high quality programmes and Gilliam gathered a group of talented writers and producers around him, including Louis MacNiece, Dylan Thomas and DG Bridson. MacNiece's radio plays, *Columbus* (1942) and *The Dark Tower* (1947) were critically acclaimed, and acknowledgement even came from Gielgud, though often with a barb. Writing to MacNiece congratulating him on the production of *The Dark Tower* Gielgud exclaimed, referring to the casting of one particular character, 'But why, oh! why? Miss Olga Lindo?' (Gielgud, 1947b). Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, to this day considered an exceptional example of radio drama, was a crucial point in both the acceptance of Features by a wider audience and also in widening the distance between Features and Drama, not helped by the fact that Thomas was Gielgud's 'least favourite man' (Gielgud, 1978: 10). Gielgud even made it clear to his 'people' that he did not want any of them frequenting The Stag, the pub attended by the Features staff (Gielgud, 1978: 10) though this was clearly ignored, especially when the next generation came along; 'We all used to drink together in The George and The Stag, and so on, exchange ideas and mix together to some extent in private' (Bray, 2002).

Gielgud had sought to control output from the Drama (Sound) department. He was frustrated by the power that the services held, and the fact that despite Haley's hopes, the Controllers of the Home, Light and Third

Programmes dictated what sort of drama was required. This led to Gielgud exhibiting a certain amount of inflexibility as well. At the planning stage of the Third Programme he informed George Barnes, the Controller, 'that under present conditions, his department could only provide the Third with a full-length play once a month' (Carpenter, 1996: 21). This came back to haunt him during the early years of the Third with a row between Gielgud and Barnes occurring after the success of the Features Department's production of *Under Milk Wood*.

Under Milk Wood had been produced by Douglas Cleverdon. Cleverdon, who had started his radio career by writing scripts for the BBC's West Region in 1937, was appointed *Children's Hour* Organiser for the West Region in 1939, and later became the West Regional Features Producer. In 1940 he produced the *Brains Trust* (1941-1949) and in 1943 he was transferred to London, where he specialised in producing literary and music features, mainly for the Third Programme at its outset (Andrews, 1954: 45). He also produced Henry Reed's series of *Hilda Tablet* (1953-1959) plays, again through Features, which led to Gielgud accusing Features of 'running a private drama sub-section of their own' (Carpenter, 1996: 144-145). This may have been the case, though the brief for Features was arguably open to interpretation. Gielgud, for his part, was not keen to experiment with other dramatic forms. This would partly be due to his own preference, but was also because his department's brief was to supply dramatic content to the three services, along with a wider role that Gielgud saw as bridging 'the business theatres of today and the national theatre of tomorrow' (Briggs, 1985: 127).

By the early 1950s the gap between Drama and Features had grown and there was clearly a great deal of friction between them. In 1954, the relationship between these two Departments had led MFC (Michael) Standing, Controller of Entertainment to write to the Director of Sound Broadcasting, REL Wellington to express his concerns. Responding to a memorandum from Gielgud, Standing sought to clarify the ground that the two departments covered by stating that Drama (Sound) 'has on the whole concentrated since the early days on translating "the theatre"' (Standing, 1954a) and that whilst there were definite areas of overlap between the two, it was now time to reach a 'sensible working agreement' as to this 'hinterland'. Part of Gielgud's problem was the fact that he did not have enough staff to meet the demands of all the services, thus when the Third Programme wanted something of a particular character, Drama (Sound) was not always in a position to supply it whereas Features appeared able to do so. Standing wrote to Wellington on the 23rd November 1954, that he had met with the two department heads and reached an agreement whereby each would inform the other of proposed work prior to it being submitted to the Third (Standing, 1954b). Following this, Gielgud appointed one of his producers, Raymond Raikes, to be attached to the Third Programme.

The Features Department was a young department in relation to Drama (Sound) and the nature and method of its working appeared more able to embrace change. Seeing that television was in its ascendency, and that it too should be embraced, Gilliam wrote to the Controller of Entertainment in 1953 'pointing out the need for experiment' suggesting the creation of

a specialist unit that brought together 'writers, producers and musicians…as free as possible from controllers' (Coulton, 1980: 150). Although this did not achieve an end result, it none the less reveals the thinking of Gilliam and his department and shows that they were open to experiment alongside the evolution in broadcast technology. Whereas Drama (Sound) had had to create a new language based on an existing theatre-based tradition, Features was an entirely new concept, something that was peculiar to radio, possibly appealing to the freer thinkers of the day rather than to the writers and directors of dramatic art under the aegis of Gielgud. Gielgud had very clear ideas on radio dramatic output and what it was he wanted to be involved with, or have his name put to. He liked to control his domain and he perceived Features not only as a threat for taking the best options, particularly with the Third Programme, but also feared they might be producing better, more memorable productions. Additionally, he clearly did not approve of the use of narration, a technique used in many Features dramatic productions to move the narrative along, calling its use, especially as stage direction, 'poisonous' (Gielgud, 1978: 6).

The three services were driven by their own imperatives and despite the aspirations of the previous Director General, William Haley, who had left the BBC earlier in the decade, there were distinctions between the Home, the Light and the Third programmes that called for different dramatic forms. When the Third was only two months old, Gielgud wrote to the Controller, George Barnes, expressing his concern that the Third Programme output was too highbrow, and that while playing to the critics

might be a good idea, it was even better to play to the audience (Carpenter, 1996: 70). This is not to suggest that Gielgud was populist in his approach. Far from it, with a long list of major English-language and foreign language plays broadcast under his auspices, his view was very much in the Irving mould (ibid: 150). Indeed, perhaps he was more easily influenced by the quality of the drama than by the possibility of testing out those opportunities offered by the medium.

The output from the Features Department was not the only thing that annoyed Gielgud. He had other prejudices nearer to him in his own department's radio dramatic output. He was particularly critical of radio serials, notably *Mrs Dale's Diary* (1948-1969). In 1949 he was 'profoundly convinced' that *The Robinsons* (1945-1947) and *Mrs Dale's Diary* were 'dramatically inept and sociologically corrupting' (Gielgud, 1949) and seven years later he was disappointed that his recommendation for *Mrs Dale's Diary* gradual demise had not been taken up (Gielgud, 1956a). This personal view was transformed into third person commentary when he wrote in British Radio Drama (1957a):

> the Family Serial has been subject to extravagant praise and equally extravagant abuse. While to the vast company of its devotees it is probably little more than the equivalent of the agreeable kind of indeterminate sweetmeat which can be enjoyed almost indefinitely while the consumer indulges in other occupations, there are people who regard its bland insipidities, its temptations to self-identification, as sociologically corrupting, even

as morally wrong. Brutal phrases such as "Daily Dope for the Lunatic Fringe" have been coined to describe it. Its most ardent defenders have been on the whole less eloquent, but no less convinced for that of the Daily Serial's contribution to the happiness, even the health, of the hard-pressed housewife, and in consequence of a great multitude of families. (Gielgud, 1957a: 71)

Gielgud's dislike might also have something to do with working-class audiences enjoying the middle-class settings of such serials, settings that 'reflect the minutiae of everyday life' (Hoggart, 1957: 100) and 'their remarkably sustained presentations of the perfectly ordinary and unremarkable' (ibid: 151). Indeed the very fact that there might be a temptation to self-identification is, according to Hoggart, a valuable reason for the working-class housewife to listen, to these serials and to other programmes such as *Have A Go* (1946-1967) and *Down Your Way* (1946-1992), 'if it is really homely and ordinary it will be interesting and popular' (ibid: 101).

At this period Gielgud had a writing style that in both internal memoranda and his published work managed to convey two sides of an argument at one level and yet contrived to give a clear indication of what he felt underneath. There are several instances where he was very clear about his feelings, the comments about *Mrs Dale's Diary* being an example, but, as one might expect, he relied on his adroit use of language to convey the correct interpretation.

Gielgud was also critical of the ability of the Regions to produce sound drama of a quality commensurate with that produced under his direct supervision. Again, he allowed his personal vitriol to seep into the internal memoranda, criticizing regions 'for seeking to achieve results beyond their reach' (Briggs, 1965: 162), while in his published account he set himself up as guardian of the output of playwrights, finding it 'harsh to envisage productions … from the North and Scottish Regions … because their authors had been engendered in Bradford and Glasgow' (Gielgud, 1957a: 129). He was adamant that the only way to conduct a proper interpretation was to produce the show in London where the best actors were and where the producers had the time and the money, their regional counterparts being little more than jacks-of-all-trades. As the Regions grew in importance within the BBC, the Head of Drama became, to them, a 'professional consultant' and the channel by which they would have their work delivered to any of the three National services – if they were lucky: 'it would be false to pretend that the situation was either an ideal or an easy one' (Gielgud, 1957a: 130). Reith had given the Regional Controllers a direct line to himself, something that appeared to have been embraced by their producers, further annoying Gielgud by taking problems straight to the Director General (Gielgud, 1978: 10).

Not restricting his acerbic pen to Features, the Regions and the Controllers, Gielgud was not above putting his barbed comments in memoranda to his producers:

Having heard two instalments of "Cranford" I feel a rather lighter hand was needed with the pastry. I think the adaptation good, and the casting on the face of it capital, but some of the old war horses, in particular Marjorie Westbury, Mary O'Farrell, and Vivienne Chatterton, showed ominous signs of enjoying themselves too much, and laying on characterization with a trowel. I am sure you appreciate as well as I do the importance of preserving the basic delicacy of "Cranford". Over acting, however technically accomplished, inevitable ruins it. (Gielgud, 1956b)

Experimentalism

Experimentalism was not new to Gielgud but the term, as used in the mid 1950s must have produced a tension for him and his production staff. In later reflections he professed to have been more influenced by American radio than he should have been (Gielgud, 1965: 84). In 1937 he introduced a programme called *Experimental Hour* in an attempt to allow radio to develop its own avant-garde (Drakakis, 1981: 10). His inspiration was the Theatre Workshop of the Columbia Broadcasting System in the United States where he had two plays broadcast, Hilaire Belloc's *Death of a Queen* in September 1937, and *Four Into Seven Won't Go* in April 1938, the latter having been co-written by Gielgud and Stephen King-Hall. Despite being deemed valuable in keeping 'the torch burning', *Experimental Hour* foundered a few years later due to a lack of suitable material, and it disappeared completely with the onset of the Second

World War (Gielgud, 1957: 69). The Home Service Board in December 1939 agreed 'that from time to time something of the old Experimental Hour type might be included in the single strand programme' though little, if anything came of it (DPP, 1939). The quest for 'experimentalism' was not restricted to this particular period. In spite of its austere appearance as the reflection of John Reith, the BBC had always been a place to foster new and innovative programming. Experimentalism had been an integral component of the Third Programme since its inception nearly a decade earlier, and was not restricted only to music but also included dramatic output. The Third Programme in its first few years tried to realise the BBC's then Director General, William Haley's ambition for an elite cultural zenith to a pyramid that was available to all and was able to be climbed by many.

Radio drama already had a long history of experimentalism. An art form that did not exist until the 1920s and had been developed by the BBC, radio drama had no choice but to be experimental in the adaptation of stage scripts, the creation of new scripts, and in the use of music and sound effects. One of the earliest exponents of this was Lance Sieveking who was working in the Research Department (the forerunner of the Features Department) when Gielgud joined the BBC. Sieveking advanced and advocated the skills of the radio producer and saw them as analogous to the medieval artisan, an artist or craftsman 'set free to carve gargoyles or evolve a technique for carving precious stones, to his heart's content' (Sieveking, 1934: 83).

Sieveking's pioneering productions from the end of the first decade of the BBC's existence - *The First Kaleidoscope* (1928), *The Pursuit of Pleasure* (1931), *The End of Savoy Hill* (1932) - achieved critical acclaim and were still held to be 'models of technical perfection' some twenty years later (Andrews, 1947). This acclaim recognised his scripts as well as his handling of the dramatic-control panel:

> Here for the first time the mechanical ingenuities of the Dramatic-control panel were used not simply as producing expedients. They were welded together, and 'played,' as Sieveking always insisted, like a musical instrument, giving the piece its essential shape and rhythm – and in consequence its original and compulsive effect. (Gielgud, 1957: 28)

The dramatic control panel had grown out of technical necessity for providing bigger and more complex variety and drama programmes. In the late 1920s and the 1930s, in order to present a programme that involved a large cast, orchestra and singers, several studios were used simultaneously with each component allocated its own space. This allowed for specific acoustics and microphone arrangements, though the microphone technology was still quite basic and acoustically some studios always sounded the same: 'Studio 6A was always recognisable as Studio 6A, whether it was acting as a baronial hall, a law-court or a drawing-room' (Pawley, 1972: 116). The use of the panel for variety programmes was reduced in the early 1930s as the control of microphones and the use of multiple microphones allowed for the cast to work in the same studio.

The panel allowed the control of a number of sources where 'individually or in groups, echo could be superimposed on any channel, cue and return lights and talk-back circuits communicated with each source and the whole programme could be heard on a loudspeaker in each studio' (Pawley, 1972: 116). This could be a very taxing instrument to use and Gielgud recounts how after producing Patrick Hamilton's *To The Public Danger* he 'ended in complete exhaustion from turning knobs constantly and fast, using fades & cuts in a way which would drive a contemporary producer mad' (Gielgud, 1978: 6).

The control panel continued in use until the onset of the Second World War when plays were restricted and technological development was focused elsewhere. It is also said that it fell out of use, according to Gielgud, as 'impulses' from the panel would act as a guide for enemy bombers' (Gielgud, 1978: 7). After the war the panel was never reintroduced but during the 1950s, as the studios were improved and up-to-date technologies became more commonplace, other options became available. The natural development of the dramatic control panel, the studio mixer that is used today, does very much the same thing but most of the sound sources are local, from one studio and with various effects on a computer, rather than from several studios at once.

The change in technology may have been one thing, but the post war-period, and more especially the decade following it, proved to be a period of turmoil for the BBC. Technical advancements, television, commercial broadcasting, and the changing tastes of audiences caused every part of

the Corporation to constantly examine and re-examine its role, and in many cases advance a good argument in order to secure its future.

As an organisation the BBC had settled into the structure moulded by Reith two decades earlier, a bureaucratic form based on the model developed at the end of the nineteenth century which was also, at the time, a model that best suited the 'growth in scale' (Burns, 1977: 23). While, with hindsight (Burns, Briggs) it was a model that needed attention in the 1930s, it nevertheless survived until the early 1960s. There were two core parts to the Corporation: Administration and Output. Quite early in the history of the BBC, Reith had decided that in order for the programme makers to do their job they should be relieved of, or supported by, an independent Administration. In fact it was not until 1933, five years after incorporation, that the system came into being and was able to drive the work of the Corporation.

By the mid-1950s, the Home, Light and Third services had each been allocated their own Controller (Table 4) who was responsible for editorial control. There were also a number of departments that supplied the output content, a system perfected under Haley but disliked by many. Lower down the hierarchy, the supply departments were responsible to the Controllers of Entertainment, Talks, News and Education though it was clear that the service Controllers had more power as it was they who could decide on content, could turn down suggestions from supply departments, and who held the ability to 'pay' for that content.

Table 4

British Broadcasting Corporation (1955) Outline of Executive Organization					
Director General Sir Ian Jacob					
Director of Home Sound Broadcasting	Director of Spoken Word	Director of External Broadcasting	Director of Television Broadcasting	Director of Technical Services	Director of Administration
REL Wellington	HJG Grisewood	JB Clark	Sir George Barnes	H. Bishop	Sir Norman Bottomley

(Source: BBC Handbook, 1955b)

The Home, Light and Third Programme were very distinct in their output and despite the earnest ambitions of Haley in the late 1940s, they were becoming three separate services and not three steps on a ladder to cultural sophistication (Whitehead, 1989: 20-21). The changes of the period, however, affected them all, services as well as supply departments.

The Directors of Sound Broadcasting (Table 5) were losing staff to television and the Corporation was losing staff to ITV. The drive by the Engineering Department to improve the quality of radio broadcast, notably the development of VHF/FM transmission, served, in many instances only to compound the issues between Output and Broadcast (Transmission). Each department had its own concerns and its own need to survive, to adapt and to change in response to the new world in which the BBC found itself.

Table 5

Home Sound Broadcasting (1955)
Director of Home Sound Broadcasting
REL Wellington
Controllers:
• Home: A Stewart
• Light: K Adam
• Third: CJ Morris
• Midland: HJ Dunkerley
• North: D Stephenson
• N. Ireland: R D'A Marriott
• Scotland: M Dinwiddie
• Wales: AB Oldfield
• West: GC Beadle -Davies
• Entertainment: MFC Standing
• Music: RJF Howgill

(Source: BBC Handbook 1955)

There were, as a consequence, many calls to Controllers, department heads, and to staff in general to find ways of improving both the larger and smaller detail. Sir Ian Jacob, Director General (1952-1960), addressed the staff about the future; he presented a picture of progress and development that all must embrace even in Sound Broadcasting. Jacob was keen to bring out the harshness of the future and did not want the Corporation to be looking back through rose-tinted glasses at a previous BBC first under Reith and then under Haley. Briggs documents how Jacob foresaw 'reducing of expenditure on sound' but was at the same time concerned about the 'maintenance of the morale of the people working inside Broadcasting House' (Briggs, 1995: 35-38). Jacob was very much aware that the high profile debates and discussions in both the

press and in Parliament 'had led some people to imagine that sound broadcasting was disappearing from the map' (BBC, 1955a). His rhetoric sought to inspire through the language of a military campaign, sympathising with those in sound broadcasting who may have wondered if they 'would become a forgotten army' and if 'in the intense struggle now taking place, they were going to be sacrificed in the demands for television' (ibid, 1955). He offered reassurance that sound broadcasting was not 'a spent force or was likely to become one in our time', and that while many of the staff in television would, logically, be recruited from sound, 'Losses in sound staff must be made good' (ibid, 1955). He recognised that there were challenges ahead, not least because, despite the rise in popularity of television, there were '9 million homes' requiring programmes on their wireless sets.

Table 6

Home Sound Broadcasting – Entertainment (1955)
Controller of Entertainment
MFC Standing

Heads of Department:
- Audience Research: RJE Silvey
- Central Programme Operations: RVA George
- Children's Hour: WE Davis
- Drama: VH Gielgud
- Features: L.D Gilliam
- Gramophone Programmes: Mrs AE Instone
- Outside Broadcasts: CFG Max-Muller
- Variety: PCH Hillyard

(Source: BBC Handbook 1955)

Having set the scene, Jacob handed the baton to REL Wellington, Director of Sound Broadcasting, to talk to the Controllers and heads of department. Wellington had been with the BBC since the mid 1920s and, as Briggs points out, his approach was not like that of Jacob. Whereas the Director General spoke with a rallying cry of 'Sound must hold its own in a world from which it was very far from being eliminated' (Ariel, Winter 1955 in Briggs, 1995: 34), Wellington was much more focussed on the competition, and on the need for radio to address the twin threats of television within the UK, and commercial radio without. The meeting, which took place on 18th October 1955, was attended by the Controllers of the three services: Andrew Stewart, Home Service, H Rooney Pelletier, Light Programme and John Morris, Third programme. Others present were from the Entertainment section of Home Sound Broadcasting (Table 6) and included Val Gielgud, Head of Drama (Sound), Pat Hillyard, Head of Variety, Laurence Gilliam, Head of Features and RJE Silvey, Head of Audience Research for Sound Broadcasting.

Wellington spoke for over half the meeting detailing his three main points and analysing the general situation, which he repeatedly referred to as 'stock-taking'. He suggested there was 'room for improvement and progress', and began to define how these improvements would be achieved (BBC, 1955a: 2-3). He reiterated Jacob's point about the number of listeners and the fact that public service broadcasting would cease to exist if they could not retain large audiences, but he also noted that it was important to produce the minority programme. As an example, Wellington pointed out that chamber music received the low score of one

on the BBC's method of enumerating audience figures, yet this still represented 300,000 people 'ten times the total audience of the Albert Hall' (BBC, 1955: 5). Moreover, he saw experiments with the medium as important and as part of maintaining the standards of the Corporation (ibid: 4). Following this catalogue of 'stock-taking' Wellington moved on to consider the technical developments. The BBC was in the midst of upgrading all their studios and it was suggested that it might take a further three years before completion. The London studios were mainly last in the queue, the Regions getting a priority. This was, generally, a good thing, as the wartime 'lash-ups' were beginning to show their age and the inception of VHF transmission required a higher standard of studio production (ibid: 8).

As the audience in the meeting were primarily involved in the production of programmes, Wellington resisted developing any of these technical themes, though he hinted at them when stating that the reproduction of music 'is not yet quite as good as it ought to be'. He moved to imploring them to meet the challenges of the future 'through adventurous programmes, gripping programmes, vivid, forceful programmes and through solid, craftsman-like programmes' (BBC, 1955a: 10). He urged them to add that little extra 'polish', to not be 'fobbed off' with 'second-best results', that 'Talks did not always 'grip attention'. Features were less enterprising than they had been. 'Our sports reporting is like a rush mat of platted [sic] clichés'' (Briggs, 1995: 35). He also indicated that he wanted to have an ethos of listening and criticising not only amongst the controllers and heads of department, but also among the producers.

His central theme appeared to be one of encouraging, if not, demanding, experimentation. Experimentation within planning' experimentation with exploitation of technical advances, and, most of all, experimental programmes, 'what I called at another moment 'non-sausage' programmes' (BBC, 1955a: 16). Forestalling any possible argument concerning where, when or how these experimental programmes would take place, he sought to re-assure those present that one should not preclude any such experimentation by the fact that even a 'small' audience may represent several tens of thousands of people and, perhaps most surprisingly, as television was now available 'to entertain us', the time and space would be there in the three sound programmes for experimentation.

When Wellington had finished he opened the meeting for discussion. The first set of questions was about the challenge of Radio Luxembourg, a commercial radio station whose income allowed them to spend more on their programming than BBC Sound Broadcast had available. Founded in 1933, Radio Luxembourg broadcast on the medium wave to listeners in the UK in English and in the post-war years became a significant option for many in the evening. It was not until the 1960s that it became a station synonymous with teenage music; in the 1950s it had a wide spectrum of programmes including music for all tastes, variety shows and serials. RJE Silvey, the Head of Audience Research, was quite sanguine about the number of listeners lost to Luxembourg insomuch as he declared that he had not bothered to look at the figures for a year. It was clear to him that Luxembourg was 'catering for a kind of demand which

the BBC does not attempt to cater for' (BBC, 1955a: 19) yet the programme schedules were perhaps indicating something different. Vera Lynn had moved to Radio Luxembourg after refusing to sing more modern material and *Much Binding in the Marsh* (BBC, 1944-1950 & 1951-1954; Radio Luxembourg, 1950-1951) transferred after the series was cut at the BBC (Nobbs, 1972). Some of the BBC's radio voices were also performing on Luxembourg; *The Adventures of Dan Dare* (1951-1956) featured Noel Johnson who was also the voice of the BBC's *Dick Barton* (1946-1951). By 1956, Radio Luxembourg's schedule had moved to combat commercial television with shows such as *Double Your Money* and *Take Your Pick* that would eventually move to ITV. This may be seen as a different sort of demand, but there was, nonetheless, a demand. A survey in 1953 claimed that Radio Luxembourg had 'an average adult audience in Great Britain (exclusive of Northern Ireland) of 4.8 per cent' (Paulu, 1956: 360-361). As Luxembourg only broadcast in the evenings, the transmitter relied on the ionosphere of the night to bounce the signal into the UK, and at these times, Paulu suggests, the audience was about equal to that of the Home Service (ibid: 360-361). In 1955, that figure was 3.9 per cent (now including UK and Ireland) compared to the Home Service's 2.9 per cent. At that time, the Light Programme had 7.2 per cent and television, 14.7 (ibid: 360-361).

However, Silvey went on to contest that the BBC did not cater for the Radio Luxembourg listener as they (Luxembourg listeners) had 'the lowest level of education and the lowest level of intelligence and the lowest level for concentration' (BBC, 1955a: 19), a view supported by Hoggart, albeit

in not such as vilifying a manner, stating that the Light programme and Radio Luxembourg were the providers of music for the working-class housewife (Hoggart, 1957: 57). This may seem, by today's standards, at best harsh and, at worst, totally biased and wrong but this view was not restricted to a few, and others were happy to voice their opinion. One of the clearest of these voices was that of Val Geilgud, Head of Drama (Sound), who took to Silvey's theme and added his own colour by referring to the Radio Luxembourg audience as,

> morons, idiots, half-wits, and such products of our glorious civilisation. Is it not about time we ceased to gear ourselves to a large sub-human element, carried away by Radio Luxembourg and soon to be carried away by the advertising virtues of ITA? Should we not stop pursuing the Gaderene swine down the steep place into the sea running half a mile behind hoping to catch them up? (BBC, 1955a: 31)

Silvey thought that Gielgud had missed the point and that it should not be forgotten that if the BBC concentrated on the 'intelligent' listener, it would cease to give the programmes they wanted to a sizeable percentage of its licence payers, or could even mean losing those licence payers altogether. Gielgud pointed out that from a programme maker's point of view, if Radio Luxembourg and the Independent Television Authority were going to grow, the BBC was not in a position to bid 'against people with bigger cheque books and less principles' (BBC, 1955a: 32).

Gielgud seldom missed an opportunity to make a point, and often managed to make it, if not in a shocking way, at least in a way that would be remembered long after the matter had ceased to be of importance. In the context of this meeting, he was among equals, intellectually, and probably in terms of class as well. This was still an era of large distinctions between the classes that were not just marked by material wealth but also by educational opportunities. An institution man, Gielgud was scathing, when he could be, of the BBC, notwithstanding it was the place that had been his vocational home for almost his entire career. However, he approved of Wellington, saying, on the latter's appointment to Controller of Programmes in January 1945 that 'to my surprise the stock of the Department, which had been deplorably low, suddenly and surprisingly rose with Lindsay Wellington's appointment' (Gielgud, 1965: 121).

So it is reasonable to suggest that when Wellington moved on to discuss the Drama (Sound) output, Gielgud might take criticism from him more readily than from the others at the meeting. Given that many in the room had at times been his adversaries – the Controllers of the three services, the Head of Features – it would have been a difficult line to tread in facing comments about his producers' work. Wellington, with regards to plays, felt that 'the rhythm of speech' was, at times, 'formalised and unreal' and compared radio acting unfavourably with that of television where, he suggested, the fact that the actors had to act as well as to say their lines led to 'naturalistic speech'. Radio actors, he said, sometimes rested on their technical competence 'instead of doing what you would really like

them to be doing' (BBC, 1955a: 13). Wellington also attached great importance to the quality of sound, both in technical terms and in making use of its 'prospective'. He wondered whether the producers were pushing themselves, and thus the technology, 'as hard' as they could, commenting that 'experiments in the medium' were 'a little few and far between', making the point that *The Goons* were exemplars of 'games' that were not being heard in drama (BBC, 1955a: 13-14).

Gielgud's response to the 'rhythm of speech' issue was to counter with the point that rehearsal time, which had been reduced out of necessity during the war, was still at the war-time level, with the exception of certain performances for the Third Programme. Whilst not disputing this, Wellington's retort was one of questioning why should the Drama (Sound) department have to produce 250 plays a year? Did the BBC and their audience need this many (BBC, 1955a: 32-33)?

On the subject of experimentation, Gielgud observed that the problem was not that his department was unable to create such performances. The problem lay with the planners who were not open to such programmes if it looked as if it would jeopardise their audience figures. Stewart, the Controller of the Home Service, intimated that this was not the case and as an example cited the series of plays *Between Two Worlds*. Dismissing this as an 'imaginative conception of planning' Gielgud went on to reinforce the point, careful to say that he did not think the Controllers were 'close minded' but that they were 'faintly prejudiced' against Drama (Sound) because of listening figures (BBC, 1955a: 32-34).

The meeting continued to discuss a wide range of points with regards to sound broadcasting, and Wellington charged the programme and service heads to return to their departments and engage in a discussion based on the points raised. Gielgud's reaction was to call a meeting of his producers and ask them to discuss this matter in order that he might relay a response on behalf of his staff. This does not appear to be Gielgud adopting a collegiate stance; this was an opportunity for others to present arguments that he might have liked to have made himself. It was also an opportunity to animate a few of his staff in order to get them to work on more dynamic material. Whilst Gielgud evidently felt that the programme planners restricted the production of what was, to him, exciting material, he was not above criticising his producers' work.

The notion that experimentalism today may easily become the norm tomorrow appears to have escaped the attendees at the meeting of Drama (Sound) producers (Table 7) on 3rd November 1955, but it is interesting to recall their interpretation of this notion and thus lay bare their own prejudices and complaints. Gielgud relayed the message from the October meeting, noting that Wellington passed 'certain, generally critical observations' (Gielgud, 1955) regarding the work of Drama and that Wellington had suggested that there should be 'an injection of a considerable new dose of experimentalism' into the output (Gielgud, 1955).

Present at Gielgud's meeting were eleven producers and script editors; many of the producers were also adapters and authors of the work that

they produced. There are no minutes of the meeting itself but Gielgud asked everyone to write a summary of their individual comments on a memorandum to him afterwards. Those present included Gielgud's deputy, Donald McWhinnie, Frederick Bradnum, Archie Campbell, HB Fortuin, Charles Lefaux, Raymond Raikes, Hector Stewart and Barbara Bray. Two of the staff, David Godfrey and Peter Watts, were unable to attend but submitted comments as well.

The producers tended to have experience that extended beyond radio, often including the theatre and frequently including a variety of other jobs as well. Peter Watts, for example, joined the BBC in 1941 after a career that included studying medicine, and variously being a journalist, policeman and wine merchant. He went on stage in 1923 and was stage manager at the Old Vic for 8 years, subsequently becoming a producer at Plymouth and Perth Reps. His radio productions included *The Small Back Room*, *Rain* and *A Doll's House* and his series *Hurrah for Womanhood* and *Salute John Bullock* had been acknowledged as highly successful (Andrews 1947/1950/1954). Watts felt that Wellington underrated the amount of experimentation that went on and cited three examples: *The Archanians* produced by Raymond Raikes, Wilfred Grantham's *Everyman* and Archie Campbell's *Lord of the Flies*. However, he was not a fan of all forms of theatre and whilst he felt that it was right to be 'given the odd jolt' he counselled against descending 'into avant-gardisme' and pleaded 'heaven defend us from an outbreak of Godot-like scripts' (Watts, 1955).

Beckett's *En attendant Godot* was first produced for the stage in January 1953 and despite promising reviews of this production, and the subsequent English version, it was dismissed at the time by Gielgud who thought the play 'phoney' (Gielgud, 1953a). Donald McWhinnie, despite his inclination to more creative and imaginative drama, agreed with Gielgud on this point (McWhinnie, 1954a). Nevertheless, it was another play by Beckett that brought the experimentalism debate, at least in Drama (Sound), to a head three years later.

Barbara Bray, script editor, felt that no-one had adequately defined the word 'experiment' but suggested that what Wellington 'had in mind was not so much individual programmes of unusual eccentricity as a general liberation from preconceived ideas of content and form' (Bray, 1955). She did point out that there were already authors writing for the BBC in this manner and that 'rarely, if ever, is a script rejected that is both unusual and of quality' (Bray, 1955). The debate about what Wellington meant exercised most of them. Wilfred Grantham felt that maintaining the current 'high quality production' and adding ''experimental' production' would demand a 'radical reorganization in the matter of quantity' (Grantham, 1955). His suggestion perhaps showed the academic background from which the producers were drawn by suggesting that experimentalism would be best explored 'on the lines of a Research Unit' (ibid) and this was perhaps not that far removed from the thoughts of Gilliam and the Features Department.

Table 7

Drama (Sound) (1955)

Head of Department: V. Gielgud

Deputy Head of Department: D McWhinnie

Producers

- M Allen
- M Bakewell
- F Bradnum
- A Cameron
- A Campbell
- B Davies
- P Dromgoole
- HB Fortuin
- J Gibson
- D Godfrey
- W Grantham
- J Hopkins
- C Lefaux
- R Raikes
- H Stewart
- P Watts
- MC Webster
- N Wright

Script Editor

- B.Bray

Secretary

- Jean Baxter

(Source: Gielgud, V. 1957a)

Raymond Raikes wondered if the criticism meant that most of the productions sounded alike or was it that they lacked 'a certain experimental quality' (Raikes, 1955b). Raikes had been appointed as the Third Programme specialist within the Drama department in order to try and ease any conflict between Drama (Sound) and Features when bidding for programmes (Carpenter, 1996: 145). Gielgud, often a harsh critic of his producers' work, considered Raikes along with Norman Wright and Mary Hope Allen as 'impenitent believers in the present and future of Sound Drama' (Gielgud, 1957a: 180).

Having raised the question of similar-sounding productions, Raikes moved on to focus on the Repertory Company. The BBC Repertory Company (today known as the BBC Radio Drama Company) was founded in 1940 and provided a valuable training ground for actors as well as a good source of talent for drama productions. Considering the amount of dramatic output, having access to its own group of actors made for efficiency in the BBC but also brought criticism from many within and without the Corporation. Raikes was one of the many on the inside and he proffered the suggestion, returning to the theme of 'sameness', that the 'compulsory use of the Repertory Company' be eliminated as 'at present the voices of the same actors are being heard in far too many shows which is bound to result in too many productions sounding alike' (Raikes, 1955b). Most participants at the meeting agreed that the Rep was constricting and that it had become a 'deadweight when it comes to attempting to make each play sound different' (Bradnum, 1955). It was also thought that the Rep was 'over worked and miscast in a considerable

manner' this being the result of having insufficient money to support the employment of actors outside the BBC (Bradnum, 1955) or to pay for longer rehearsal times (Raikes, 1955b).

A few members took the stance that one cannot have experimental productions without having the appropriate scripts. Peter Watts' plea against Beckettian writing did have a kernel of concern in that the 'writing' should be concealed, the listener is not made aware of the approach, that the majority should be 'solid, sound, realistic French's Edition' (Watts, 1955). Wilfred Grantham was more succinct, feeling that 'very little good can come out of a bad script' (Grantham, 1955) and Charles Lefaux was pragmatic in suggesting that the producer should work with the author from the start (Lefaux, 1955). Lefaux, though in his late forties, was a fairly recent addition to Drama (Sound) following a number of years as an actor. In early 1950 he was seconded to produce *Dick Barton* (1946-1951) and in 1954 took charge of the Drama Department Script Unit. Barbara Bray's more measured approach – and she was the Script Editor – suggested that the programme slots needed to be less conservative to encourage more freedom for writers and provide opportunities for audiences to hear new and different productions (Bray, 1955). Hugh Stewart's opinion went further and he would have liked to have seen commissioning of experimental writers, especially tapping 'the dramatists not always successful on the modern stage through being too novel or "unconventional"' (Stewart, 1955).

Many felt that the road to experimentalism lay in the technical advances that were happening in that period. Tape recording equipment allowed for the development of different recording and editing techniques whilst improved broadcast and reception equipment allowed for an increase in the fidelity of the signal, which would then allow a more subtle approach to production. Tape recorders had been in development since the end of the war and broadcasters took little time to see their benefit. In December 1951 Marjorie Banks, one of Features producers, wrote to Gilliam saying that for a particular job, 'a car and recording gear are essential' and that she used, as an example, the fact that reporter Edward Ward had 'his own car and his own Ferrograph tape recorder' (Banks, 1951). (What she neglected to point out at this time was that she had recently become Edward Ward's wife, though it is possible that it was common knowledge by that date.) By the middle of the decade, production teams were beginning to use tape recorders to create strange and wonderful sounds, and Features, perhaps in the lead in such developments, were discussing their advantages. The Assistant Head of Features, DG Bridson suggested that a new version of *Gulliver's Travels* would be enhanced by using effects to speed up the Lilliputians speech to give them 'little voices' (Bridson, 1956a).

More use of spot effects was advocated because the noise of the effects disks was very apparent, even more so since the introduction of VHF broadcasting, which had its first regular transmission in May 1955 from the Wrotham station in Kent. Out of the producers present, who knew about effects, was David Godfrey. He had joined the BBC in 1937 in the

Drama Effects department. After being invalided out of the war he returned to the BBC as a Junior Programme Engineer in Manchester before moving back to London to become a Junior Drama Producer in 1945, where he worked with Peter Watts on the *Robinson Family* series (Andrews, 1954). Godfrey was not only concerned about the quality of the existing recordings but also suggested that the medium should change and that the discs ought to be replaced by new recordings 'perhaps by ones on a portable recorder' (Godfrey, 1955). Yet some were quite disparaging about the use of technology. Wilfred Grantham felt that the script was the important thing, the part worth investing in, and that this 'fun and games with acoustics and effects' was only 'legitimate' if the script definitely demanded it (Grantham, 1955).

Another figure who welcomed the march of technology was HB Fortuin who wished to 'try out the technique of recording dialogue and effects-cum-music on separate tapes to be 'married' later with complete control of timing and balance' (Fortuin, 1955). Fortuin was well known for working his cast hard and when he was able to get access to tape recording technology, he would record complete rehearsals and then make the cast sit and listen to it all (Spenser, n.d.). Charles Lefeaux expressed his preference to do his own tape cutting, a task normally carried out by the engineer, not the producer, and wanted tape and disc recording facilities in each control room, pointing out that it was 'not possible to marry conveniently two tapes and make a third' as no control room contained three tape recording machines (Lefeaux, 1955). Archie Campbell envisaged other advantages with the tape recorder whereby

scenes could be rehearsed and recorded by foreign stars in their home country, 'the real production taking place only when the final sequences are assembled in the cutting room' (Campbell, (1955). This allusion to the film production process was echoed by Bradnum who suggested that the use of the tape recorder to rehearse and record a production allowed for a 'more filmatic' (sic) approach and would contribute to the improvement of the 'technical brilliance' needed for VHF transmission (Bradnum, 1955).

Nearly three weeks after this meeting, having received the written notes from his staff, Gielgud composed a response to Wellington that summarised, in his view, the main points. However, he also attached copies of their summaries, possibly to underline his comments, possibly to confuse the senior management or possibly to show that these were the sort of people that he, Gielgud, had to deal with. Gielgud's memorandum to Wellington was sent via Standing, then Controller for Entertainment, who commented to Wellington that he would 'doubtless wish to discuss' the contents with him. Gielgud begins the memorandum with a typically obsequious opening, which also lays any blame for disharmony firmly at the door of the Director of Sound Broadcasting:

> Following upon the recent meeting when, with every justification,
> you passed certain generally critical observations regarding the
> work of this department, and expressed your wish for the injection
> of a considerable new dose of 'experimentalism' into our output as
> a whole, I took the occasion of a departmental meeting to lay the

criticisms and the suggestions squarely before my producers and invited their comments. (Gielgud, 1955)

He then lays out five points, dealing with the idea of experimentalism relatively perfunctorily by stating that it was 'warmly welcomed' – this despite the fact that he was clearly not in favour of it, the word, according to Barbara Bray, being 'like a red rag to a bull' to him (Bray, 2002). He suggested that disbanding the Repertory Company would reduce the sameness of voices across productions although, he noted, that so doing could lead to each producer forming his own personal rep. Despite any personal gain he might have achieved by this commentary, Gielgud was making a good point about the role of actors. This 'sameness' was already a point of debate in relation to the radio serial which could lead to actors being type-cast. In an audio-only world, if a voice became well-known and associated with a character, then it would be hard for that actor to find roles open to him or her in other productions.

Generally, Gielgud was of the opinion that the route to achieving the objective could only be pursued if more money were available:

To disband the Repertory Company would make casts more expensive. Longer rehearsal time, the most essential question of all in experimental work, would add to costs. Specially written music, a most important item, is never cheap. The longer period of 'gestation' asked for by various producers, not unreasonably, would imply less individual output for individual salaries. Experimental

studio work with tape, new effects discs, and other production requirements would cost money without producing results immediately apparent in programmes. (Gielgud, 1955)

The funding issue was also very real with departments being asked to examine ways of reducing their budgets, particularly in radio, which was losing ground to television both in consumer and in budgetary terms.

Having managed to tread a path that might appear to please all and to leave his position firm, he manages, in his fifth point, to cast a few shots at the Controllers of the Services:

> The last thing I wish to do is to imperil my – at present – excellent relations with the Controllers of all three Home Services, but it is simply a fact, which it is most important not to blink, that the Third Programme mentality does not willingly accept what may be called experimental projects unless initiated by themselves; that Home Service is too cramped for space owing to its inescapable commitments to offer us much scope in this line; and that the Light programme policy of keeping one eye very firmly on Audience Research figures must naturally tend to create resistance to 'the new thing' as such, as experience has taught that the result of 'the new thing' is invariably a drop in listening popularity. (Gielgud, 1955)

There is a sound nucleus of truth in these observations and certainly from Gielgud's point of view, his department was being squeezed by the Services. Gielgud's relationship with the Third Programme had always been a difficult one for, despite having achieved some degree of clarity over airtime with Features the previous year, he still harboured thoughts that Features were carrying out work that ought to be done by Drama (Sound). The Light Programme, home of populist drama and *Mrs Dale's Diary* was clearly not where he thought his department services could be best used and the Home Service, to Gielgud the home of radio drama, was cramped.

It is also possible that Gielgud was making a point to Wellington knowing that Standing would read it. Standing had been appointed Controller of Programme Organisation in 1952 following the retirement of Howgill 'in preference to either Gielgud or Gilliam' (Bridson, 1971: 240). This decision, given the feelings between Drama (Sound) and Features, was probably well made by Wellington. Gielgud's thoughts on Standing are not known as there is only one reference, in Gielgud's autobiographical *Years in a Mirror* (1965), and that refers to Standing's time as a war correspondent in the closing months of the Second World War. However it is clear that Gielgud did not miss an opportunity to make a point when he wanted to, however oblique.

Responses from the management were not particularly quick, which suggests that other things were of more import at the time; or that whilst this might have been very important to Drama (Sound), each department

had its own agenda. In the new year, H Rooney Pelletier the Controller of the Light Programme added two comments to the debate which referred 'to "monotony" rather than to "experimentation"' (Pelletier, 1956). His message suggests that what might seem to be earnest was not appropriate for his audience and that he wished for something that 'catches the ear and demands continued listening' (ibid). The audience for the Light programme had already been deemed to have different needs, and how programmes were presented was very important. For example, title music was often required to denote separate but thematically related plays, perhaps for a season. Pelletier also argued that, irrespective of the content, 'the illusion of novelty by creating occasions to present drama' is an important aspect of the service's presentation (ibid).

Relations with the Third were not so perfunctory. John Morris, Controller of the Third Programme wrote to Wellington asking that Gielgud 'substantiate his contention' about the 'Third Programme mentality' (Morris, 1956a). Morris had a 'feeling' that as the Third did not receive suggestions unread, as was the case with the Home Service, Gielgud saw it as a reflection on his own judgement. But Morris, firing a shot directly at Gielgud, observed that the 'needs of the Third Programme are, however, so different that much more consideration is necessary if our standards are not to be lowered' (ibid). Not content with this, Morris adds insult to injury. Having offered to 'explain reasons' for rejecting any Drama (Sound) proposal, he states that the Third does not initiate 'any so-called experimental drama productions' and that all of their 'experiments are

from features Department and we do in fact accept a very high proportion of their offers' (ibid).

In late January 1956 Standing sent a memorandum to Gielgud that returned the issues to the Head of Drama but did not discuss the points raised by the Controllers of the Light and the Third Programmes. His opening remark was 'What action do you now propose please?' (Standing, 1956). He then commented on the general lack of financial support but expected Gielgud to put in requests 'in respect of the individual productions where there might be really discernible advantage' (ibid). He asked that Gielgud prepare an estimate of the cost of disbanding the Repertory group and suggested that there was an agenda to be pursued between them when they 'are sifting through the various points put forward on that subject' (ibid).

At the same time, Wellington had moved from general examination of the quality of sound broadcasting to an explicit theme of 'streamlining'. Urged on from the Director General downwards, the BBC was now focussing on the economics of running the Corporation and while the previous four or five months of debate had been ostensibly about improving the methods of working, it was now explicitly clear that the institution was entering a period of economically-driven reform:

> It may be that the time is at hand when it would be right to change
> or even abolish many long-standing practices and institutions within
> the BBC, and perhaps replace them by new arrangements and new

agencies which would be more effective in the practical circumstances of to-day. (Wellington, 1956)

For Gielgud, this was, perhaps, a period of reflection. Changes were building on previous changes, and irrespective of the other objectives in the institution - the obligation to educate, entertain and inform - the main focus now was clearly financial. By this time, Val Gielgud had been in post in excess of twenty years. He had taken the embryonic Drama department from its small and limited beginnings to a department that supplied dramatic output of many types to the three Services, that worked with the Schools, Religious and Empire departments, and had also provided the proving ground for many writers and performers.

This modern approach to the way that things were done must have been very difficult for Gielgud. In the business that he was in, he was certainly well aware of the need to continue to invent and re-invent. Experimentalism was not a new word; they had been experimenting from the start of radio drama in the 1920s. Nevertheless new approaches and new technologies sometimes overtake at a pace and intensity that may leave the unwary behind. Theirs may be the view that they have seen it all before, or it may be that they are content to let the younger generation have their head; still others may see it as a destruction of the old order. To some, Gielgud appeared suspicious of the new generation: 'he thought we were trying to undermine him, so we all used to be very careful to write memos about everything, our decisions and our opinions

and so on, to make sure that it was obvious that there was no hanky-panky' (Bray, 2002).

This period of austerity and hope, of bread rationing and scientific development, was also a period of swift and many-sided changes (Hopkins, 1963: 11), including a new style of theatre as well as new methods of producing radio drama. In 1953 after surviving for two decades without a deputy, Gielgud had appointed Donald McWhinnie as Assistant Head of Drama (Sound). McWhinnie had joined the BBC after being demobbed from the RAF and had worked in the Drama Department from 1949. At the time of his appointment, McWhinnie was about the same age that Gielgud had been when he took over the Drama department. There was certainly a generational difference and whilst Gielgud must have had confidence in his appointment, it may also have been seen not as a threat, but as giving a greater credence to new avenues to be explored, and these may have been avenues that Gielgud himself did not necessarily approve nor wish to pursue. Gielgud admitted freely that his involvement in the promotion of the New Wave in the theatre was 'for the most part a negative one'. He was to observe that the 'drama department would perform Death of a Salesman over his dead body' (Bray, 2002) and that the 'positive credit' should be given to McWhinnie and the younger generation of producers (Gielgud, 1965: 173). His other bête noir, the radio serial, was also an area he appeared to be quite happy to leave with someone else. His feelings about *Mrs Dale's Diary* were equally applied to *The Archers* (1950-present) and, as has been shown, he held all family-based serials in contempt. For other styles he was more pragmatic. *Paul*

Temple (1938–2013) and its successors 'fulfilled a definite requirement' and he was quite content to leave that in the hands of Martyn C Webster. It may be concluded that he saw the thriller serial as following in the 'honourable footsteps' of Buchan et al (Gielgud, 1957a: 70-71).

However, it did not escape his attention, in an echo of Arnold that he 'often found himself between two worlds' (Briggs, 1979: 694) and that while he may have been positive in saying that as his arms were 'upheld' by McWhinnie on the left and Webster on the right, he 'found it possible to plan the output of radio drama on more solid and comprehensive lines (Gielgud, 1965: 174). This may have been the case, at least on the face of it, but it is also possible that the two major developments in post-war radio drama, the serial and the New Wave, were anathema to Gielgud and that these two cardinal points were encompassed by two of his best producers.

The previous chapter discussed the wider contexts of the nation and its culture, and the British Broadcasting Corporation. In the next chapter, attention is turned to the production of one key radio play, *All That Fall*, and to the detail of the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop. The drive to create the Workshop came from different quarters, yet it is Drama (Sound) that played a key role in terms of demanding different, and new, experimental production techniques. This chapter has presented a picture of the Drama (Sound) department and its Head, Val Gielgud in order to understand the more immediate context within which these developments took place. Gielgud was clearly good at his job but he came to realise that

things were changing; even if they were not getting out of his control, certainly they were getting out of his environs. His principles were much more founded on his education and upbringing than simply on class, and his professional values were guided by his contact with the theatre. He also felt secure enough in his post to spar with his peers, and even with his superiors and he clearly enjoyed constructing memoranda as miniatures in writing in their own right.

As the country was in a period of transition, so too was the institution, the department and the department head; they were in fact caught between two worlds. The country was moving, albeit slowly, from austerity to wealth though the BBC was looking at a future in which their economic standpoint would be radically altered. Having enjoyed over twenty years as sole broadcaster, now the threat of competition from commercial television made a real impact. Despite RJE Silvey's lack of concern, Radio Luxembourg did have a considerable number of listeners, so BBC radio had to deal with competition from television and competition from other radio stations. Both of these were seen, as with books and magazines before them, as an indication of the dumbing down, the popularising of the medium; inform and educate seemed to be bowing to the overarching power of entertainment. The concerns of Gielgud and his peers about appealing to the masses through some lowest common denominator cannot be ignored and in an effort to retain standards, as perceived by them, the heads of departments went off to look at ways of making their output more interesting and attractive – without lowering their standards. Theirs was a generation of people largely educated in a manner no longer

carried out in the nation's schools and which was certainly not commensurate with that of an audience that had been influenced by the United States, popular newspapers, magazines and pulp fiction. Irrespective of the standards, the aim was to keep the audience figures. Here was a transition from what the Establishment, in the form of the BBC – the benign Aunty – believed the audience should have, to what might be given to the audience so that it would stay with her, keeping her listenership figures buoyant and thereby maintain her public service role in the future. Looking back to this time of transition from a viewpoint in the second decade of the twenty-first century, there is a sense of irony that one of Donald McWhinnie's early series of plays, a series which won acclaim from within as well as beyond the BBC was a season for the Home Service. The season was entitled *Between Two Worlds*.

Chapter 4

All That Fall

This chapter examines the confluence of the strands of experimentalism in radio drama, technological developments (particularly the use of tape recorders) and the institutional structures at the BBC. This confluence brought key people together with new technology at one fortuitous moment. The merging of these strands was marked by the recording of Samuel Beckett's play for radio, *All That Fall* (1957). After this point, each strand continued on its own path, the people involved also travelling on, some together, others discretely. The chapter discusses the production and the roles played by the key members of the production team, particularly that of Desmond Briscoe and Donald McWhinnie. The argument is made that it was these two men who laid the ground for the Radiophonic Workshop; indeed it was Briscoe who went on to run the Workshop for most of its existence.

The chapter is written as a narrative of the chronological development of the production of *All That Fall* and the parallel development of the Radiophonic Workshop, covering the period from 1956 to 1958. In this period, the discussions about experimentation in radio drama prompted some producers to look at ways of improving or enhancing their productions. Similarly, producers in the Features department were also keen to push the boundaries, in their case driven by a need to improve their standing, since the luminaries of the 1940s Features department had moved on. This chapter shows that in this parallel development, radiophonic effects are in use before the physical creation of a workshop. It also shows that the involvement of Donald McWhinnie and Desmond

Briscoe in the studio was as important in the development of the application of these new sounds, as was Malcolm Gerrard's drive to create such a facility.

Developments

As has been shown, experimentation or creativity had always been available but had been driven more by interested individuals who could make it happen than by any discussion and drive from the management. This was still the case in the middle of the decade. Charles Lefeaux, for example had had an exchange of memoranda with the Head of Programme Contracts in January 1956 over the rehearsal time of an orchestra being used for the production of *The Queen of Cornwall*. The play, written in 1923 by Thomas Hardy, was deemed a 'significant event' (Simpson, 2008: 43), due, apparently, to the rarity of performance more than the musical accompaniment. Lefeaux's production was looking for a very particular 'acoustic pattern' and he reported to Programme Contracts that the composer and conductor would be using 'that curious electrical instrument the Ondes Martinot' (Lefeaux, 1956).

Early 1956 also saw the final discussions on the nature of experimentalism that had been prompted in the Drama (Sound) corridors by Gielgud's meeting the previous October (as discussed in the previous chapter). Issues between Gielgud and John Morris, Controller of the Third Programme, still appeared to rumble on. In 1954 they had had a

disagreement over Drama (Sound) input into the Third Programme (Standing, 1954b), and during the more recent discussions on experimentation, there appears to have been little opportunity lost to have a little dig at one another. Morris, writing to Lyndsay Wellington, the Director of Sound Broadcasting, said that whilst 'we do not normally accept his suggestions unread, as has been found perfectly satisfactory in the case of the Home Service' the 'needs' of the Third Programme were 'so different that much more consideration is necessary if our standards are not to be lowered' (Morris, 1956a). Despite these altercations, one positive result from the 1954 episode was the appointment, by Gielgud, of Raymond Raikes as a 'liaison point' (Gielgud, 1954), someone who would work directly between Drama (Sound) and the Third Programme. Raikes did this for a year and in January 1956 tendered his resignation, officially stating that his work was done and that now was the time to pass the baton onto someone else. However a personal note to Gielgud is much clearer, stating that Raikes wanted to get back to the studio and production, 'I know that I have been unhappy the last six months or so at the sparsity [sic] of my productions' (Raikes, 1956).

By the Autumn of 1956, the focus for the evaluation of the work of the BBC Sound departments and services had become very clear. Wellington's meeting the previous October, where he championed the cause of radio and encouraged his staff to be creative, had been a subtle way of introducing the unassailable fact that competition from television, both from the BBC and from ITV was the big issue for radio.

In March 1956, television reception was in the reach of 95% of the UK population and it was planned that less than 2% would be without reception by 1958 (BBC, 1957a: 109). The number of new Sound Only licences had peaked in 1951 at 11.8m, four years after the introduction of the Television and Sound Combined licence, of which nearly 344,000 were sold. By 1956 Sound only licences had dropped to 8.45m whilst figures for the Combined licence had reached 5.73 million. The figures were even closer the following year with 7.49 million Sound and 6.96 million Combined licences. (BBC, 1958a: 212). During this period, listeners and viewers had a choice from a weekly output of 166 hours of Home Service, 108 hours of the Light Programme, 40 hours of the Third and over 50 hours per week of BBC television (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958a: 215-216).

Of added importance at this time was the rise of ITV. During 1956 it could be received in one million homes (there were 15 million homes at the time), a figure, according to Briggs, that would rise to 5.25 million by 1958. The importance of television to the Corporation had been clear for some time and the Director General, Sir Ian Jacob, had clearly acted where his predecessor, Sir William Haley, had failed to, by pushing television to become the leading broadcast media – and by becoming acutely aware of the competition (Briggs, 1995: 30-34).

A Gallup survey of October 1956 for the BBC (Table 8) takes no account at all of the Third Programme for that evening (perhaps no-one was listening), but it illustrates the relative size of audience shared between

the two main radio services, its two major non-BBC rivals and the two television providers. It also shows that BBC-TV had overtaken the Light Programme.

Table 8

Listened or viewed <u>at some time</u> between 6 p.m. and midnight on Thursday, 11th October 1956				
	Adults (aged 16 and over)		Children (aged 8 to 15)	
Listened to	%	Number	%	Number
Home Service	17.2	6,360,000	12.0	620,000
Light Programme	28.9	10,690,000	26.0	1,350,000
Luxembourg	10.3	3,790,00	9.0	470,000
Radio Eireann	0.1	60,00	0.5	30,000
Viewed				
BBC-TV	29.8	11,030,000	37.0	1,920,000
ITA	9.4	3,470,000	7.0	310,000
Listened or Viewed	67.0	24,770,000	69.0	3,590,000
Did not listen or view	33.0	12,230,000	31.0	1,610,000
Total Population	100.0	37,000,000	100.0	5,200,00

(Source: BBC, 1956f)

A consequence of the rise of television was that resources for Sound Broadcasting were becoming tighter, and the need for production, or even service continuation, became much keener. While Drama (Sound) tried to invigorate its production staff and come up with plays that were

acceptable to the Third Programme, the Third had become an easy target for the impending economic cuts. The argument was that since the audience share was small, as a service it would not be missed as much as would the curtailment of the output of either of the two larger services. However, Andrew Stewart, Controller of the Home Service had an interesting view suggesting that the Light Programme should take the heaviest knock as it was losing the largest percentage of listeners, and those to television. The Home Service was losing about one per cent whilst the Third Programme's audience figures remained static. He finished off by pointing out the potential loss of 'prestige' both at home and abroad, if the Third Programme was to close (Stewart, 1956). The notion that the Third might cease was, for some, a very real possibility. Following the *Future of Sound* report, the vehicle that had started up the previous year with Wellington's formal and informal discussions on financial savings now quickly gathered pace and this, it appeared, was an opportunity for some to promote the view that losing a service would be to the overall benefit of Sound Broadcasting.

It is indisputable that money was very tight. A dispirited Frederick Bradnum, one of Drama (Sound)'s producers, wrote to Donald McWhinnie, the Assistant Head of Drama (Sound), after a departmental meeting à propos the 'aggravating demoralising effect' that was the result of being told of shortages in engineering staff, editing facilities, studio slots, Home Service Announcers and money for entertaining' (Bradnum, 1956). The output from Drama and Features combined at this time was not inconsiderable. Over the year 1956 to 1957, Features and Drama together

contributed 1,758 hours (12.7%) of the output for Sound Broadcasting, though this does not include productions by Drama (Sound) for children and for School's Service, nor Features output for Documentaries, so the total hours contributed would be more than these. During the same period, Features and Drama contributed 274 hours (10.1%) of the output for the London television service (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958: 217-218). McWhinnie responded to Bradnum's concerns saying that whilst these shortages might be annoying and at times inconvenient, there had to be a sense of realism in that the facilities that producers had been accustomed to having heretofore could no longer be taken for granted. On the particular subject of tape-editing McWhinnie said that he thought it was relied upon too much, given that 'the facilities are far from comprehensive' (McWhinnie, 1956a). He also noted that the 'crisis of studio accommodation' was because of 'our own unreasonable and unrealistic demands' (ibid).

The Heads of Features, Drama and Variety met in November 1956, prior to meeting the Working Committee set up by Wellington to look at Future Policy and Practice. Laurence Gilliam, (Gilliam, 1956b) reported back on behalf of the three Heads and said that they agreed that changes were required in order for Sound Broadcasting to become 'more efficient and more economical' and suggested four items for discussion. The final two points dealt with a call for a realistic costing system for programme making and a call for 'professional programme staff in the English regions' to 'revert' to their departments. It was, however, the two points that came before these that were the most important.

The first item was about centralising planning of programmes, which would, they said, give more 'direct responsibility to Supply Departments' - something that all three department heads had consistently requested since the system was introduced under Reith. The second point must have been the hardest one to arrive at, let alone agree upon:

> We consider that the future pattern of Sound Broadcasting lies with the provision of higher quality programmes for a widening number of minority audiences. This means fewer programmes, higher quality. It also implies a far greater use of the principle of planned repeats. (Gilliam, 1956b)

Here they develop a theme that Wellington had spoken of at the meeting he had called the previous year. In that meeting the Director of Sound Broadcasting had suggested that the decline in audience figures was inevitable, yet even small numbers of listening or viewing figures were invariably in the tens if not hundreds of thousands. Offering a radio audience, however large or small, the opportunity to listen to a piece of music or a play, even with limited or specialist appeal, would still result in many more listeners being able to hear it than would or could attend a concert hall or a theatre. What mattered was that radio did what it did well, that it continued to do it better than television. For these three supply departments, this would allow them to continue to make programmes like *The Goon Show* (1951-1960), *Under the Loofah Tree* (1958) and *Under Milk Wood* (1954), which would, in turn, allow the mind

of the listener to create exotic, expansive or surreal landscapes in which these productions were enacted.

It was exactly these sorts of attributes that the Assistant Head of Features, DG Bridson, wrote about in his report of the July 1956 Features Conference. Bridson had always embraced the technological developments and used them to enhance his work in Features department. In June of that year, with a self-confessed 'revived enthusiasm', he sent the Controller of the Home service an outline of an idea for an 'amusing and ingenious adaptation' of *Gulliver's Travels* using 'an entirely new technique for the handling and editing of recorded speech'. Bridson's proposal was to record the Lilliputian dialogue at slow speed so when played back at normal speed they would have 'little voices'; the Brobdingnagians would be recorded at a higher speed and then played back at the normal rate; and the Houyhnhnms whinnying voices would be created using 'Sonovox distortion' (Bridson, 1956a). In his conference report from July he said that it was no 'coincidence', given the challenges that radio was facing from television, that the two themes of the conference were Experimentation and Controversy, and that he felt in terms of topics these were the 'most vital to the healthy future of Sound broadcasting' (Bridson, 1956b).

> As for Experimentation – TV is virtually incapable of it. Experimental work is a really strong asset towards establishing Sound among the intellectuals as the prestige medium. Apart from that, experimental

radio offers Sound a truly unique claim upon the public imagination (Bridson, 1956b).

Bridson's view was typical among many of the key players of this narrative but their drive to experiment and to definitely interest the 'intellectuals' was not necessarily one agreed with by all. Gielgud was not a proponent of such developments and there were those outside the BBC who felt that the important programmes were those that Hoggart referred to as 'homely' and those that Priestley referred to as 'middle brow' types for whom the 'Home Service is the mark of 'the cosiness of plain easy folk' (Hoggart, 1957: 154; Priestley, 1951) Certainly a considerable portion of the listeners were in these two categories and has been shown, the Light Programme with its popular programmes and popular appeal had the largest audience of the three Programmes. Here too a tension becomes apparent between the macro-context of those whom Priestley and Hoggart and others are writing about, the Light and Home listeners, and the micro-context of BBC Sound responding to falling listenership and an awareness that with television growing, its listener base will be diminishing and thus taking a view that it will be more likely that the 'intellectuals' will remain faithful while the 'plain easy folk' turn to the TV. Consequently, the impact BBC Sound becoming <u>a</u> mass media provider, not <u>the</u> mass media provider was, at this point in the 1950s, leading some to look to provide experimental and controversial programmes but, presumably, with the knowledge that much of their work would only be heard by a relative few, 'the lisping highbrows' (Priestley, 1951).

Hoggart does see that there is advancement, development, but pitches much of it against his stand for the working-class. He contends that 'most people are subjected to a sustained and ever-increasing bombardment of invitations to assume that whatever is, is right, so long as it is widely accepted and can be classed as entertaining' (Hoggart, R., 1957: 157). A most prescient contention which he connects with the need to have the next new thing as that will bring enjoyment, 'the present is enjoyed only because, and so long as it is, the present' (ibid). Consequently Bridson's view, a view representative of a number of people employed by the BBC could well be different to that of the listeners – returning to Haley's aspirations for the listener and the thought that how is the listener to be educated to enjoy what is new, what is 'present'.

Bridson's report on the Conference was clearly enthusiastic about radio and about what radio should be doing. Laurence Gilliam's report on the Features Conference, to Michael Standing, the Controller of Entertainment (Gilliam, 1956a), was much more concerned with the state of the BBC and the effects that this was having on production. In addition to the increased competition and the financial constraints, talk was also about a further BBC television channel and the renewal of the Charter. Gilliam's impression of the feelings about television arising out of the conference were generally positive but called for a better training regime for staff on secondment to television. He also pointed out that there were too many feature programmes and that this watered down the effect and the quality and had, in fact, been 'cheapened by Programme Controllers and Regional Heads by commissioning features from all and sundry' (Gilliam, 1956a:

2), a theme he returned to in his report from the November meeting of the department heads. The poor quality of the technical facilities was raised again, 'in particular the heart-breaking slowness in the provision of tape editing channels' and how inadequate the technical staff were in relation to the editing of programmes. The assumption here is an inadequacy of editorial decision rather than an inability to splice a tape. To answer this criticism, he suggested something that many of the producers at Gielgud's Experimentation meeting the previous November had called for, 'a more flexible system of allowing non-technical staff to work on the editing of programmes' (ibid: 2).

As has been noted previously, the drive for experimentalism, at least from the technically-minded producers, came not only from a desire to be more creative but also from a desire to exploit the advances being made in technology. These advances were not just within the studio. The roll-out of FM transmitters had started in 1955 and by the end of 1956 there were eleven transmitters open, covering 84% of the United Kingdom; by the end of the following year, the addition of a further six meant that an 'expected' 96% of the population would have been able to listen to VHF/FM transmission (BBC, 1956e). The BBC had been experimenting with frequency modulation since before the war, and post-war the pressure was on to improve the signal, and thus the quality of the broadcast at the receiver. The existing long and medium wave transmission frequencies were prone to interference, particularly at night, a time when the listener might sit down to enjoy a concert or a play (Pawley, 1972:339); and as television was becoming more and more a

competitor for the same audience, FM transmission was another key to improving radio output.

Gielgud's mind, however, was still preoccupied with money. In December 1956 he wrote a lengthy memorandum to the Controller of Entertainment proposing economies within his Department, which included relinquishing two secretarial posts, not replacing Lance Sieveking, who had retired, and not replacing two other producers who were also due to retire. As producer numbers had only increased by one in the previous ten years, this must have been adding more strain to the system. Barbara Bray recalled that at the time of taking on the Script Editor job in 1953, there were between thirty to forty producers, some contract, some freelance (Bray, 2002); Gielgud names twenty-one producers serving in the department in 1955 in *British Radio Drama* (Gielgud, 1957a: 202).

Further comments in Gielgud's memorandum included the cessation of producing short plays with large casts, the fact that the Department had spent under the budget for the Repertory Company and, never missing the opportunity, he suggested that it would be 'too much to hope' that the 'gradual demise' of *Mrs Dale's Diary* would see the radio serial closed. In fact, he knew it was very popular and had seen some revenue from it including the sale of 40,000 actual diaries (Gielgud, 1956a). His final paragraph contains a plea for the 'preservation of staff morale' requesting that if there were to be redundancies 'the menace should not be kept a dark secret from the people who are the probable victims' (Gielgud, 1956a).

All That Fall

The twin pressures of television and economy made 1956 an important year in the BBC and in Sound, the Controllers of the three services were defending their own ground whilst, at the same time, attempting to dictate their requirements to the supply departments. This was not the model that had been put in place by Reith, a model that provided editorial boards for both Controllers and Heads to discuss content with the intention that a collegiate decision would be reached. However, Controllers were concerned about audience figures, and the Controller of the Light Programme was particularly concerned about them, with the result that even Controllers could be set against each other. There was also the continuing tension between Features and Drama (Sound) though Features were beginning to lose the advantage. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Features was producing some very significant pieces of radio, and was capturing good audience figures and international prizes. As the 1950s progressed the quality of dramatic output from Features started to be overtaken by that of Drama (Sound), as Gielgud's producers, particularly Donald McWhinnie, worked on creating new, exciting and experimental creative pieces.

As has been indicated in an earlier chapter, Val Gielgud was rather conservative in his approach to drama. Barbara Bray, the Script Editor, suggested that he was more concerned about pleasing his friends at the Garrick Club than producing modern cutting-edge drama:

> I remember him [Gielgud] once saying at a departmental meeting soon after I joined that [the] drama department would perform *Death of a Salesman* over his dead body! He thought that was the, you know, the latest most shocking thing. Most shocking things were the things he tried to commission from his pals at the Garrick. (Bray, 2002)

However, this conservatism was compensated for by the appointment of Donald McWhinnie as the Assistant Head of Drama (Sound) in 1953, in part, as a response to the supremacy of Features who were getting the major dramatic slots on the Third Programme at that time. Over the next few years McWhinnie brought about ever more creative and experimental productions and the movement, started by Louis MacNiece in the previous decade, nurtured writers who would provide plays that could build on the standards set for content and production, writers like Giles Cooper, Henry Reed and Samuel Beckett.

As stated above, despite the promising reviews, Beckett's *En attendant Godot* was dismissed at the time by Gielgud, in a memo to EJ King-Bull, who thought the play 'phoney' (Gielgud, 1953a). J Ormerod Greenwood wrote to McWhinnie in February 1954 enquiring whether McWhinnie had read or considered the play and pointed out that it had been 'praised so highly in "THE LISTENER" [sic]' (Ormerod Greenwood, 1954a). McWhinnie replied that he had initially thought it would be 'a chancey project' but was 'worth having a serious attempt at it'; he then changed his mind and adopted Gielgud's tone, 'We have modified our views, and feel that there

is something basically phoney about the piece. We have accordingly dropped it' (McWhinnie, 1954a). It is interesting to note that McWhinnie, in his memorandum to Ormerod Greenwood used the same word, 'phoney' as Gielgud did to King-Bull and that he used the personal pronoun in the plural.

Waiting for Godot had moved Beckett from an author of dense, Joycean novels to an acclaimed playwright. Whatever McWhinnie said in that memorandum did not seem to agree with the lengths to which he eventually went to, to entice Beckett to write for the radio. King-Bull's later memorandum to Leslie Stokes, in May 1954, suggested that the play did not appear so enticing in Beckett's English version, 'It struck me as far less funny, and less racy, than in the original, and I think one might seriously say that Beckett has had Irish inflections and idiom in his mind (King-Bull, 1954). This might be interpreted as giving Gielgud a good reason for not supporting a radio production of the play. In order to push the point further he continued that Beckett's agent and publisher in Paris described Beckett 'as 'un sauvage', with whom any sort of collaboration would be out of the question', though there was a vague hope that permission might be gained 'to tinker with his version' (King-Bull, 1954).

From King-Bull's and McWhinnie's memoranda there is an impression that they had to respond not according to their own wishes but to the wishes of the Head of Drama. This might have been because McWhinnie was still relatively new in the job and Gielgud wished to point out who was in charge; there is also a suggestion that King-Bull and Gielgud were not the

best of work colleagues. In *Years in the Mirror*, Gielgud recounts the absorption, in 1931, of Research Section, an experimental department that was not tied to any other department in the BBC. Research comprised Lance Sieveking, Archie Harding, Mary Hope Allen and King-Bull; 'The resulting atmosphere was not pleasant. In one quarter it was never wholly dispelled' (Gielgud, 1965: 69). Jocelyne Tobin, King-Bull's secretary from 1950 until his retirement in 1957, recalls that the 'one quarter' was King-Bull, Gielgud's 'bête noir' (Tobin, n.d.). James Knowlson in the authorised biography of Beckett, *Damned to Fame*, also notes that the project was scrapped, attributing this to Gielgud who was 'hostile to the play' (Knowlson, 1996: 786).

Despite this rejection of *En Attendant Godot*, Ormerod Greenwood continued to promote the idea that it should be broadcast, perhaps even on television 'for which it seems admirably suited' (Ormerod Greenwood, 1954b). In the same memo he noted that Drama (Sound) had rejected it 'on the grounds that the Author's English version (unpublished), which is the only one we would be allowed to use, is unsatisfactory' (Ormerod Greenwood, 1954b). The response is not known but the interest in Beckett and in *Waiting for Godot* did not go away and in September 1955 Raymond Raikes, at the behest of Gielgud, went to see the English version of the play at the Criterion Theatre. Raikes' lengthy reply – lengthy because he evaluated the play's potential for radio – included the suggestion that 'we record and broadcast this production as soon as possible lest it be said the BBC has once again "missed the boat"' (Raikes, 1955c). Raikes did not get to see the first report from the French version,

the one said by Gielgud and McWhinnie to be 'phoney', until he had seen this English version, and concluded his memo by saying that it seemed 'a minor tragedy that on the strength of the [earlier] report it was not then given on the Third Programme' (Raikes, 1955c). The following month, a memorandum from Stanley French, the Drama Booking Manager to McWhinnie outlined some of the matters for consideration for the production of a 'full-length' version with the Criterion cast (French, 1955). However, despite the build up of interest, *Waiting for Godot* was not broadcast on BBC radio until 1960, in a production by Donald McWhinnie. A second, shorter version, produced by Robin Midgley was broadcast in 1962 (BBC, n.d.1).

The history of the genesis of *All That Fall* suffers from a scarcity of records and even some of these accounts do not appear to be particularly accurate. Whilst Drama (Sound) under Gielgud was following the line that Beckett's work was not right - possibly too adventurous, too experimental - for BBC radio, the Controller of the Third Programme, John Morris, was keen to get Beckett to write something for the Third and went to Paris meet him. Cleveland (1973: 49) proposes that it was McWhinnie who suggested to Beckett that he write something for the BBC but this is not borne out either by the documents held at the BBC Written Archives nor by Beckett's letters (Craig, et al (ed.), 2011). However, Cleveland does raise an interesting point in terms of the status of the play. Billed as being 'commissioned by the BBC' there is no evidence of a 'commission' in the standard manner. Morris suggested that he might like to write something for radio and whilst he goes through the process of doing this, Beckett is

clearly under no contractual pressure, just his own commitment after having accepted the proposal.

It is possible that the disapproval for anything adventurous, or indeed experimental, was not just restricted to the Head of Drama (Sound). The Controller of the Home Service, Andrew Stewart, was equally opposed to 'radio fantasies'. In a memorandum replying to a previous one from Stewart, Laurence Gilliam, Head of Features complained about the 'dismissal' of a proposed project, *Pied Piper*, written by Francis Dillon and was concerned 'by your [Stewart's] statement that you have no use for his [Dillon's] vein of radio fantasy' (Gilliam, 1954). Apparently the Controller even commented on the prestigious Italia Prize, in which Dillon had won second prize in 1949 for a fantasy entitled *Rumpelstiltskin* (Cairns Post, 1954), saying it was 'a "meaningless gesture by a lot of hot-headed foreigners"' (Gilliam, 1954). Morris, was much more adventurous and through the Third Programme was much keener to commission daring pieces of work.

Morris may have been the instigator or catalyst in bringing Beckett to write for the BBC but the two did not physically meet until July 1956, a month after the invitation had been made. In *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1941-1956,* The Chronology for 1956 states that on the 21st June 1956 Beckett was 'invited to write a radio play for the BBC' (Craig, G. et al, 2011: 589). The matter was prompted by Morris having seen in *The Sunday Times* on 17 June a short piece about Beckett having two new works in preparation for the Marseilles Festival of Drama. Morris was keen

to get Beckett on radio. It should be said that the lack of *Waiting for Godot* as a radio piece at that time was not entirely due to Gielgud and McWhinnie's disdain for the work, there were potential infringements of the Lord Chamberlain's rule over theatrical probity. However, concerned that the BBC should not miss out on another Beckett play, Morris wrote to Gielgud asking him to 'make immediate enquiries about this so that, if it turns out to be suitable, we may get an option on it before the rats get at it, so to speak' (Morris, 1956b). Gielgud noted in pencil on the memorandum that 'We've asked Cecilia Reeves to get the script if she can' (Morris, 1956b). Reeves was the Paris representative of the BBC and well-placed to follow this up. On the 21 June she responded to Gielgud informing him that she had written to Beckett but forewarned him that Beckett was 'an elusive character…spending much of his time outside of Paris' (Reeves, 1956).

The plays, a mime and a one-hour play, were in fact withdrawn. However, the interest in the one-hour play, with the view that it should be used on the radio, was also prompted by the knowledge that Michael Barry, the Head of Drama, Television, had expressed an interest in the mime piece as Beckett related in a letter to Nancy Cunard on July 4:

Saw Barry of BBC TV who is interested in the mime (and why not?) and am told that Gielgud wants a play for the 3rd programme. Never thought about Radio [sic] play technique but in the dead of t'other night got a gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging feet and

puffing and panting which may or may not lead to something. (Craig,

2011: 631)

He also responded to Reeves on 4 June, saying that he would 'very much' like to write a play for radio but felt 'very doubtful' about his ability to work in that medium. He did, however, indicate that he had had some ideas but did not give the detail that he gave to Cunard, at that stage (Beckett, 1956a). A few days later, in a letter to Aidan Higgins, Beckett expands a bit more on his idea:

Have been asked to write a Radio Play for the 3rd and am tempted, feet dragging and breath short and cart wheels and imprecations from the Brighton Road to Foxrock Station and back, insentient old mares in foal being welted by the cottagers and the devil tattered in the ditch – boyhood memories. Probably won't come to anything. (Criag, et al, 2011: 633)

Morris met Beckett in Paris on July 18 and afterwards wrote to Gielgud expressing how keen the playwright seemed to be about writing for the radio (Cronin, 1996: 461). This keenness appears to have either been short-lived, or the presentable face of Beckett to the BBC. His downbeat comment to Higgins about the play 'probably' not coming to anything continued, according to his letters to others he knew well, though how much of this is Beckett's character is difficult to discern. At the start of August, in a letter to Barney Rosset at Grove Press he said he was 'battling slowly up the steep dull hill of the 3rd Radio script, something

may come of it if I'm not careful' (Craig, et al, 2011: 643). The 'steep dull hill' alluded as much to his depression as to his progress with the play. Towards the end of August he wrote to Rosset that he was 'still deep in a drain' and later in the same letter a brief line that said 'Haven't made much progress with 3rd programme script. Not interested' (Craig, 2011: 645-647). At last a brighter, or at least a more positive tone appeared the following month in a further letter to Rosset dated 23 September 1956: 'I shall finish the piece for the BBC this week' (Craig, et al, 2011: 654). The script was sent to Morris on 17 September (Knowlson, 1996: 431). On 18 October Beckett wrote to AJ and Ethna Leventhal stating that 'The Radio Script has been accepted by the 3rd who ask for more' (Craig, 2011: 662), the Third Programme recognising that anything from Beckett at that time would be good for their schedules. Beckett noted in the same letter that he might consider a collaborative work with his cousin, the musician John Beckett (ibid).

Having submitted the play, it was then the responsibility of Donald McWhinnie to realise it in sound. McWhinnie who was born in 1920, had served for six years in the Royal Air Force after Cambridge and joined the BBC when demobilised. He started his career there in the European Division as a scriptwriter and producer on documentary features before transferring to the Drama (Sound) Department in 1949. In 1951 he was appointed as Script Editor and in May 1953 became the Assistant Head of Drama (Sound) (Andrews, 1954: 248).

As has been previously noted, Val Gielgud had been running the Drama department since the early 1930s. After twenty or more years he decided

to look for some assistance, some support in his job, and, more particularly, for someone who might take on some of his administrative duties 'but who would always act in my name' (Gielgud, 1953b). Although this job came to nothing, the idea of an Assistant Head as opposed to a personal assistant was certainly under consideration in early 1953. The memorandum of 3rd February 1953 afforded Gielgud the opportunity to write the job - or rather, person - specification. Whilst acknowledging that it should be a younger man (he constantly refers to 'he' throughout the note) who takes on the role, and this person should be trained to take over the department 'when the time comes' (Gielgud, 1953b), he was also clear he did not want someone who would want to be in the studio much – at least Gielgud himself would be discouraging such activities.

The person he appointed, Donald McWhinnie did not fit the person specification entirely. Indeed he was younger, by twenty years but turned out to be very interested in the studio and in the developments that Gielgud was getting quite nervous about. In fact the relationship between Gielgud and McWhinnie can only really be guessed at and as such is of little value as evidence here. The passages about the refusal to request a radio version of *En Attendant Godot* (above) suggest that in the early days McWhinnie was very much the junior member, but over the next few years his credentials both in terms of selecting suitable and new plays and producing them, whilst continuing as Assistant Head of Drama (Sound), is some testament to the value of the role he played in British radio drama. Gielgud mentions him once in his history of British radio drama, referring to the series of plays *Between Two Worlds*. Gielgud's book, *British Radio*

Drama 1922-1956, was published in 1957 and it might have been expected that some commentary about the post if not the man would be made (Gielgud, 1957a: 187).

McWhinnie's appointment was important and is, according to Whitehead 'widely regarded as responsible for the blossoming of avant-garde drama on radio' (Whitehead, 1989: 32). It did not take him too long to start to look for experimental methods of generating more creative output from writers. In a memorandum to Gielgud, dated 11th December 1953, with the subject Experimental Fund in capital letters, McWhinnie suggested that they 'contract' a writer for a few months to work within the production system of Drama (Sound). That writer would supply a couple of adaptations and 'initiate' ideas of his, or perhaps even her own for 'creative radio writing' (McWhinnie, 1953). McWhinnie was clearly aware that the writing was key and at the start of the whole process of radio drama production. The search for 'creative radio writing' set the scene for the development of radio drama at a time when technology created great opportunities for sound quality and manipulation. It was also a time when television and the changing social outlook meant the radio had to be able to offer more, perhaps not to maintain its immediate post-war audience share, but to maintain the standards as well as offering opportunities previously unavailable to writers, producers and actors. The avant-garde was also in vogue on the continent. The Prix Italia which rewarded productions and pushed the boundaries of style, production and technique, evidently excited the new Assistant Head of Drama (Sound).

The concern about the quality of scripts extended to the management of them. When Charles Lefeaux took on the, albeit temporary, role of liaison between Drama (Sound) and the Third Programme, Barbara Bray was employed by the BBC as Script Editor. The system for getting plays to production at the time of Bray's arrival was rather ramshackle, 'if somebody came [and] said they wanted a Saturday Night Theatre, you'd open the cupboard and brooms and scripts and cobwebs would fall out and you'd say "Would this do?"' (Bray, 2002). Another system was that of giving preferential treatment to material coming in from agents, often after a luncheon given by Gielgud 'and everybody else got treated by, and rejected by, an iniquitous office that was called PCS' (Bray, 2002).

Bray changed the system and had every play that was submitted sent to her and then she gave it to one of the 'six or seven readers' who would return it with notes 'and if it was obviously something that would suit one of our directors [sic] we would send it to them' (Bray, 2002). She also made sure that the system was fair for all playwrights, the unknown as well as the known. This paid off with the discovery of such writers as Rhys Adrian and James Saunders, who went on to create good drama on radio and elsewhere. Sometimes these submissions came without a name or an address as in the case of Saunders' *Dog Accident*, a play that was 'very sort of imitative of Beckett' (Bray, 2002). Both Bray and McWhinnie liked the play but 'it took ages and ages to trace the blighter, but once we got him it was alright' (ibid).

Having made a point about the writers, the following May (1954) McWhinnie laid out some concerns about producers. The low number of producers in Drama (Sound) had been a problem for many years, and one that Gielgud had also written about. In a particularly busy set of memoranda between Gielgud, John Morris, the Head of the Third Programme and Lindsay Wellington, the Director of Sound Broadcasting, Gielgud pointed out that with nearly the same number of production staff as Features yet a far greater output to fulfil, Drama (Sound) suffered from a lack of equity in the system. The result was that programmes for the Third seemed to be taken up by Features, even if those programmes clearly should have been produced by Drama (Sound). McWhinnie's memorandum of 21 May, to the Controller of Entertainment (Sound), highlighted the problems that production staff had, both in terms of volume of work and in terms of switching quickly from the depth and detail of a play for the Third Programme to something lighter for the Light Programme. It was not surprising that the producers were 'liable to get jaded' and that they might not be able to 'maintain their standards without suffering staleness' (McWhinnie, 1954b).

McWhinnie's interests definitely lay in production. He was a 'great thinker and a great experimenter, by nature' (Briscoe, 2004) and despite Gielgud's suggestion that the Assistant Head should effectively be trained to take over from him when the time came, it did not happen. By the time Gielgud retired, McWhinnie had become freelance, forging a career in film, television and stage and the Head of Drama (Sound) passed to Martin Esslin. But all that was in the future, at the end of the decade and beyond.

As the 1950s moved into its second half, the push for efficiency, the competition from television, the improvements in technology and, in the Drama (Sound) department, the high profile of experimentation coupled with a need by that department to regain ground lost to Features, meant that McWhinnie and other like-minded producers were able to work on more creative productions.

In November 1956 McWhinnie travelled to Paris, to look at various plays, visit the French broadcaster RTF and to meet Samuel Beckett. *All That Fall* had been submitted and accepted, and McWhinnie wanted to meet the author to discuss the work, reporting that he had 'had several delightfully interminable meetings with Samuel Beckett' (McWhinnie, 1956b). He also reported how keen Beckett was about radio as a medium to write for, how much he enjoyed listening to the radio and how he was planning his next piece. Beckett was pleased to meet McWhinnie and wrote to John Morris on 16 November recounting how McWhinnie's 'ideas about the sound agreed with mine and I am sure that he will do a very good job' (Beckett, 1956b). Beckett and McWhinnie collaborated on a number of plays and became friends. Edna O'Brien writing about Beckett, tells of talking to the playwright about dying and how Beckett told her that he had received a telephone call from Donald McWhinnie who was on his deathbed, 'hoping for a word of wisdom. "What did you tell him?" "Not much," was the hapless reply' (O'Brien, 2006).

The Art of Sound

The concept of aural creativity was not only an invention of Drama (Sound). As has been noted in the previous chapter, the idea of experimentation was not new, appearing on an almost regular cycle as a driver for change. However, during the post-war period, experimentation and creativity came primarily from two quarters, Features and Light Entertainment. Features, originally a section of Drama (Sound) that became independent in the 1940s, was, at the time, essentially a collection of poets and writers, many included in the Department but working on a freelance basis:

> The BBC Features Department numbers among its staff some of the leading poets of our time, working side by side with journalists, scientists, novelists and dramatists. Outside the staff of the department, there is an ever-widening circle of professional writers and experts in many fields, who have been drawn into broadcasting as a means of expression by the exciting possibilities made available. (Gilliam, 1950: 10)

Barbara Bray noted that the Head of Features, Laurence Gilliam, was considerably different to Gielgud, being 'very open-minded and adventurous'. She thought him a good 'captain' of the ship, given that he 'had a sort of wagon-load of monkeys there in the Features Department' (Bray, 2002).

Significant in this wagon, but by no means the only key people, were Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas. MacNeice's *Dark Tower*, 'one of the most celebrated of all radio plays' (Coulton, 1980: 79), and according to McWhinnie, 'a textbook of radio technique' (Rodger, 1982: 78) was first broadcast on 21 January 1946. Described by the author as a 'parable play' (MacNeice, 1947), this significant production used sound and music, with the score by Benjamin Britten, as well as words. It was produced under Drama (Sound) by MacNeice, and sits on the cusp between the classical inspired drama of Gielgud and the more creative or adventurous plays that were to come. Not only did it prove popular, it received accolades from C Day Lewis, WR Rodgers and fellow BBC playwright Henry Reed (Coulton, 1980: 82), as well as some praise from a solicitor from Belfast, although MacNeice was more interested in the consignment that arrived with the note: 'first of all, thank you very much for procuring those more than welcome five bottles' (MacNeice, 1946).

Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, a "Play for Voices" was first broadcast in 1954. Much has been written about this play, but of significance here are the production values, the naturalised use of sounds, the use of acoustics to enhance the spatial awareness and the lack of dramatic structure, which, as Rattigan points out is not necessarily required 'where conflict and resolution are carried out within the unities of time, place and action' (Rattigan, 2002: 86).

The use of sound in all its forms was not restricted to serious or high-brow works. *The Goon Show* (1951–1960) made as much use as was possible

of sound effects, many as spot effects but with an increasing number as pre-recorded or manipulated sounds. Harry Secombe in Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Spike Milligan gave a description of the effects as used in *Crazy People* (1951), the forerunner to *The Goon Show*:

> There was always a "spot-effects" man behind a screen with a miniature door with a knocker on it, half coconut shells for horses' hooves, a swanee whistle, a rattle as used by football fans, and anything else that Spike or Mike [Bentine] had decreed. (Carpenter, 2003: 119-120)

Pre-recorded effects were only available on discs at this time, as the BBC was still developing the tape recorder with UK manufacturers. For many programmes, particularly some plays, and certainly for *Crazy People* (1951) as well as subsequently, *The Goon Show*, effects had to be created and specially recorded on to discs. These were played in the control cubicle attached to the studio, and were operated by a studio manager or by one of his staff. Sometimes a bank of turntables was needed, the exact place on the disk marked by Chinagraph pencil:

> Spike would perhaps want the sound of Big Ben mixed with a chicken cackling so the engineer would need two turntables going at the same time. Sometimes four or five machines would all be going together with the poor fellow going berserk to keep up with all the effects. (Carpenter, 2003: 119-120)

Experiments with sound were also taking place on the continent, particularly at Radiodiffusion-Television Francaise in France, where the broadcaster had set up the Club d'Essai and Pierre Schaeffer and others manipulated sound. McWhinnie thought this probably 'the most exciting part' of his trip to Paris in 1956 and 'could not fail to prove stimulating to an enthusiast for the medium' (McWhinnie, 1956b). Comparing the progress of radio drama between the two broadcasters, whilst the French may have been ahead with the use of technology, French producers agreed that they lagged behind the BBC in terms of writing and script editing. Even though McWhinnie felt that the 'handling of sound' was excellent and far in advance of the BBC, he noted that 'their expertise is often lavished indiscriminately and to the point of absurdity on trivial subjects' (McWhinnie, 1956b). Nevertheless McWhinnie appeared to be stimulated by what he saw and heard. Barbara Bray, who accompanied him on the trip, said that there were examples of 'artificial sounds, non-natural sounds, made from musical sounds [and] natural sounds, and unnatural sounds' manipulated 'by filtering and prolonging'. She also noted that the French studio equipment was 'primitive' and included 'an ancient old piano that they tied things to and chucked things in' (Bray, 2002).

McWhinnie suggested ways in which the BBC might develop its own version of such a studio but tempered his comments, perhaps to curb his own enthusiasm or possibly aware of Val Gielgud's feelings about creativity and experimentalism: 'I would not for a moment suggest a

similar research set-up here, or even an equal pre-occupation with 'noises'' (McWhinnie, 1956b). He did, however, go on to suggest,

> Obtaining facilities for private experiment and for making recordings which may never be broadcast…. I should say that the basic essentials would be a room containing two or three tape reproduction machines, turntables for slow speed or 78s, a tape recorder, facilities for echo, filters, etc and a small studio with two or three microphone points, an old piano, various percussive instruments and space for two or three actors. (McWhinnie, 1956b)

Considering that he did not sanction creating a replica of the Club d'Essai, this was quite a list and a potential demand on rooms and resources. Realising this, he attempted to appease his Head of Department by stating how aware he was of 'the dangers of experimentation' but was also aware that 'we have become a good deal too conservative in our own sound techniques' (McWhinnie, 1956b).

McWhinnie was not the only one discussing the possibility of developing a special resource within the BBC to create experimental sounds. MRG Garrard, the Organiser of Studio Operations, submitted a report to the Head of Central Programme Operations, RVA George at a similar time to McWhinnie's memorandum to Gielgud. Garrard's report gave an historical outline of musique concrète, the use of tape recorders and electronic music, citing, in addition to Schaeffer, the works of Maurice Jarre, John Cage and Werner Mayer-Eppler. After a brief overview of provision in

radio studios on the Continent he proposed the creation of a specialist unit comprising one recording engineer and three tape editors; the three editors would be 'devisors of special effects' as well. He also presented a wish list of premises and equipment which these staff would require. When George received the report he was quite supportive and invited Garrard to discuss the objectives in more detail. Garrard had touched on the subject of a word to describe this sound and suggested that the BBC did not use the terms musique concrète or electronic music. Although he did not directly state his preference as such, it is clear that he found the term Radiophonic Music far more appropriate. He tied the use of this term with the ambition for the BBC to do something different, to create a different section in the area of sound. Aware that there was a demand for sounds from non-music producers, particularly referring to Features, he said that although Radiophonic Music was 'in a primitive and elementary form' here was an opportunity to 'develop a facet of the technique that has been overlooked by the workers on the Continent' (Garrard, 1956). George, however, was not that impressed by the term: 'The title you have chosen would in these circumstances be inappropriate' (George, 1956a).

George moved quickly on receiving the report. Four days after he received it from Garrard, he sent a memorandum to the Superintendent Engineer, Recording and the Senior Superintendent Engineer, Sound Broadcasting, inviting them to join a committee that brought Engineering and Studio Operations together. The objective was to 'consider what steps the BBC should take in order to keep pace with developments elsewhere in the field of electronic sound effects, musique concrète, etc' (George, 1956b).

George proposed that, at this stage, they would bring in specialists from engineering as well as from the programme supply departments when it was appropriate. Standing, the Controller of Entertainment (Sound) had sent George a copy of McWhinnie's report of his trip to Paris. George responded, thanking Standing and explained about the proposed Committee and that they would be inviting Features, Drama and Variety to take part (George, 1956c).

The newly set up committee met for the first time at 11 o'clock on Friday 14 December 1956. Present were EWS Porter, George's deputy, and four others representing the two Engineering sections, TH Eckersley, the Organiser of the Permanent Library, and MRG Garrard. The objectives of the Committee were twofold: to set up a workshop for the creation of effects and sounds and to 'direct and develop' the endeavours of the workshop (BBC, 1956b). The meeting agreed the 'project' would be simply '"supporting sound for programmes"', the rooms and the technical specifications were listed and George had obviously had his way regarding terminology, as the committee agreed that the 'most descriptive name' for their work was the Electrophonic Effects Committee (BBC, 1956b).

December 1956 for McWhinnie was taken up with preparing and rehearsing Beckett's play. Desmond Briscoe recalled that 'Donald got this script from Beckett and he said "You'd better take this away and read it". Briscoe had gone away for the weekend to see his parents and was reading the script on the Sunday morning when his Mother went into to his room, quite concerned 'and said "Are you alright?"'. I was absolutely

bowled over by it. It just seemed so Beckett, the way it was written, the way his sound directions were written seemed absolutely right for the treatment (Briscoe, 2002).

Having met Beckett and discussed the production, McWhinnie would have been mindful of the playwright's concerns, particularly regarding the use of sound. Beckett had written in September that 'it calls for a rather special sort of bruitage perhaps not clear from the text' (Beckett, 1956c) though the producer tested the playwright right at the start of the production. The play opens with a series of farm animal noises, a device to set the landscape and to bring a certain rhythm to the introduction. McWhinnie wrote to Beckett 'at the moment experimenting furiously with the various sound complications … I feel that all the animal noises must be done by humans' (McWhinnie, 1956c); Beckett responded saying that he did not see why the noises should be by 'mere humans' and that he was generally 'perplexed' by this and perhaps McWhinnie could explain (Beckett, 1956d). McWhinnie explained that whilst there were realistic recordings available it was 'almost impossible to obtain the right sort of timing and balance with the realistic effects' (McWhinnie, 1957a). In *The Art of Radio* (1959: 133) McWhinnie explained in detail his reasoning behind the use of voices for the farmyard animals and the need to control the 'rhythmic pattern'. According to Barbara Bray, Beckett never really liked the animal noises (Bray, 2002), 'it was Donald's [McWhinnie] particular idea of doing that' but she too pointed out that the pace and the pitch were important, treating the play as a piece of music with the producer taking the role of the conductor. The problem here lay not with

any difference between producer and author but, potentially, with unsympathetic technical staff:

> And there were some sound engineers who hadn't got any ear whatsoever who would just wrench at the knobs and you have in your mind's ear how long a fade should be, and how long a cross fade should be and they would just pull the knobs on until you could just go raving mad. (Bray, 2002)

McWhinnie (1959), Cleveland (1973), Worth (1981) and others make it clear that this production of *All That Fall* brought together the new recording and editing techniques of the day and used them to produce a very particular piece of radio drama, 'tailoring each sound to the dramatic situation' (Cleveland, 1973) and, as with music, making great use of silence and rhythm, 'You suddenly realised that this man [Beckett] when he said silence meant one thing, when he said pause meant another thing and so on' (Briscoe, 2002). Alongside this use of silence, time or tempo became important, again as in musical composition, defining what Desmond Briscoe termed 'new naturalism'

> Since the aural texture recognized time as the primary dimension of radio drama (and often introduced a highly self-conscious awareness of time), and since it emphasized silence as a context in which a special range of intimately heard sounds (both natural and mechanically manipulated) unavailable in this manner to the stage

could be introduced, the total effect could be characterized as a "new naturalism". (Cleveland, 1973: 48)

Both Worth (1981: 199) and Esslin (1980: 84) pick up on this use of natural sounds. Here McWhinnie took his cue from Beckett's script. He took the natural sounds and used them in some cases juxtaposed to the strange, at times fragmented speech of the characters, in other cases they were manipulated; in both situations they created tensions that impacted not only on the characters but also on the audience. Another major innovation in consideration of production techniques was that of silence. Again, McWhinnie discussed this in detail in *The Art of Radio*, but *All That Fall* predates that publication by 2 years. Beckett's demands in the script were not just confined to the actions and the 'bruitage'; he differentiated between silence and pause, a discovery for Briscoe that was 'an astonishing experience' (Briscoe, 2002).

Silence had grown to become an important tool in the production of radio programmes, particularly from Features and Drama. Rodger (1982: 108) points out that the introduction of the tape recorder allowed writers and producers the opportunity to study the spoken word and to mimic speech patterns on the page and at the microphone. An essential part of speech are the gaps and it is these pauses that can often add dramatic appeal to a production.

The production process commenced with McWhinnie and Briscoe developing the sound effects and the methods of playing them during the

production. The play was not post-produced and at the time of recording, the effects, under Briscoe, were quite complex for the period. Briscoe commented that he had been described as looking as though he were 'playing Liszt on the mixing desk' (Briscoe, 2002). Those effects that were on disk were 'wound up' by the operator, pushing the turntable around with a finger. The realisation of the sounds came from the minds of McWhinnie and Briscoe; Beckett's knowledge of radio production was not extensive, and so the materialistion of the sounds, from manipulated, non-recognisable clicks to hoof beats for example, was the decision of the Producer and the Studio Manager.

All That Fall was recorded on the 2 January 1957 and broadcast on the thirteenth of that month. In a memorandum after the recording, McWhinnie commented on the technical difficulty of the production, stating that the production's needs were so different to the usual that he 'had to create a style in all the effects which would be suitable for this extremely individual play' (McWhinnie, 1957b). In the same memorandum he also paid tribute to the technical staff who had supported this recording, Desmond Briscoe ('absolutely invaluable'), Norman Baines ('timing and mixing were first-rate') and Angela Palin (McWhinnie, 1957b). Gielgud sent his 'warmest congratulations' to McWhinnie the day after the broadcast saying that he appreciated the difficulties in terms of production, and how well he had done. His effusive praise continued:

> Your all over grasp of the problems involved, your exceptional
> casting, your ingenious use of effects, and your extreme sensitivity

of approach, combined to do a fascinating script every sort of justice. Well done. (Gielgud, V. 1957b)

This was praise indeed from the Head of Drama (Sound) who 'was never an experimenter' though he appeared to back the ideas even if he was 'gravely suspicious' (Briscoe, 2002).

That the end result was a triumph is clear. The debating point is whose triumph? As a play *All That Fall* is not as well known a part of Beckett's oeuvre as is *Waiting for Godot*, nor yet in terms of his radio plays, as well known as *Krapps Last Tape* (1958) or *Embers* (1959). However, it did mark two departures for the playwright; this was his first play in English and his first play for radio. In many respects, Beckett writing for radio should not have been as much of a great move as his letters (above) suggest. His stage productions to that point had been fairly stark and it can be argued that he sought to make the words and the silence the important part of the play. What was being said at times paled into insignificance when compared to how it was being said; the examination of the character coming through the delivery as much, if not more than, the words themselves. Such discussions are ably dealt with in other texts, for example: Cleveland, 1973, Cronin, 1996, and Knowlson, 1996.

Radiophonics

Despite his words of congratulations to McWhinnie, Gielgud was concerned about the move by Central Programme Operations to develop a specialist unit that would provide electrophonic effects. Following the first meeting of the Electrophonic Effects Committee in December, RVA George sent a memorandum to the Heads of Drama, Features and Variety explaining that he would be seeking approval to spend in the region of £5000 to set up the proposed 'laboratory' and asked whether the Heads would lend their support to this venture and whether they would like to represent their department in future discussions (George, 1957a). Gielgud's response was that he was 'of course in principle entirely in favour' of such a development but he immediately tempered this with a concern about such an expenditure at a time of impending economy. It is interesting to note that in this memorandum, dated 8 January 1957, Gielgud refers to a conversation he has already had with the Head of Variety, Pat Hillyard, stating that he, Gielgud, agreed with Hillyard's view. Hillyard did not send his response until three days later and whilst he did indeed make a similar point about spending money at that particular time, he also covered both sides by naming his representative should the laboratory proceed (Hillyard, 1957). Gielgud, in his memorandum, said that he had yet to hear from the Head of Features though he did take the opportunity to offer a suggestion of cost-cutting elsewhere to fund such a venture 'by economising on purely negative facilities like Audience Research' (Gielgud, 1957c). Gilliam did not send in his response until the 21 of January. Gilliam's voice was much more enthusiastic than that of his fellow Heads of Departments. He was 'strongly in favour' and wished for it to be put

into action as soon as was possible. He thought that the equipment should be 'stringently controlled', and only certain personnel (qualified producers, interested engineers) should be allowed to use it to keep the 'lunatic fringe' from availing themselves of it (Gilliam, 1957).

While the heads of the supply departments debated the financial worth of this venture, the Engineering section was already seeking redundant equipment that could be brought into the Electrophonic Effects Unit. In particular they were looking for disk recording and playback equipment, oscillators, microphones and amplifiers etc (Winget, 1957a). This was a list not dissimilar to that suggested by McWhinnie in his report following his trip to Paris (McWhinnie, 1956b) although the absence of tape recorders from the engineers' wish list reflects the comparative newness of this equipment, and therefore it was highly unlikely that there would be any redundant ones. The Equipment Department had little to offer at the time but included some Type C recorders, a design that had been introduced in 1939, nearly twenty years previous (Pawley, 1972: 274); the Superintendent Engineer, Recordings Department, had also sourced some spare equipment (Winget, 1957b). If the equipment could not be sourced from within the BBC the choices were either to source it elsewhere or make it from existing parts. It was estimated that it was going to cost between £1,000 and £2,000.

Following fairly quickly after *All That Fall* was Douglas Cleverdon's production of *Opium* (1957). *Opium* was quite a different piece of work, 'built around' musique concrète and 'most of the speech involved special

close working techniques, filters, and special echo effects' (Garrard, 1957b). Cleverdon, who worked in Features, took a piece that Andre Almuro had previously made for the French broadcaster, RTF. Cleverdon replaced the dialogue with an English translation with English-speaking actors (Neibur, 2010: 28). The lines were recorded at the Corporation's London Piccadilly Studio 2 and went so well that Cleverdon was moved to write a brief thank you memorandum to Garrard and stated how impressed Almuro had been with the 'whole outfit' (Cleverdon, 1957a). Indeed, the BBC had been able to supply the equipment needs demanded by Almuro and thus provide all the effects that he required; the tapes of the recordings went with Almuro back to Paris to be integrated into his composition (Garrard, 1957c). The proposed broadcast dates were the 18 and 21 March, 1957, and Garrard felt that he should warn the Engineer in Charge, London, that there would be distortion and not to worry about it, 'I am therefore writing to inform you, and other centres, to expect abnormal quality during this period, owing to the introduction of deliberate distortions of the frequency and amplitude characteristics' (Garrard, 1957b).

Cleverdon, writing in the *Radio Times*, described *Opium* as an 'essay in experimental radio' (Cleverdon, 1957c). Niebur points out that if *The Sunday Times* critic was taken as a good example, the audience was not quite ready for this distortion of voices other than in *The Goon Show*, and that maybe Cleverdon should have provided 'a bit more guidance' (Niebur, 2010: 28). This is a perennial problem when introducing something and/or taking one concept - in this case an effect - from one recognised

context and making use of it in another. The use of radiophonic effects and distortions was new and needed to be placed in context, possibly with considerable help. There is another way however of regarding, this and that is to consider the originality of the piece. Its use of effects and distortions was making the audience think, challenging them, and as such, appealing to the perceived intellectual apex of Haley's cultural pyramid who was the BBC Third Programme listener.

The next meeting of the Radiophonic Effects Committee was held on March 6 1957 (BBC, 1957b). The Committee had undergone a name change even though the term 'electrophonic' had been accepted at the first meeting the previous December. The Organiser of Studio Operations, MRG Garrard had been conducting some research and found that "electrophonic" was a recognised term in the science of hearing, having first been used in the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* in 1937, and Garrard wondered if they would 'be wise to continue using it' (Garrard, 1957a). The minutes of the March 1957 meeting do not record the change of the name, it just occurs in the title of the Committee and in relation to sounds being discussed.

Although both Gielgud and Hillyard had expressed their concerns about the proposed development of the unit, their departments were represented for Drama by McWhinnie and for Variety by Dixon, in addition to Douglas Cleverdon representing Features, and GRS Dixon representing Schools Broadcasting. The first item dealt with the differentiation between the two types of sound that the Unit would be dealing with. The producers,

and in some cases even the studio managers, were not necessarily interested in the origination of a sound, rather they wanted a particular sound to add to a particular image, to enhance or emphasise, to complement or contradict. How it was to be described was secondary. However, this differentiation was necessary for a number of reasons, particularly in terms of who owned the sounds and who was responsible for them. The meeting settled on a definition that separated the two kinds of sound by whether each one could be represented by conventional musical notation or not:

> a) Those produced on instruments played by musicians which may include electronic devices, but the music of which can be expressed in existing forms of musical notation.
>
> b) Sounds, produced by technical methods, embracing the techniques already developed in other countries, e.g. electronic music derived from oscillators and for which the composer cannot use existing forms of musical notation, and musique concrète based on natural sounds. (BBC, 1957c)

Having agreed the definitions, it was then clearly easier to assign responsibility, and this led to the first type of sound being under the Music Division and the second under Entertainment. In addition to this, if producers wished to use a composer to 'supply unusual music effects' then they would have to go through the Music Division whereas those sounds that did not call for a composer would be the responsibility of the 'Radiophonic Effects Unit' (BBC, 1957c).

In July EWS Porter convened a meeting between the BBC and the Performing Rights Society to interrogate these definitions, to explain to the PRS the different methods now available for creating music and sounds, and to consider to whom the licence for that sound belonged. The Society questioned who would 'classify' the sounds into their two proposed categories; Central Programme Operations 'avoiding any potential issues in the studio' left that in the hands of the Corporation's Copyright department (BBC, 1957d).

The definition of 'radiophonic effects' as agreed earlier in the year was amended in October 1957. Following the July meeting, it was considered that the Performing Rights Society definitions 'were not sufficiently precise and were also misleading' (Eckersley, 1957). Eckersley's proposals were:

a. Sounds produced on instruments played by musicians which may include electronic devices but the music of which can be expressed in existing forms of musical notation.

b. Sounds derived from electronic generators and other devices for which an accurate form of notation is possible and which can be produced by other persons to represent faithfully the intentions of the composer.

c. Sounds produced by any technical device utilising electronic generators and/or natural sounds for which <u>no</u> accurate form of notation is possible and which <u>cannot</u> be produced by other persons to represent faithfully the intentions of the composer.
(Eckersley, 1957).

These amendments were a response to the rapid development in a notation system for electronic sounds that allowed for Eckersley's second group to be faithfully represented by other performers. The third category of sounds are unique in their creation. MT Chandler, the Head of Copyright, had no objection to these definitions though she felt that the Performing Rights Society would not licence sounds produced under the third definition (Chandler, 1957). However, these definitions were agreed by the Society in December 1957 (anon, 1957a).

The 6 March meeting also discussed the essentials of accommodation, equipment and staffing. The Head of Central Programme Operations had already alerted the Controller of Entertainment (Sound), MFC Standing, to the issues of rooms and the funding of equipment, making the plea that the BBC was 'lagging far behind' its fellow broadcasters and that this situation would persist until the right 'technical facilities' were available to 'enable and encourage producers to exploit this new medium' (George, 1957b). During the meeting, the Assistant Head of Central Programme Operations (Studios), EWS Porter, reported that the technical requirements of accommodation were two large rooms, and that these should be near existing studios. The Maida Vale facility had appropriate space but the rooms were not available. The criteria for the rooms also included, 'little interference with other people, peaceful surroundings, and it should not be too easily accessible to keep away people not connected with the work' (BBC, 1957c).

The equipment needs were as per the list drawn up at the previous meeting; George, in his memorandum to Standing, had said that the sum included in the budget, £2000, would purchase the 'minimum required' of necessary equipment, in addition to that gleaned from redundant plant (George, 1957b). On the subject of staffing, it was proposed that the Radiophonic Effects Unit would be initially staffed by studio managers and engineers seconded from their respective sections. It was anticipated that there would be only three or four people. The remaining business of the meeting dealt with a list of Radiophonic music in the BBC libraries, Cleverdon's proposed monthly playback sessions, and the decision that until the Unit had been formed, 'all requests for Radiophonic Effects' were to be made through the office of the Assistant Head of Studio Operations. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed to invite the Head of Music Production, Television, to join the committee, thus ending Sound's exclusive involvement in Radiophonic Effects (BBC, 1957c).

It was clear that despite the definitions and labels, plus the supposed 'home' of various sounds, interest in music, concrète, electronic or conventional, was not restricted to music programmes. A lot of this interest came from producers, and leading these were McWhinnie from Drama and Cleverdon from Features. Cleverdon wrote to EWS Porter requesting a monthly 'playback' of experimental music for an interested audience (Cleverdon, 1957b; Briscoe & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 28). These playbacks were fairly normal internal-only affairs that allowed BBC staff to listen to what other broadcasters were doing, in order to assess the worth of a production or, as in this instance, glean the opportunity to learn and

develop their knowledge and interest in something new and different, no doubt with a view to assimilate innovation into their productions. Cleverdon's memorandum was prompted by the playback he organised of *Nadja Etoilee* (1955), a work by Andre Breton, produced by Almuro with music by Maurice Jarre.

Even amongst those who wished to develop these techniques there were 'factions' (Briscoe, 2002). Groups championing the French or the Germans or the Italians, or even

> the American sort of stuff on disc: [the] great Symphony of The Birds [Jim Fassett, 1955] and things like this, that was done. It was all pretty simple and not very imaginative. And some of the other Continental work - the French work and the Italian work sounded different, but it didn't communicate, it might irritate but it didn't communicate. (Briscoe, 2002)

Films were also making use of electronic sound. The Theremin had been used in Hitchcock's 1945 film *Spellbound* but the first major film to use a soundtrack created electronically was *The Forbidden Planet* of 1956. Created by Louis and Bebe Barron, the music was certainly of interest to some at the BBC. AE Windsor of the BBC Film Unit played a sample of the soundtrack to Garrard and Daphne Oram. They were obviously impressed as Garrard requested a copy of the piece and offered to supply the tape to record it on, if necessary (Garrard, 1957d).

Daphne Oram's place in this history is an important one, yet it is one that brings with it a number of problems. Despite her involvement with the origination of the Radiophonic Workshop and the other work she had been doing at the BBC, her tenure at the Workshop and the Corporation ended fairly soon after it was set up. This makes it difficult to consider her impact, also there is some debate as to the position she held within the Workshop. Both of these have led to a school of thought suggesting that her importance in the story of the Radiophonic Workshop has been overshadowed by others because she was a woman. Hutton (2003) states that Delia Derbyshire, Maddalena Fagandini and Brian Hodgson, all members of the Workshop in the 1960s have all said that Oram was the first Studio Manager for the Workshop and that Briggs does not include her name in his *History of Broadcasting in the UK*, though as had already been established, any reference to the Workshop in Briggs' histories had been at best perfunctory and certainly does not include anything about the genesis of the project.

Niebur (2010: 54-63) paints a fuller and slightly different picture. In December of 1957 the planned staffing complement was two engineers and two Studio Managers, with a concern that fatigue would set in, particularly with the Studio Managers. Niebur records that Oram was in fact the Radiophonic Effects Committee's first choice 'as one of the studio's SMs [Studio Manager]' (ibid: 55). This is justified by her experience in music, in her creation of electronic music and in her technical ability; it does not necessarily suggest that she was the first choice in terms of heading up such a unit, more that she had all the

essential skills in order to carry out much of the anticipated work. There are however two reasons why the other choice for Studio Manager was Desmond Briscoe: his involvement in radio drama, and a concern over the potential for bizarre offerings which might be the fruit born of the Workshop. Briscoe's relationship with Drama (Sound) was well-known. He had worked with McWhinnie on many productions, most notably *All That Fall,* and as Drama (Sound) was to be a major customer of the Workshop it made a lot of sense that he should be included (Niebur, 2010: 56). Briscoe had a strong musical background, had worked with effects for some time and he understood the needs of the creative producers. The seniority of the roles that Oram and Briscoe occupied is not clearly laid out in the available documents.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Radiophonic Committee on the 23 April 1958, held just after the opening of the Workshop facilities at Maida Vale, indicate that despite staffing having been allotted, security of tenure was risky due to shortages of studio managers across the Corporation; it seemed that the only person who could remain 'for some time' was Daphne Oram, 'to preserve continuity' (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958b). Briscoe suggests that this circulation of staff would keep the feared 'lunatic fringe' at bay and that 'management thought that if any one person worked on radiophonic music and sound for more than three months, they would go mad' (Briscoe & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 37).

Whatever the reasons, of the original team, it was Oram whose place seemed the more secure, but there were equally good reasons for both

Oram and Briscoe to be in the Workshop, and the work that they were involved with stands as testament to that. As for the recognition of Oram's position in those very early days, it certainly appears that there was an element of institutionalised sexism (Niebur, 2010; Hutton, 2003), making it difficult for women to work in the Corporation beyond the stereotypical roles of secretary and administrative staff. This was the norm for the period, a time when it was certainly rare for women to rise to positions of authority over men. Superimposed on this is the subsequent rancour that grew up around the publication, in 1983, of the Briscoe and Curtis-Bramwell book, *The BBC Radiophonic Workshop: The First 25 Years*. Niebur considers the BBC, who were the publishers, had been led to a position where they probably 'felt it was better to omit her than to risk her misinterpreting' what was written about her (Niebur, 2010: 73). Oram was apparently granted only a short period of time to make amendments to the manuscript, and she contested a number of points. In an interview with the author in 2004, Briscoe said that the book was not the one that he would have chosen to write; the book was, it seems, to have been a hurried affair, mainly the result of dictating his thoughts to Curtis-Bramwell in the back of a boat followed by a 'hectic' weekend sorting out the draft: 'I'm still very glad I did it, because it's there and it exists; it isn't entirely misleading, but it is a bit cobbled' (Briscoe, 2002).

Despite the undercurrent of dissatisfaction, Oram's place was important; it was her aspiration for the fledgling unit that would clearly not be achieved which led to her departure. As Niebur points out, it was her hope that the

Unit would use the impetus provided by drama to create sounds that would allow her to work on developing pieces of music, as music and not as support for dramatic and comedic purposes (Niebur, 2010: 56). Her aspirations were misplaced, as the unit was clearly going to supply the developing market for sounds in radio and television and there had been no question of a section for producing new music, electronically. On quitting the BBC, Oram went on to pursue what became her life's work, the development of a machine that would play music from colours: Oramics.

Briscoe, who worked with McWhinnie on a number of productions, was born in 1925 and joined the BBC in Manchester at the age of 16 (*The Stage*; *The Guardian*). He was interested in music from the age of nine, particularly in percussion, which involved two hours of regular practice – 'I would say I had very tolerant parents and even more tolerant … neighbours' (Briscoe, 2002). He joined the BBC in Manchester where the Radio Drama department had temporarily moved at the outbreak of the War. Briscoe's role was to assist in sound effects; at that time many were produced during the recording in the studio, alongside the actors, as 'spot effects'. The facilities in Manchester were 'not tremendous' and studio staff became inventive, especially when it came to providing music. Briscoe's background and interest in music allowed him to find pieces of music that could be used, the ability to commission such pieces during this period being not very easy. The production of plays at that time was also hampered by the fact that some of the staff had opted to remain in London, as had most of the actors.

Despite his interest in sounds, effects and music, he felt that experimenting was never done for its own sake:

> It was because of a need of a production. It could be quite simple, or it could … be the result of happy accidents … playing 78rpm discs and just picking out one sound, and you know, dropping the needle. You had all sorts of extraordinary things happen as well. You couldn't record them but you could try and repeat them. (Briscoe, 2002)

Briscoe's early experiences with recording tape were with the Blattnerphone. The Blattnerphone and the similar Marconi-Stille machines were used to record radio programmes at the BBC that required a repeat broadcast. Marconi-Stille steel band recorders were built specifically for the BBC, had a full reel weighing 25kg (55lbs) and were described as 'fairly dangerous with a risk of deep cuts' (Morton, n.d.). The Blattnerphone:

> used 6mm steel tape to record a very basic audio signal - good enough for voice but not for music. Spools were large and heavy, editing was done by soldering the tape, and the high speed at which the machine ran (5 ft per second) meant it was hazardous for the operator - a break in the tape could result in razor-edged steel flying around the studio. (BBC, n.d.2)

The quality of the recording was 'remarkably good' (Briscoe, 2002), and if the tape broke there was a little welding machine to put it back together. At that time the advantage of the tape over the disk was that a complete programme of an hour and a half could be played on one tape, whereas the large 15-inch disks held only 15 minutes of recording and so a number of disks would be required for the same programme. Recordings were made of drama productions when a second, and perhaps even a third broadcast of the play would be required within a few weeks; this was often the case for many of the major productions, and it might be difficult to get the actors and production team together for the re-runs.

Generally, recordings were made on disc, although as Briscoe points out, everything had to be recorded live and continuous; there was no opportunity to stop the recording, go back a page or two on the script and re-start from there:

> Occasionally, in full length plays if something had gone really wrong, you'd do a retake, and that meant that the recording engineer who put the programme out had to do a change over to another disc and then not necessarily back to the original disc. (Briscoe, 2002)

As for manipulating sound, the techniques were basic. There was not much of a call for such manipulation except where special and specific atmospheres were required, for scenes that were not in reality, or for dreams. Prior to the introduction of the tape recorder, effects usually meant 'pushing the disc round with your fingers' (Briscoe, 2004). Other

than that there was a constant desire to find new and interesting ways of making sounds in spot effects:

> You could make strange noises with all sorts of things, whether it's a wet balloon … if it did the right thing, if you discovered something and then a play came up with something that was necessary, well then it was used, and nobody thought particularly about it, it was just another sound effect. (Briscoe, 2002)

In the spring and summer of 1957, Garrard appeared to gather around him a number of documents discussing various aspects of electronic music. TA (Alec) Nisbett (who went on to write *The Technique of the Sound Studio* in the early 1960s, a standard text that remains in print today) produced a paper entitled *The Notation of Electronic Music and Effects*. It had already been recognised that writing down electronic music that talked in terms of frequency, tone and volume would require a different method to that used in conventional musical notation; the challenge of the time was to produce something that would 'serve as a bridge between musical and technical terminologies' (Nisbett, 1957). Nisbett's paper (in the form of a lengthy memorandum) outlined the issues that needed to be considered, and appeared to be a starting point for a search for the suitable answer: 'In summary, what I am doing at the moment on the question of notation is to examine systems of notation currently in use' (Nisbett, 1957).

He will also have been listing and evaluating works that might be of use to the work of the Radiophonic Effects Unit. Amongst the papers that Garrard will have looked at were an article from *The Times* about the Trautonium (an electronic instrument that had originated in the 1920s but was still heard in concert), an article on the notation of electronic music from *Electronica,* and an extract from *Elektronische Musik* called The Production of Sound Effects in Broadcast Plays.

The experimenting with equipment began to take on a more official tone, although occasionally requests for technical advancement were met with a suggestion for easier options. A request from Garrard for a Ferrograph tape recorder to be altered to allow sound to be played backwards (Garrard, 1957e) received the reply that whilst it could be done with the addition of a new head and some other alterations, which would take time, 'the quickest way … would be to copy off your half track "noise" on to a standard centre track'; playback would be a case of simply reversing the tape' (Superintendent Engineer Recording, 1957).

The BBC had been very slow to take to tape. A scheme for major investment in tape recording equipment had been proposed in 1951 and was eventually approved by the close of 1952 at an estimated cost of £225,000 yet not completed until 1955 (Pawley, 1972: 392). Semi-professional tape recorders had first appeared as rehearsal recorders in Drama, but were not as useful as at first thought, as taking the time to rehearse and then retain the cast, to listen and then rehearse again, extended the cost of actors. Briscoe and his contemporaries set about

finding out what could be done with these machines, which initially was only very simple actions such as turning the spools by hand, slower or faster than the machine turned them. Then the BBC set up one or two studios with recording studios next door so that, with the addition of an 'obliging recording engineer … all of a sudden there's all sorts of possibilities' (Briscoe, 2002). Using the studios at night, they learned a lot about what could and could not be done with the machines 'but didn't produce works of art' (ibid). Nonetheless once they were in the studios experimentation could really start.

Clearly there was work to be done in order to train staff in the available techniques and to provide them with the tools, to allow them to consider new, exciting and experimental approaches. In early April 1957, Garrard drew up plans for a two-day course on radiophonic effects, a course that was a mixture of lectures, demonstrations and practical exercises. The lectures were to 'provide the background to radiophonic effects as developed on the Continent & in U.S.A.', to be introduced to the specialist equipment and to listen to sample recordings: 'In the afternoon of the first day a simple exercise would be started involving the primitive methods at our disposal, and this would then be completed during the second afternoon' (Garrard, 1957f). The first course was set for the 21 and 22 May, and the 'guinea pigs' (ibid) were members of the Studio Managers, Drama, section. Garrard invited Desmond Briscoe to make 'the "sound bricks" for the production exercise'; he also invited the Senior Studio Manager from Features to attend with the view that this person would lead the next two-day course (Garrard, 1957g). Papers presented

included one by Dr Alfredo Lietti, of the Italian broadcaster RAI, entitled *Technical Equipment of the Studio of Musical Phonology of Radio Milan* and an extract from *Musique Concrète: Technical Apparatus* by Jacques Poullin.

The development of the Radiophonic Unit at this time was comparatively quick; in addition to the contribution to radio drama, their services were being called upon elsewhere. In consequence of this, they needed a base to work from. The Ways and Means sub-committee of the Radiophonic Effects Committee met on Wednesday 3 July 1957, following the offer of accommodation at Maida Vale. EWS Porter, the Assistant Head of Studio Operations, felt that it was 'imperative that an estimate for equipment' should be 'considered as a matter of urgency' (Porter, 1957). The rooms offered were situated in a former roller-skating rink that the BBC had taken over in the 1930s 'looking for a quiet area and a building large enough to house a music studio centre' (Briscoe & Curtis-Bramwell, 1983: 9). The agreement, between the Senior Engineer, Sound Broadcasting and RVA George, the Head of Central Programme Operations, had been in favour of the release of rooms 13, 14 and 15, which had previously been occupied by large Blattnerphone steel-tape recorders (Briscoe, 2002). George was appreciative of this as he 'had almost given up hope of finding suitable accommodation'; indeed, he was 'very grateful' (George, 1957c). Work started on the facilities on Monday July 15 (SESB, 1957). It was not until April the following year that the new amenities, which were then referred to as Radiophonic Effects Workshop, became operative (Porter, 1958b).

By the end of 1957, the work of those involved in Radiophonic Effects was growing. The programmes containing radiophonic effects that year were:

Prometheus Bound

All That Fall

The Disagreeable Oyster

Night Thoughts

Opium

The Quinquaphone

The Unexpected Country

Private Dreams & Public Nightmares

Death of Grass

The Metamorphosis

There was still an element of reticence about the number of productions that resulted. In fact 'it was stressed how difficult it is when devising Radiophonic Effects for programmes not to let them become "typed" when the listener would immediately be prejudiced' (BBC, 1957e). Daphne Oram had prepared a list of programmes and other undertakings for this meeting that shows the other activities that they had been engaged in:

Light Music signature tune

Attempt to provide TV News signature tune

Kraken Wakes (Experimental, not broadcast)

The Cocktail

The River Man

The Hungry Spider

The last three only contained minor radiophonic treatment. She also reported that they had been producing material for three courses – the

Radiophonic Effects Course, a Studio Manager's Advanced Course and a Feature's Course (Oram, n.d.)

As the completion of the Maida Vale rooms got nearer, Porter was keen to get the staffing numbers finalised. He asked George for approval to bring three Studio Managers to set up the Radiophonic Effects Unit. The only name he mentions in his memorandum is that of Daphne Oram, the intention being to employ her 'for six months with two other suitable types, to enable her to impart the know-how so far gained' (Porter, 1958a). Even without a base, the business of the Unit was brisk with demand growing all the time, particularly from television. Porter suggested that the start up should include Oram, 'AN. Other and the Recording Engineer' (ibid) and at the end of the three months another Studio Manager would be brought in. He also advised that if the activities of the Unit continued to increase, he would have to consider the expansion of the number of personnel.

Once the Unit was in place, two press visits were made to the Workshop on 22 May 1958 (Hardwick, 1958). *The Times* the following day printed a small piece, noting that 'A "workshop" for producing synthetic sounds, partly by electronic oscillators and partly by trickery with conventional sounds recorded on tape' had been set up and that it was to 'provide an imaginative background to drama productions which cannot be obtained from ordinary music or from the stock-in-trade of sound effects' (*The Times*, 1958). In a subsequent memorandum, this time to all the Senior

Studio Managers, Porter stated that the term Radiophonic Workshop 'now includes both 'workshop' and studio at Maida Vale' (Porter, 1958c).

This chapter has covered the period from 1956 to 1958, the period when the strands of technology and drama production came together, stimulating the need for a specialist unit. This was the period when television overtook radio, becoming the major form of mass communication in the UK, yet sound broadcasting was still a very important force. It was important but it also had to stand its ground by improving technically and creatively. The three home services were considering their listening figures and the need to retain their share of the audience, whilst the production areas were all looking to cut costs. This was the time when Sir Ian Jacob's economies started to take effect.

Within this context, apparently disparate members of the Corporation were pursuing their own interests, which lay in music, electronics and dramatic production. Daphne Oram's work in both music and electronics is unusual at this time, given the general difficulties faced by women in an organisation of that period, difficulties that may well have contributed to her departure. The Engineering departments interests in studio electronics were involved with the development of the tape recorder whilst those interests of Studio Operations were the direction and training to the Studio Managers to operate this equipment.

The developments of the studio infrastructure were driven and also exploited by a small number of eager producers and programme makers,

keen to push the boundaries and to make life, if not easier for the Studio Manager by the replacement with a ready-mixed tape of five or six record decks, at least they could make it different. For Douglas Cleverdon in Features and Donald McWhinnie in Drama (Sound), this infrastructure allowed them a bigger and fresher pallet from which to paint their pictures in sound. For McWhinnie, this was an additional palette, one to be used, not exploited. Taking Beckett's first radio script, he wanted to produce it as faithfully as possible in sound, and by using new technologies, by recording and manipulating, and also employing the old one, using the human voice for other sounds, he moved the production of radio drama on to another level.

The chapter has also shown that these strands were at times running parallel, and at times were interlinked. The chronological narrative demonstrates that during the period from first contact with the playwright to the production of Beckett's *All That Fall*, there was a parallel set of discussions ensuing, primarily between Studio Operations and Engineering, about the setting up of a specialist unit to create effects. To the list of pioneers, Briscoe, Oram, McWhinnie and Cleverdon, must be added the name of Malcom Garrard. These strands are discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The premise at the start of this research was that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop was created as a direct result of developments within the Drama (Sound) department. This was based on preliminary reading and some investigative research. Once this research was underway it quickly became clear that there were a number of factors that led to its creation, or rather a number of elements that were progressing through the BBC during the period, and that these reached a common point of coincidence, that common point giving rise to the Radiophonic Workshop. The previous chapter displays however that even pinning down this point of coincidence is very difficult and that a number of options presented themselves as to when the point of establishment could be placed:

- the first meeting of the Radiophonics Effects Committee
- the designation of the Radiophonic Effects Unit
- the opening of the Workshop as a physical entity at the Maida Vale studios
- the production of *All That Fall*

There are good arguments for each of these events. The Radiophonic Effects Committee was convened to respond to the growing need for different and experimental sounds, a need created by the programme makers and assisted by those with interests in the creation of different and experimental sounds. The designation of the Radiophonic Effects Unit grew out the Committee meetings when it was realised that such developments and interests required some form of management and possibly some form of control. The logical development from that was the

physical presence for such a Unit, which, by the time it had opened in Maida Vale became known as a Workshop. In terms of institutional structure, these three are key milestones yet, the production of *All That Fall* remains of paramount importance as the focal point of creativity and technology, as much an example of what experimentation meant in 1957 as an example of what people are able to do given the right environment. It was also a practical example of the needs of the day, as pointed to by the Radiophonic Effects Committee.

Much has been made of the role played by Drama (Sound) in this narrative. To a greater or lesser extent, the roles of Features, Music, Central Programme Operations and Engineering have also been important, essentially through staff in those departments who have contributed to development of the Workshop, yet the scope of this research did not allow for an enquiry of similar depth to that of Drama (Sound) into their roles. Features was as much at the cutting-edge of experimental radio as Drama, except that by the mid-1950s, the Features department did not comprise the strong collection of journalists, writers and poets that it had ten years previously. That said, Douglas Cleverdon, a producer in Features was a significant voice on the Radiophonic Effects Committee and was instrumental in organising playbacks of musique concrète and other experimental radio and sound broadcasts. The Features department created a whole new radio genre within a relatively new medium and an investigation into the history of that department could not have been given justice within the constraints of this thesis.

Whereas Features provided programmes, Music spread across the whole network. Like Entertainment, Music, with its own Controller, RJF Howgill, was seen on the same departmental level as the services (Light, Home and Third Programme) since it pervaded all areas of output, not only as content of programmes but also as provider of incidental and title tunes. Music was one of the topics discussed in Wellington's meeting of October 1955, when he encouraged department heads to consider the importance of even a small audience, thereby adding to the impetus to experiment and not worry unduly about the audience figures. This did not appeal to all at the meeting, particularly the Head of the Light Programme who was very concerned about his listening figures (BBC 1955a). To others, Wellington's words were seen as a sign of support in their endeavour to try new things, develop new sounds.

As has been shown, all departments had members who were interested in pushing the boundaries where technology was concerned, and so the involvement of Daphne Oram, a Studio Manager in Music, was important. Her interests and her knowledge of electronics and music alongside Cleverdon's promotion of musique concrète were clearly welcomed in those circles keen on electrophonic and radiophonic effects. Musique concrète has been a major component in this account. It prompted interest in sounds, sound capture and editing and it gave rise to much interest from Music, Features and Drama. As has been said, Cleverdon was a champion of musique concrète as were some of the Drama producers who cited its potential in the meeting to discuss experimentalism called by Val Gielgud. In Music, Daphne Oram's work had

been influenced by musique concrète. The subsequent development of the Radiophonic Workshop to becoming a provider of electronic music has been well documented in general, and in particular in Louis Niebur's book *Special Sound* (2010). Members of Central Operations and the Engineering departments also had an interest in the technical appeal of electronic music production, showing what might be done with sound when given the right equipment, or provided with the opportunity to make the right equipment.

Another area that demands further investigation is the use of experimental sound effects in other programmes. The call for experimentalism by Wellington was to all radio departments, and in this investigation it is to Drama that the creative lead is granted. It must be assumed that Features, Music and Variety were also required to address the call to experiment when the call came from Wellington. As discussed above the role of Features in the story of the Radiophonic Workshop was significant; indeed the work that Features had produced since the early days of the BBC was essentially experimental, one of creating pictures in sound, bringing aural colour and texture to poetry, science, journalism and many other disciplines. However, as has also been established, by the mid 1950s, the creative core of Features had waned whilst that of Drama was gaining strength.

For Drama, the worth of their output was conceived to be from plays, dramatic productions for the Home Service, as well as for the Light and Third Programmes, a situation that no doubt Val Gielgud will have been

pleased about. However the radio serial, despised by Gielgud, had become a staple of the listeners' diet in the post-war years, and alongside *Mrs Dale's Diary*, *The Archers* and *Dick Barton*, there was *Journey into Space*. This series was written and produced by Charles Chilton and first aired in 1953; it aimed to bring the sound of the space-age future into the living room. Unfortunately the original recordings have been erased, as this was the policy of the time, yet a 1958 version, a transcription for overseas use, was discovered and is now commercially available. In these episodes, ample use has been made of oscillating and pulsating sounds and whistles, reverberation and manipulation merging to create a rich, other-worldly aural experience. Where and how these sounds were collected and used is unclear and is another thread that has not been followed here. A list of complete programmes that used the Radiophonic Workshop dating from about the end of 1957 precedes the list with

> Many programmes use radiophonic devices in some way or another, although many effects, which might be justly so called, are obtained by trial and error; a selection rather than evolution. The "Goon Show" and "Journey into Space" are examples. (anon. 1957b)

In addition to these areas that have not been covered in depth within this thesis, there are some wider points of discussion that have not been researched but are worthy of further investigation. The middle 1950s was a period of financial and structural change for the BBC, and the pressures of the redirection of finance from radio to television must have made an

impact on all aspects of sound broadcasting. Briggs covers this theme in much depth but extrapolating these effects to see what influence there was on the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop has not been given enough consideration here. Audience figures were also important despite Silvey's apparent laissez-faire attitude and Gielgud's palpable dislike for them. The importance of these figures was just beginning to be understood. The battle with BBC television and with ITV for audience numbers was very quickly becoming a driving force and for the BBC this also meant its role as a public service broadcaster could be called into question had listener and viewer numbers dropped substantially.

A final omission to note is that there is insufficient detail about Central Operations, their personnel, their structure and their work. The style of this narrative has been to focus on key people, and to explore them to a greater or lesser extent, in order to understand how they and their sphere of influence functioned. In the previous chapter, it is very apparent that MRG Garrard, the Organiser Studio Operations, was central to the development of the Radiophonic Workshop. Little information about Garrard has come to light and he is not mentioned in Briggs' *History of Broadcasting in the UK* but his contribution requires further investigation.

When taking up the challenge of writing a history, the author must be prepared to cover the subject to a depth appropriate to the level of the task but also to be mindful of the fact that despite that depth of research, the breadth of coverage, and the examination of detail, there will be omissions, such as those discussed at the start of this chapter. The author

also needs to decide on the approach to the writing and it was not until some way into the research for this thesis that the narrative style, with some emphasis on key people, took shape. The importance of Val Gielgud to this narrative grew with the research. His presence whilst discussing radio drama was firmly felt and his role cannot be ignored. He was not directly responsible for the production of *All That Fall* and his interest in all things experimental had, by the mid 1950s, all but disappeared. Nevertheless, BBC Radio Drama was developed by him, and being in a position to see his communications with his producers and his peers and superiors helps to create a picture of a man who is approaching the latter end of his career, relinquishing the reins slightly, and spending considerable time in engaging in skirmishes, using memoranda rather than a fencing sword. Through Gielgud a picture emerges of middle management at the BBC, all having a similar background and that all-important education influenced by Matthew Arnold, for whom to educate, inform and entertain was ordained, and in that precise order.

By contrast, Sir William Haley was an autodidact and, unlike Gielgud, refused to stay in one place for life. A journalist by trade, he wanted to take his philosophy, his notion of truth, to as large an audience as possible and whilst he was at the BBC this desire manifested itself in the creation of the news service and the Third Programme. Although Haley had left the BBC several years before the creation of the Radiophonic Workshop, his influence in the formation of the Third Programme, which created a legitimate outlet for experimental programmes cannot be ignored. Also not to be ignored is the fact that as a radio man, Haley's

influence on the slow start of television in the UK had an impact on how his successor, Sir Ian Jacob, moved the Corporation on, fending off competition, tightening budgets and considering television to be the major focus of the Corporation's work.

With the scene set by Haley and Jacob, the call for experimentalism was given to Gielgud who took it to his producers. It was McWhinnie who led the answer to this call, his own productions often being innovative and creative. His connection with Beckett, both similar in character, led to a long professional as well as social relationship; out of the first encounter came *All That Fall* and that production brought in Desmond Briscoe as Studio Manager. As has been shown, there were other developments going on at the same time; there were developments in music with Daphne Oram, developments in Features with Douglas Cleverdon and there were also other developments with Drama (Sound). Nevertheless, it was the production of *All That Fall* that drew together the key strands of creative production, technology and writing, in an environment where, once inside the studio, the institution did not matter, the production did. After this point, these strands diverged. McWhinnie pursued a career in directing on stage, in television and in film, including many of Beckett's plays. Oram left to pursue her invention of Oramics. Briscoe, after Oram's departure, became the director of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

The actual process of carrying out the research provided some interesting points for discussion. Gaining access to the BBC Oral History Project proved to be a difficult and time-consuming activity but the end result,

access to the records from the interviews with Haley and with Gielgud has been valuable. That this resource was not freely available to academic researchers except those who were also connected with or employed by the BBC is a topic to be explored further elsewhere, but it is hoped that other researchers not so connected will in future be able to explore this extremely useful archive. Having crossed that boundary, access to actual recordings is still barred to those researchers who have no connection with the Corporation. The tapes of the Oral History Project are not available, which might have increased the usefulness of the Gielgud interview. There are further programmes which may also have been of use which are not available through the National Sound Archives, BBC iPlayer or commercial outlets. Again, this is a debate to be had elsewhere, but there is the ever-present thought that when dealing with an aspect of a resource, other aspects are not available.

The access to the written records was essential and the Written Archive Centre has been invaluable. Much of chapters three and four were built from minutes of meetings, memoranda and information documents that had been produced during the 1950s, and these documents - many with comments hand-written by the recipient - provided a great insight into the Corporation as well as into the individuals under scrutiny. The documents may be photocopied or photographed but handling large numbers of this type of data presents its own problem. Each image, and this research recorded approximately 850 of them, was catalogued on a spreadsheet with the document date, BBC file reference and details of the document being recorded and a hyperlink to the image added to allow quick retrieval.

Clearly the element that is pursued to the most depth in this thesis is that of Radio Drama. The conclusion reached in this thesis is that, after all the research Radio Drama should still be viewed as having been the major creative driver in the development of the Workshop, and the consideration of the background in such depth has been justified.

In order to understand how Drama (Sound) came to have this leading role it was necessary to understand the department and where the demand for experimentation came from. Gielgud's position in the department seems to have been quite firm; it had, after all, been his domain for over twenty years. He had built it up to become the world's largest commissioner of plays, providing a good nurturing ground for authors and actors alike. However, as is often the case in such situations, the need for new blood had become very apparent, and as has been discussed, the employment of Donald McWhinnie helped to introduce this required stimulus and with it a new surge of interest in making radio drama more interesting and an effective entertainment for the second half of the twentieth century.

Sir Ian Jacob, then Director General, had put out a call to the Heads of Department in Sound Radio, a call that had been made loud and clear and which today may be seen to have been a precursor to substantial economic restructuring as radio lost out to television, amidst the BBC's need to hold its own against ITV. Wellington relayed this call to Gielgud, and this latter, despite not being enthusiastic where experimentalism was concerned, must be credited with instigating the process of discussion of experimentation amongst his producers.

There does not appear to be any recorded discussion by Gielgud about impending cost-cutting, other than a slight concern about the cost of actors, and the need, or not, to consider listening figures. The bigger issues that would become apparent in the near future do not seem to have been relayed through the memorandum of Drama (Sound). The producers still had the luxury of worrying about the creative worth of scripts, tape recorders and musique concrete, indicating that these people were very clearly focussed on their job, essentially the creative work which may have appeared separate, away from the central issues of Department and Corporation. They still had the practical tasks of getting the script right, arranging the actors, the studio, the effects, and whether he or she had would have others around to assist in the production. Barbara Bray provides a good example of how the institution allowed its employees to develop, for she became very much involved in the whole process, to the point where she was not only the Script Editor, but also adapted stories and produced dramas.

This research has also afforded an opportunity to look in detail at the relationship between the employees and the BBC – between Haley and the institution, between Gielgud and his producers and between the producers and those other people on the studio floor who produced the artefact, namely the writers, the script editors and the studio managers. Drama (Sound) may have provided the creative drive but it was the people within the department who brought about the demand for more and more technical enhancement of the sounds. Evidently it was not the leadership of Val Gielgud, at least not directly, that created this impetus. Rather, it

came about through his deputy, Donald McWhinnie who was in the right position in terms of hierarchy and was an outstanding producer with a keenness to explore what experimentation with technology could do. His drive, along with that of the script editor, Barbara Bray, and the studio manager, Desmond Briscoe, brought about Beckett's *All That Fall,* a production that placed demands on the actors and the technicians and showcased the possibilities available through subtle technical manipulation of sound.

It is interesting to consider, possibly with the benefit of the distance of time, that Beckett wrote plays that had a high degree of minimalism, that demanded lots of space and silence and pauses, and that relied as much on the lack of speech as on the words themselves. The radio production of *All That Fall* contained all these elements as well as containing technical innovation that was in-keeping with the author's style, innovative creations that were both minimal and subtle. It was this play that provided the creative drive to establish the Radiophonic Workshop, demonstrating that sound creation and manipulation can add to, and in some cases, make the production.

In The Art of Radio (1959) Donald McWhinnie illustrates in great detail how sound manipulation is important to radio drama and how the techniques demand both technical and creative ability.

The use of manipulation techniques in *All That Fall* to represent the oncoming vehicles that met up with Mrs Rooney as she dragged her weary

body to the station were to represent the sounds of the vehicles as heard by her, disturbing her reverie as she moved ever nearer the railway. McWhinnie describes the technique used to bring Christy's cart from vague noise in Mrs Rooney's unconscious hearing to the reality of a cart and donkey. For McWhinnie, the sound of the approaching cart and donkey is an opportunity to make 'a definitive statement of Mrs Rooney's relationship to the physical world' (McWhinnie, 1959: 136). McWhinnie's definitive statement is relayed to the listener by the use of stylised sound, sounds that allow us to hear what Mrs Rooney hears: 'Might we not realise an exciting imaginative tension if we treat the sounds which gradually force themselves on Mrs Rooney's preoccupied attention in the reverse way?' (ibid). The sound of the cartwheels as they enter Mrs Rooney's hearing are 'an indeterminate sort of sound' but add this to the hoof beats of the donkey pulling it and there is a 'more profitable starting point' (ibid) and one that allows for the metrical pattern of these beats to be exploited:

> 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 [who is walking at a steady though slow 4/4 beat]. (McWhinnie, 1959: 136)

This is the producer interpreting the author's directions, interrogating the simple instructions, 'Sound of approaching cartwheels' (Beckett, 1986: 172) and understanding how, through applied distortions, the listener can

be drawn, very quickly and readily, into the head of Mrs Rooney at the start of the play.

From this brief description it can be seen that the producer's skills not only included the interpretation of a play for listeners only, but also included an understanding of music and metrical notation, and how to manipulate sounds. Just as the producer needs the writer's words and directions, he also needs the technical support to realise the end result. The producer as interpreter needs to understand the playwright's words and directions and to have a knowledge of what is practical in terms of sound generation – or a knowledge of what he wants, how it can be described and how it may be created. The BBC Radiophonic Workshop grew out of this requirement, and became the instrument providing an interpretation for the demands of the producers to provide the blue sound for a creepy play, the noises in the head or the scenery of a far-flung planet.

On a personal note, to look at and handle the documents that made this narrative possible, was a great opportunity; to read a hand-written letter from Beckett, or a note from Val Gielgud, penned in green ink, brought the reality of the people into sharp focus. It was very clear that this had to be a narrative about the people, about their motivations and their modi operandi, rather than a commentary on the pieces of paper. Getting to know these people, their likes and dislikes, and how they expressed themselves in writing, added colour and texture to a world of typed memoranda and letters. Gaining an understanding of Val Gielgud has

been most interesting. Here is man of whom little has been written, yet through his memoranda, his own books and the comments of others at the time, a picture has been painted of a man with many sides. All people are multi-faceted, Gielgud was a critic of the plays produced by his staff, he compared the listeners of Radio Luxembourg to the Gaderene swine, and was an eloquent writer of multiple-layered memoranda. To see this evidence led to further investigation, a need to create a picture that is both a snapshot in time and a broader view of his life and history, this has led to an understanding that people become older and may become wiser, but may be less open to change. This is in our nature, to a greater or lesser extent we are all like this, and it is an important lesson to learn when considering large institutions like the BBC: the BBC consists of people, not paper.

In the early discussion regarding the nature or genre of this history, it was clear that cultural studies had to be, at the very least, taken into account and as the period that is investigated here coincided with the period when Hoggart started his considerations that led to the formation of Cultural Studies, he could not be ignored. The content of *The Uses of Literacy* proved useful in adding to what has been earlier termed the macro-context, contributing to an examination of the wider social and cultural landscape within which the focus of this narrative takes place. And as the narrative progressed, *The Uses of Literacy* proved useful in offering a challenge or a counter-point to the micro-context of the BBC. At first glance this challenge appears to be one of perception of class, Hoggart's working-class, influenced by popular, often United States-led

entertainment, versus a staid Edwardian upper-middle-class of the BBC. In reality in this post-war period, the Edwardians were retiring and were being replaced by people who were evidently still middle-class but were seen as, and by some vilified as, intellectuals. For Hoggart (and for Priestley for that matter), the intellectual or high-brow was just as inappropriate to the working-class as were the cultural enjoyments of the upper classes and it is difficult to separate this intellectual or class structure in contemporaneous texts. As Orwell pointed out, if you could use a certain level of language, you could raise your class in the eye of the beholder. However, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is clearer to see that 1950's Britain was moving from a class system based on historic aristocracy to one based on intellectual ability and financial acquisition.

It is also worth reiterating that the importance of the text, *The Uses of Literacy*, to the researcher, demands interrogation particularly into its standing in academic circles. The picture of Hoggart, as with those of Gielgud and Haley, allows for some depth of understanding, and in Hoggart's case enables an understanding of the text itself, which has a major autobiographical element in it. It also shows how the author perceived the book and how it has been at times mis-perceived by scholars.

To return to the question of when the BBC Radiophonic Workshop came into being, it is clear that in a period of eighteen months, from late 1956 to spring 1958, the Radiophonic Workshop was developed from an idea in

a Committee meeting into a physical entity that opened its doors in Maida Vale Studios in April 1958. This research has demonstrated that there were a number of strands to this creation and that these ran at times independently and at times interdependently, yet each contributed to the Workshop's creation. This research has also demonstrated that despite an apparent void between management of departments and the studio floor, the creativity required to produce works suitable for broadcast could not take place without the infrastructure, managed by the likes of Val Gielgud, operating in a system overseen by William Haley or Ian Jacob. In the Drama studio, such hierarchies were ignored, and producer, editor, studio manager, all worked together to produce an exciting audible experience. A catalogue of the Radiophonic Workshop output from the early 1960s, a list of works and their tape references, shows that in the first year of service it provided radiophonic sound for five productions. In 1958, 47 contributions were made, and in 1959 the number of contributions had increased to 83. The first programmes it created were all for Sound; in 1958, about a quarter of the sounds produced were for Television; in 1959, Television accounted for over 37%. By the early 1960s, Television had become the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's biggest customer (BBC n.d.3).

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Appendices

Personal Interview Transcripts

These two appendices are extracts from the personal interviews carried out by the author with Barbara Bray and with Desmond Briscoe. The interview with Barbara Bray took place in April 2002 in Les Editeurs, a café in Paris near where she lived. The interview with Desmond Briscoe took place at his home in Windsor, UK, in October 2002 and included input from his wife.

The excerpts presented in these appendices are samples that serve to demonstrate the issues of transcribing as described on pages 83 – 91. They also contain extracts of conversation on topics referred to in various parts of the narrative. The interviews were transcribed privately and full transcripts are available upon request.

Desmond Briscoe died in 2006 and Barbara Bray died in 2010.

Appendix 1

Personal Interview:

Barbara Bray

Sample transcript

Recorded at Les Editeurs, Paris

2002

BB   I don't remember that meeting and I don't know whether that preceded or followed um a visit that Donald McWhinnie and I made to Paris, er round about that time. And I don't know whether he'd um made the contact beforehand or whether he found out on the spot but in those days, um whatever it was called -er, Radio France or whatever it was called, um had a studio in the Rue de l'Université where Alain Trutard (Sp?) and some other friend - er so colleagues of his whose names I don't remember, but will be in the Radio France archives, were experimenting on artificial sounds er er non-natural sounds, made from musical sounds and natural sounds, and unnatural sounds, treated, I wouldn't say it was electronically then but by

RPH   This is..

BB   filtering and prolonging and so on, 'cos they had very um er primitive equipment an ancient old piano that they tied things to and chucked things in and so on.

RPH   Yeah

BB   And I remember going and spending an afternoon there, and then we came back to um London and we said "Well, you know, we ought to have some of that." And in those days there was quite a lot of money floating around and the French people, as I think I've told you before seemed to be on a shoestring, and not really integrated into the main

production and um and as far as I remember quite soon the Radiophonic Workshop was set up in quite a small way. And then as it was more and more used um it er er, the site and the equipment and the staff increased. I think Desmond Briscoe was there from the start.

RPH   Yes

BB   I think it was a jolly bad show that he was in that photograph and not even named

RPH   Yes

BB   Um and um of course I should imagine, I mean I I wasn't looking at it from a historical point of view then, I would imagine that the Germans were er er all on the same lines as well, working a bit along that, but the thing was, in those days, um we were trying to represent - we were a monopoly and so if we didn't represent ea, anything or um if we didn't represent an author they went unrepresented so we used to fall over backwards to try to be as um catholic and eclectic as possible and that was one of the lines we were following. So I can't say whether that was echoed anywhere else. The thing about the French was, we tried, we did um actually get some workable script out of the Germans but it was usually - the traffic was usually in the other direction, as far as actually

RPH   Mmm

BB   radio plays went. Of course we did do a lot of um contemporary French theatre 'cos that was the time when contemporary French theatre was was being um, innovative. But um when we tried to get radio scripts out of them, even after this even scripts that did have radiophonic effects, there was a sort of big chasm between the ingenuity of the effects and the nothingness of the text. So we very rarely did them. I remember there was one by Claude Avnin (Sp ???) that um - that um - what was his name? -Er one of the producers liked and did. But I didn't think it came off the first time, I think it may have come off the second time. Anyhow, um I think, I don't know whether you've got this down anywhere - I think, to my recollection, the first time such a sound was used was in a play by Lydia Ragussen (Sp???) - heaven knows what it was called. But um we wanted a sound which would evoke the Steppes of Russia

RPH   Oh yes?

BB   And so we had a long sort of siren like sound which was a saw vibrated. And that was, as far as I remember, I may remember wrong, but this, as far as I remember was the first time this was consciously done

RPH   N That,that's that's the use of electronic manipulation   ?

BB   Well - I don't - what's the difference to - wha what's electronic manipulation?

RPH   Well, I was thinking is, that uh that uh there's a lot of um interest was shown of of musique concrète,

BB   Mmm?

RPH   um which had been around a little bit earlier than than being able to electronically modulate

BB   Mmm

RPH   Some of the sounds.

BB   But what is the distinction between electronic - I mean uh d - it's filtered through uh an electrical circuit or...

RPH   Well er yes I'm just thinking that the my, again, my reading of of how they talked about musique concrète at the time was mainly due to the advent of the um reel to reel tape recorder

BB   Mmm

RPH   They could physically cut and splice things

BB   Mmm

RPH   Together

BB   Have you looked it up in Grove (????)

RPH   No, I haven't gone to Grove, no.

BB   Well you should really because there must be a distinction between radiophonic sound and musique concrète which - 'cos musique concrète was supposed to form a sort of ensemble, whereas radiophonic workshop was really for providing er non-realistic

RPH   Yeah

BB   effects. And in fact for Lydia's play, as far as I remember it was just used as a sort of intro, and an exit, and maybe a punctuation thing

RPH   Yah

BB   But it was frightfully effective

RPH   Mmm

BB   'Cos of course it was then quite new. And it sort of made your hair stand on end. (Laughs) It was quite simple but uh

RPH   Ye-es

BB   And then of course you come across *The Disagreeable Oyster* and so on, where people started to um er - I suppose they were using that in light entertainment soon after that for the Goons

RPH   Mmm

BB   and so on to make funny voices, but um - I suppose it all took off once people started to see the satirical and comic effects of filtering and speeding up and

RPH   Yess

BB   turning upside down they did it.   But I would say that quite definitely musique concrète - unless maybe some of the...

RPH   Well yeah, I think it's - it it in terms of um how it appeared on the radio, I think what I'm what I'm saying is that the part of the impetus to actually look at how what you could do with sound appears to come - And then again that's only from the notes I've got from

BB   Mmm

RPH   the archive.   There was there was um there were one or two instances of people going um.. They had Pierre Holbury (Sp????) Um and - just trying to think um - come over - and I think they had um Maurice Jarre as well, or they had some piece by

BB   Mmm

RPH   Maurice Jarre that er had been, that had been put in with a in a play. I'm just trying to find the reference I've made to it. Charles Lefaux had said at that meet in '55 that he'd like to experiment with um

BB   Gosh, that's funny, 'cos he was one of the most er

RPH   musique concrète

BB   stick in the mud - (laughs) -

RPH   (Laughs)

BB   you could dream of. Listen, have you got in touch with Desmond, I think he's still alive? Cos I was in touch with him a little while ago?

Appendix 2

Personal Interview:

Desmond Briscoe

Sample transcript

Recorded at Desmond Briscoe's home

October 2002

DB   Um, yes, um, yeh that the famous memo, yes. But eh no uh it all, it all grew naturally, and an awful lot of it grew out of tape, there's no doubt about it, without tape it could never ha, could never have happened, that's really the thing. I mean, um, I was working for Drama department er as a sound man, but I'd also, you know, I'd adapted the odd thing and I'd also, always been involved with music, ever since I was nine years old, sort of thing, erm and therefore um - and there were others, obviously, who were interested in what was happening on the Continent, and what was happening, people like Stockhausen, and um Pierre Schaeffer and er so on, and we listened to whatever we could lay our hands on. And the BBC was very slow to take to tape. And they first of all, it appeared on semi-professional machines as rehearsal recorders for Drama, and of course once we, we found their, the machines and what you could do with sound on tape, even if you - it was only turning the spools by hand, you know and this sort of thing, it was a whole new world..

RPH Mm

DB   ya, the obvious thing, ss ss - of speed change. Um and then gradually they set up one or two studios that had their own recording room next door to them **[0:06.17.6 - listening, not listening]** and if you got er an interested and obliging recording engineer of course, that's - s'all of a sudden there's all sorts of possibilities, and there's no doubt about it that um Donald McWhinnie whose incidentally *The Art of Radio* - you know the book...?

RPH That - (chuckles) Yes - why I chose *The Art of Sound* as the title for my radio piece.

DB (Laughs) But I mean Donald was a great thinker and a great ..... experimenter, by nature, and he and I had worked together quite a lot anyway on normal radio drama. And it just sort of came naturally and when there were studios with recorders we used to ss hang around at night and experiment and experiment and experiment, you know. And then he went er the the.... I mean the.. there'd been little things done before *All That Fall,* but really that, that was the the first time any - a piece of quality work - broadcastable quality work had been done. I mean using tape recorders at night, n n in ill-matched to their studio equipment et cetera et cetera you learned a lot. But um didn't produce works of art. I - I think that to some extent the - the word, the literary element, was a great - guide. I, I still think that.

RPH Mm

DB I, I'm still happier with pieces which are a way of, of sound or music which are supporting words than I am with abstract pieces of sound or music which don't really communicate, very often. (Chuckles) Or not very much, anyway!

RPH Unless you're given an insight in perhaps into how somebody intended it?

DB   Well, yes, but then er er...

RPH ...it loses its...

DB   Exactly....

RPH ... impact there...?

DB   That's right.   No, so that's, that's and it s.. it started really from there and then Donald got this, er script from Beckett and um he er, you know, he said "You'd better take this away and read it." You know, so I did.   And I was absolutely ... er, bowled over by it.   Oh, **[0:08:30.2: He'd?   We?]** listened to quite a lot of musique concrète and various things of words as well that we you know - were around on tape.   And it just seemed to.... Beckett, the way it was written, the way his sound directions were written seemed absolutely right for the treatment.   And er, this is really, I suppose, in a way where it started, and it certainly was the thing that persuaded the BBC, to take it seriously.   And, and then there were wri... writers like Giles Cooper who wrote comedy material which lent itself enormously...

RPH *...Disagreeable Oyster?*

DB *Disagreeable Oyster.* And er, *Under the Loofah Tree*, which was written for the Workshop.   Or just, it was written, er we did it in the

Workshop fairly on. And he wrote that with, 'cos we had great dis - he and I had great discussions, I persuaded him it could be done, so he went away and invented it, er you know and er, so on. And although there were other people doing things it wasn't you know - but it was Cle - Douglas Cleverdon, who was features producer, he was, he liked to use some of the foreign composers. In fact I worked on a thing with him with er André Almuro who came over and er we wor... this was in the very early days of the Workshop and we worked together, and that sort of thing. But it, it... And then really, it was a case of um..... when successful things were done somebody asked for something else. You know, and in fact, I used to, I sort of had a dictum that the producers who were going to do interesting work listened to other people's programmes. (Chuckles)

RPH Yes

DB And this is, you know, it di - developed in that way. But where, you know, the kind o, what led up to it, um, if you worked with sound and I mean, I first joined the staff of the BBC to do sound effects, in in in the North in, during the war time and Drama Department were there. And I was always, as I say, interested in music. Sss - had some studies in music and percussion, particularly, and I would say I had very tolerant parents and even more tolerant, and they had even more tolerant neighbours, you know

RPH (Chuckle)

DB   Two hours percussion practice...

RPH Yeah

DB   But it's all related, obviously, to a consciousness of sound, and a meaning of sound. And, war-time radio drama, the facilities in the North were not tremendous and we, those of us working there, we became inventive, and, and finding bits of music that could be used, and all sorts of things. But I mean there was a certain amount of specially commissioned music, but not a great deal.

RPH Northern ra - northern drama was one of those, during the research of this item I've also, - "Ah, that's another strand I'd also like to go off down." The regional. Cos it's those little, those little comments you keep comi - I mean, one of the other, one of the really enjoyable things was finding all these little acerbic notes by Val Gielgud and the like...

DB   (Chuckles) Yes

RPH In er, and um, his comment about things from the regions, how awful things were that came from the regions. "They may be alright for Manchester, but they're not alright for us." (Chuckles)

DB   (Chuckles) Oh yes, and of course when, then, they fini... drama finished up there, in the studios, and using that erm staff - oh, some staff were especially recruited, obviously, and and the drama producers, most

of them came up, some stayed in London, the Features Department. I mean er, in theory also but looked at these, 'cos it was Features and Drama...

RPH Yes..

DB   at that time. But Drama Department, as such, um was certainly the more classical side of it, found its way back to London as soon as possible.

RPH Mmm

DB   ... Not surprising really, partly because of availability of actors and all that sort of.... But they the the .... making sound work, experimenting was never, in my experience, done for it's own sake.

RPH Mmm

DB   It was because of a need of a production. It could be quite simple, or it could, and sometimes it could be the result of happy accidents, because playing 78 rpm discs and just picking out one sound, and you know, dropping the needle... (chuckles) You had all sorts of extraordinary things happened as well. You couldn't record them but you could try and repeat them

RPH Yes

DB   Of course. Um....

RPH I hadn't realised, till I started really looking into Schaeffer's work that it wasn't until.. that a lot of his early stuff was done with closed groove.

DB   Oh, oh yes yes

RPH I di - didn't realise you know - there was - he came to tape recording relatively late in terms of the technology.

DB Mmm Well, eh, I mean the tape recording wasn't really there anyway.

RPH What was, what was the steel stuff like?

DB   Steel tape? Aaah, well, you couldn't manipulate it. You, you had to be very careful it didn't break and chop your head off, actually. Er, it was very fearsome stuff - it was about that wide, and reels about this big - was huge great machines, er and it was literally, er, if it broke you sort of had a little welding machine and put it back to gether. Er the quality of the actual recording was remarkably good, and in fact the rooms occupied originally by the Radiophonic Workshop were the rooms where the uh steel Blattnophone (???)

RPH Mmm, yes

DB   Machines had er been. They er - uh no the actual recording quality - but you couldn't edit, you couldn't do anything like that, you could just play, and so on. It was easier than playing an hour and a half play off off 15" discs er

RPH Yes

DB   That was how things were recorded. You could get about a quarter of an hour o - on the di- on the big discs -16" discs

RPH Mmm

DB   and... But you couldn't manipulate anything er um anything had to be done at the time, you know - of recording. Everything had to be done at the same time. You couldn't do retakes. Occasionally, in full length plays if something had gone really wrong er you'd do a retake, and that meant that the recording engineer who put the programme out had to do a change over on to another disc and then not necessarily back on to the original disc, 'cos you didn't do re-takes like that, you wen - went on then, you know

RPH Yes

DB   so... But the the actual manipulation of sound, was something you did as you made it some

RPH Yeah

DB   and that was all. But I think one was always aware that that sound in its ss - for its own sake could create and atmosphere, could say things, that you - that words

RPH mmm

DB   couldn't say. And they also - the backgrounds one could create, um for for scenes that were not in reality...

RPH yes

DB   dreams, and this sort of thing. Um, there was possibility I mean in pushing the disc round with your fingers, and all this sort of thing. Um, but the release that - it's really that tape gave um incredible release, there's no doubt about that. The thinking, leading up to the beginning to use tape in this way was a desire to broaden the medium, really and we - one did strange things but they, they were, they were very elementary,

RPH Mmm

DB You could make strange noises, you know, with all sorts of things, whether it's a wet balloon, or a - (Laughs) you know, if it did the right thing, if you discovered something and then a play came up with something that was necessary, well then it was used, and nobody thought

particularly about it, it was just another sound effect

RPH Mmm

DB   it was a "spot effect" was....

RPH They'd been using... I suppose one of the other things about tape was the fact that you could introduce the sounds afterwards. Whenn - when - did that become apparent?

DB   Not... not not very quickly... um because this would have meant sort of dubbing and remixing and and and so on. Er I I I I think tape was used, it was editing, certainly, not creative editing, just editing for putting, putting bits in that were - had to be retak…