| FILE NAME: | **LR000559 - Barbara Bray - 04-05-1995** |
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**Moderator questions in Bold,** Respondents in Regular text.

**Transcriber Comments**: One male moderator, one female respondent. Very good audio that begins and ends mid-sentence.

**KEY: Unable to decipher** = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** = (ph + timecode), **Missed word** = (? + timecode). For respondents M: Male, F: Female.

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(TC: 00:00:00)

**You have to hand hold these little machines. Now, this is the next generation of digital recorders, (inaudible 00.09) or come across them at all?**

Barbara Bray: Well, no, I haven't actually done much recording recently.

**Tiny cassettes in there, and they're being recorded on digitally rather than with analogue, whatever that means, I'm not quite clear. Always right, I think now I get a buzz, but there I don't. Right, can I just do some-, so, you come over, what, once every six months or so?**

No, more often than that.

**More often than that.**

My mother lives here and one of my daughters lives here.

**Right, yes. What's your preferred means of transport from Paris?**

Well, I used to drive when I had time because that was much the nicest way, but I haven't yet been on the Eurostar, because as I come to Oxford, it's simpler to fly and just take the bus from Heathrow.

**Yes. I did Eurostar at Christmas (inaudible 00.53), travels as far as-, right, I think we're running. My list of names, I put it down somewhere, here we are, good. Let's go back to the beginning, when did you actually join the BBC?**

In October 1953.

**From what sort of professional background and training?**

Well, after I left, I did a bit of research at Cambridge and got married. Then we went to Egypt and taught at the university there until the abrogation of the treaty when all the British Council nominated officials were reprised and chucked out because we were the, sort of, designated victims, much to the chagrin of our Egyptian colleagues. Then we all came back to England and were at a loose end, and I

didn't do anything very much for a few months until I saw this post advertised at the BBC, and I applied for it and I got it.

**The first post was script editor?**

Yes.

**Which is a very senior, very influential post.**

Yes, and one of my feelings was because I had a number of readers who were also supposed to be adapters, one of the things I thought needed changing was that you don't really speak with very much authority to authors unless you can do what you're suggesting to them that they should do. So, it wasn't long before I arranged for my adapters and readers to do small productions, and that I started doing productions as well, so that it was not a gap between what we were saying and what we were thinking other people ought to do.

**Had there been a predecessor in the job, or was it a new post?**

No, it wasn't a new post. Lance Sieveking was my immediate permanent predecessor, and the fort was held after he left by Charles (inaudible 02.43), who was a director, or what used to be called a producer then.

**You hadn't then at that point in your life worked in professional theatre.**

No.

**So, what qualifications did you bring to the task of looking at scripts?**

Well, I had a double first in English Literature at Cambridge, and I had a lot of friends who were interested in the theatre and the cinema and so on, and I was young, and beautiful, witty and clever, and I'll leave you to add the rest. Also, I found, seriously, that I took to it like a duck to water, it was just the fact that I hadn't-, I was always very, very interested in drama, and interested in it at school, but I was the head girl during the war. When the headmistress went away to have a baby and so on, I had to be the headmaster's right hand thing. So, I didn't take part in the, we had quite good dramatic and opera societies, but I didn't actually get onto the stage. I don't know whether I would ever have had the nerve, but I was interested in it and thought I had some feeling for it.

**Were you a great listener to radio drama before you joined the staff?**

Well, I hadn't been in England for some years then, but it really was something that I discovered that I knew about, and was interested in, and had a certain equipment for.

**Were you, I mean, again you hadn't been living in England, but were you at least by hearsay aware of the Third Programme as a special entity?**

Yes. When was it actually founded?

**1946.**

I can't remember actually thinking about it, but they were all lumped together then. Drama department and features department all were called supply departments, who commissioned and found material, and scheduled it among the programmes, which were then, of course, three, in a variety of ways. The Home Service and the Light Programme then, although we had meetings with the controllers or whatever they were called then, and sketched out the general policy, either for a quarter or for a year, or for a special project, whatever it was. We then, more or less, were free to plan things and schedule things according to our own interpretation of their policy. So, it was a fairly independent scheduling for the Home and the Light Programmes, whereas for the Third Programme, which was always much more special. There used to be meetings weekly, and fortnightly meetings with the Third Programme committee, at which not only policy but separate items were all discussed, and analysed, and put forward or put back by the comments of interdepartmental members.

**Were you able to say when you looked at a script that it found favour with you or your readers? That is (inaudible 05.55) a hum on this which comes and goes, let me just-, yes, do drink your tea when you have a chance. Why is it doing that? Let's get this one out. Worse still. Silly thing, I must buy a new microphone. Sorry.**

Have you got a little thing to prop it on?

**I have, it makes it worse. It's gone now. Were you able to say, when you saw a promising script, 'This looks distinctively like the Third Programme material.'**

Yes, in a way, though I was against this highbrow, lowbrow, middlebrow thing. When somebody addressed himself or herself to me and said they would like to be a reader or a director or whatever, they were only interested in the Third Programme, I always said that's not of interest to me because I don't believe in these artificial distinctions. Although in the first place, when something was very novel and required the sort of creation of a public, it might be a programme scheduled first on the Third Programme, that wasn't really an admission that it was beyond the wits of the people who tended to listen to the other programmes. A), it was our policy in drama department and in features department, I think too, to cross trail and to cross programme, so that something which got across in the Third Programme was then tried out on the Home Service. In certain quarter long projects, we would move them from one programme to another and cross trail so that people got out of the habit of thinking of material as specifically Third Programme, or specifically something else. The other reason why you might say something was Third Programme material, or should be tried out first on the Third Programme was not that it was particularly elitist, but that whereas on the other programmes, most slots were one-offs with some slots there was an automatic repeat.

On the Third Programme, for all originations, whether they were music, or talks, or plays, or whatever, they were automatically scheduled first of all for the originating programme, secondly another repeat within ten days, usually, and then after that, a second repeat within the same quarter. So that meant that you could appraise the evolution of the audience's reaction, and this was, of course, extremely interesting in the case of people like Pinter, or Beckett, or Giles Cooper, because the first time something was out, everybody said, 'Terrible, minus three, we couldn't understand it.' Then the second time, some people begin to get an inkling, and then the third time, people would, you know, have begun to get an ear for it.

**That interests me very much because looking at the Radio Times, one's constantly struck by the repeats. Plays just come back again, and again, and again, and you tend to think, 'They're short**

**of money, they can't find enough productions to fill the space.' It was a deliberate policy to really draw the listener to the play, was it?**

Absolutely. I mean, it was the case in music as well. In some cases, some concerts, they did a repeat during the same concert, because with innovative material, if it really is odd and breaking new ground, even the expert needs to hear it more than once. Quite often things which originated on the Third Programme, because they required a certain amount of baggage of one kind or another, if they proved to be very popular, they were almost automatically done on the Home Service or whatever. So, this business of dividing it up, I always was against it, it was a kind of administrative device, but it seems to me to be very much against the spirit of what art is supposed to be. Also, the other thing (TC: 00:10:00) was that it gave a financial inducement to people to write, because if you were sure of getting two repeats, it made it worthwhile.

**Of course, somebody's starting some fierce hammering the moment we start recording. Terrible time recording Harold Pinter recently when there were people, workmen, next door and he was in a thunderous temper as a result. At one point leapt to his feet to go and shout through the window, dragged the entire recording machine, almost the producer with him to stop (inaudible 10.24). What were relations between drama department and the Third like when you first arrived? I mean, Val Gielgud could be quite sticky if he didn't like something that was being passed onto the Third, couldn't he?**

Well, he wasn't really in sympathy with the Third. He wasn't particularly interested. I mean, he went because it was his duty to go, but after a while, most of the material that was plausibly directed towards the Third was directed by the younger members of the department when I was there.

**Tell me about Donald McWhinnie, because, I mean, he of all producers is the one one keeps spotting as picking on the right plays and doing them the right way. He doesn't seem to have had a theatrical background.**

No, he didn't have a theatrical background, he was in the RAF during the war in intelligence, and he did a lot of concert party work. He was also a very good pianist, jazz pianist and so on, and he was just a natural producer, a natural critic, and had a wonderful ear for new writing and writing of all kinds, particularly the radio, of course. Somebody he would want to have mentioned was one of these ghost figures, who is not given his or her proper due in the official histories, but who is very influential and is always saluted by people who take their profession seriously. I hope you've already heard of him, and that is Archie Harding. Donald was a great disciple of Archie Harding and the ghosts of Archie Harding presided over our noblest and most serious efforts.

**I know his name but really no more than that. Tell me about him.**

Well, I don't know anything about him, he was dead by the time I got there, but I knew he had trained the younger generation of directors. It was sort of in his wake that they worked as they did.

**Let's start talking about individual playwrights. I think that by the time you arrived, Henry Reed had established himself pretty firmly as a fixture.**

Yes, but he was a features department writer. He did translations of plays for us, but his original things were put out by features department. There's another person who doesn't get his proper due. You've heard, of course, of Laurence Gilliam.

**Of course, and Douglas Cleverdon.**

Yes.

**Was there resentment in drama department about the enormous string of successes that features, particularly Cleverdon productions, had?**

Yes, because we were all pals and drinking companions, it was a purely administrative thing. Laurence was a great facilitator and a great maverick, I mean, he didn't care whether it was drama or features. Occasionally there would be spats over which was which, but there was a lot of common ground. It was just a question, really, of who had nurtured the writer, in a way.

**Did Giles Cooper arrive in radio while you were there, or had he already done so?**

No, he was already there, a protégé of Donald's, and I'm not quite sure, I think of Archie Harding's as well.

**Tell me about him.**

Giles? He was a wonderful original, fantastic writer. You still hear echoes of his plays now when you listen to dramas because he evolved, really, the pure radio style. If you listen to Unman, Wittering and Zigo or The Disagreeable Oyster, I mean, anybody who studies radio writing, either is able to incorporate that into their own work, or else imitates it. Even an imitation is not at all bad.

**They're not what you would call very highbrow, very serious plays, are they?**

Yes, I would have said they were. I mean, they're not literary, they don't make any allusions whatever, usually, they're completely self-contained, but they're a genre of their own, really.

**There did seem to be a feeling though, certainly in the early part of his career, that he had tremendous promise but that he didn't get over that into a real, you know, top-level achievement, you didn't feel that?**

No, not at all. I mean, I think he easily reached, in fact, was from the beginning at the highest level in radio. He never had a success in the theatre, but this is a, sort of, irrelevant expectation, if you ask me.

**What sort of person was he?**

He was a wonderful person. Very witty, and amusing, and fun to be with, and of course his premature death was a great shock to us all.

**Yes, it was strange, that. I mean, what was your own reading on that?**

Accident, I should think.

**Now, Beckett. How far had the story got when you arrived, anywhere at all?**

No. It was John Morris who first met him and, on the strength of Waiting for Godot, wanted to get him to write something for radio, but he didn't accept commissions, so he just said he would do his best to

try to write something that would do. The result of that was All That Fall. He loved writing for new media, and he always hit the nail right on the head, and sort of hit the media square in the middle. I can't remember now whether it was before we did All That Fall, or whether it was between that and Embers. We did a whole lot of readings from From an Abandoned Work and all the novels and so on. It was when Pat McGee was doing those readings that Sam heard the recordings and was inspired to write Krapp's Last Tape.

**He said, didn't he, that McGee's was the voice he'd always heard in his own head.**

Yes. Well, that was very interesting because, of course, Sam had a very clear idea of what sort of voice he wanted for the readings of From an Abandoned Work and from the Trilogy. It was very interesting to see Donald, sort of, gradually rendering Pat McGee down because all actors want their performances to be as large as possible, but their genius is often as small as possible. It was the creation of that voice which really was the making of Pat McGee.

**Did you see much of Beckett yourself?**

Yes.

**Tell me about working with him.**

Well, out of this world. He was somebody who always instinctively understood what other people were trying to do in the way of creation and so on, and knew what he was trying to do. He was unlike some of the representations of his attitudes. He was always completely ready to revise, and to change, and to take other people's opinions because, essentially, when you write for performance, you're writing something which is potential. You're not writing-, otherwise have it done by machines. So, his own productions, or his collaborations with productions were endlessly open.

**He seems to have affected an enormous change in radio drama with his requests for the strange sound effects in All That Fall, do you remember that?**

Well, that's a paradox because we did that. We thought it would be a good idea to have human voices producing these natural sounds. Actually, afterwards, he thought maybe it would have been better not to. I mean, I didn't agree with him about that, one doesn't have to agree with him about everything. I think it was one of the things that made it so striking at the time, as it was.

**There are other wonderful effects, I mean, the trains passing each other at the station, it's like something out of the Goon Show, isn't it? I mean, literally out of the Goon Show. Do you think that had any influence on Beckett?**

No, he'd never (talking over each other 18.57)-,

**I mean, Beckett himself hadn't heard it, but Donald McWhinnie would presumably have heard it.**

No, no, I don't think except that, you know, I can't remember at what stage it was but in those days, the BBC had a lot of money, or we were treated as if it had a lot of money. At one stage, we were in touch with what they were doing on French radio. There, the French radio had in the Rue de l'Université a radiophonic workshop, the first radiophonic workshop, as far as I know. They had a few broken down

pianos with the cords tied with bits of string in which they made very weird and wonderful noises. They were a bit hampered. They were very, very sophisticated and inventive on the technical side as far as sounds were concerned, but there was a, sort of, huge gap between the sounds and the texts to which they were married. It was very rarely, actually, that we could find one of their texts which had enough substance to live up to the sound. We were very lucky because we came back and said, (TC: 00:20:00) 'We want one, please,' and they set up the radiophonic workshop. It was from that and the freedom and the resources which were given to that that radio, kind of, took off exponentially, well, from the sound point of view, the sound effects point of view.

**Do you remember which plays on the Third made the first good use of the new radiophonic equipment?**

No.

**Right.**

(Talking over each other 20.26), not ex tempore (ph 20.27).

**It's been said that it was Under the Loofah Tree.**

It may have been.

**(Inaudible 20.32) all that, no, no, (inaudible 20.34). You talked about Beckett being willing to change things. He also seems to be extremely friendly in his personal relationship with John Morris, with Donald McWhinnie, quite different from the, kind of, craggy image one normally has of him. Immensely professional, but convivial, but actually getting on with the job as required.**

Yes, he was a very kind person, and fitted in to everybody and made them feel wonderful.

**Harold Pinter, first memories.**

Again, this was one of Donald's virtues because I can't remember how he had got to know Harold. After the Birthday Party, which was, you know, the succès d'estime but didn't get him any more contracts in the theatre for several years, as you will have seen from the archives. Harold kept body and soul together, if he kept body and soul together, by writing for radio. He would come in with a synopsis on a piece of paper, which in later history would turn out to be one of his major works in the theatre, which then was a sort of strange jumble of elements. Donald would come into my office with a puzzled frown and say, 'What do you think about this?' By that time, Val had sort of washed his hands of such eccentricities. We'd commission him to do it. I mean, we always had to cover ourselves because otherwise we might have been accused of just favouring our friends, but we were all knowing that this was on the cards. We were always very careful to do it correctly. You know, things like a Slight Ache, the Hothouse, and the Dwarfs, and all these things. This was what the BBC should have been doing, and should still be doing. If I, as long as breath is in my body, will be nagged into continuing to do, or resuming.

**A Slight Ache bills a third actor who is not heard, David Baron, alias Harold Pinter.**

Yes.

**Was that a sort of in-joke?**

I can't remember at the time. One of the things we used to do, because in those days, we thought it was our duty to promote talent, and give it a chance, and to get authors to acquire as much technique as possible, so that if somebody even wrote just a little 30-minute theatre, we would invite them into the rehearsals. If possible, because everybody was poor, give them a chance to, if they were an actor, to have a part in it, because that was the way they learn the technique. The difference, actually, between a play written by somebody who worked in the studio with microphones, and directors, and acoustics, and so on, and one that they just spun out of their head was enormous.

**I have a general impression that while the BBC was very good at doing what you're talking about, being the patron, that people needed its support. It perhaps had a run of bad luck or was too cautious to have spotted, in a sense, the right play at the right time. There was a chance to have done Waiting for Godot before it was ever staged. There was a chance, I think, to do the Birthday Party-,**

I don't think there was a chance of doing Godot before it was staged.

**It was considered.**

Was it?

**It was looked at very early on, I think just before your-, you arrived in 1953? Yes, just about then, I think it was being-, certainly later on with Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz was looked at and was turned down as being unsuitable for radio and so on.**

That was after my time. I think it was just after my time when they did the one about the Forth Bridge.

**Albert's Bridge, yes. I mean, there had to be a mixture, didn't there, of, you know, a desire to patronise, in the best sense of the word, to be a patron for, and support new talent, but you had also to be fairly cautious.**

No, we didn't have to be cautious at all. There were certain things which don't really lend themselves to radio. In fact, our policy was to do everything that could feasibly be done. Of course, we occasionally had to threaten to resign. I can't remember, I think there was one petition about Endgame because they wanted us to-, we wanted to say, 'The bastard doesn't exist,' but anyway.

**Yes, the story about, the remark about God, yes.**

Yes.

**That did go to the very topmost level, to the chairman, in fact, who vetoed it, and that resulted in the play not being done.**

There were always two schools. There was always the Pucker (ph 25.11) school, which didn't want to take any risks, and the public service broadcasting school, which thought that we should be doing everything that had any merit.

**Now, you were still there when Tom Stoppard first began to turn scripts in (ph 25.27), weren't you?**

I didn't ever see a script by Tom Stoppard, to my knowledge.

**That was after (talking over each other 25.34)-,**

That may be a lapse of memory.

**No, you may be right, that was after-, Kate? I'm doing a recording in here with somebody, so you can be fairly quiet? Thanks. That was after Michael Bakewell took over from you, yes, well, I'll talk to Michael about that, obviously, yes. Now, I mean, we've mentioned Pinter, and Beckett, and Cooper. Other people, please, who you recall, who don't come so obviously to mind, other writers who you were proud of having?**

There were two interesting people who were quite well known, I suppose. One was James Saunders, because after we'd started doing the Beckett things, a little short play came in called Dog Accident, which was obviously derivative. We couldn't find the author. He didn't have any name and address, and he didn't have any agent. I forget how long it took. It came in with the usual reader's report, you know, 'Ravings of a lunatic.' When somebody sent me a report like that, I always sent it to somebody else, and if two people said, 'Ravings of a lunatic,' either it was ravings of a lunatic or it was something new. This was obviously something that was derivative but good, and we finally did it. That was the first thing that James Saunders had produced, as far as I know.

Another chap who had a bit the same trajectory, though he didn't become internationally well known because he was too idiosyncratic, and that was a chap called Reese Adrian (ph 26.58). His first script came in like the tail of a mouse (ph 27.03) in Alice in Wonderland, all typed up by an amateur typist and streaming all over the paper. That got the 'ravings of a lunatic' treatment from the readers, and I showed it to Donald, I said, 'Do you think it's the ravings of a lunatic?' No, he didn't. So we did it. It was called, 'The Man from the Ministry', but it didn't get a very, sort of, right-on production, the first one wasn't very successful. We gave it to other producers afterwards and thereafter he went on to-, I mean, he wasn't a genius, unfortunately he's dead now, but he was a completely individual voice.

**A lot of adaptations were done, I think, by but also of Muriel Spark.**

That was features.

**Right. Now, I mean, in general terms, you were in that job just as British theatre was changing dramatically, weren't you? Were you aware of this enormous shift, I mean, did the landscape change before your eyes?**

Yes. We didn't get on board with the court as fast as we should have done. I think that might have been partly because, although Look Back in Anger's been, sort of, historified (ph 28.19) as a breakthrough, in fact, it was a very conventional three-act play in form. I always thought the one he wrote before, Confessions of George somebody or other was better and more interesting. There was a huge change coming over the theatre, not only from the writing point of view, but of course also from the acting point of view. I don't think they were two separable things, because, for example, when I went into the BBC, I was introduced to all the literary agents, which seemed to be singularly beside the point. The way in which material was treated then was that there were different methods applied to the

different intake. Agents would send in things and they would get one kind of treatment, and things that by known authors would get another sort of treatment, and things that came in just through the post were dealt with by clerks, and just sent acknowledgement slips or rejection slips, which struck me as being entirely wrong. So, I changed it all and said, 'Everything that comes in, wherever it comes from, has to be treated exactly the same and has to come to my desk first.' Then it's minuted out to one reader, and then I see what the one reader says, and then I minute it to another reader to get a complementary-, then in the meanwhile, I and other members of the editorial staff will have read it.

Then, we had a very good relationship then with the directors, and you would then minute a script to (TC: 00:30:00) one of the panel of about 20 or 30 directors with whom you thought it might click. Then if you thought it was jolly good but none of the other directors wanted to do it, well, then we did it ourselves. The idea being that everything that came in that had any potentiality should be properly considered. Anything that we thought, this sounds very sanctimonious, but I mean, I think this is what public service broadcasting is supposed to be. Anything that has the merit to be done has got to get over whatever administrative and auto-censorious obstacles there may be. So, occasionally things would be kicked upstairs because they were controversial, and the administrators would say, 'No, better not,' then the long struggle would ensue, and some means would always be found to do them.

**It does sound an elaborate chain, not of command, but of approval. I mean, the script unit, the producer or director, and then, of course, the network controller could have a say. In practice, this was quite a good system, you feel?**

It wasn't slow, no, I mean, it wasn't to slow things down, it was to give everything a chance.

**Do you recall any one moment of looking at a script, or perhaps a reader's report and then at the script and saying, 'Yes, wow, look at this, this is wonderful,' tremendous excitement?**

Yes, often, often.

**Can you name a few plays which had struck you like that?**

Well, Reese Adrian's, James Saunders, there are one or two minor, I mean, one or two schoolboys who used to send in things, and you saw immediately that it was okay. There was one, I can't remember what it was called, the Mask of something or another, I think he's now a permanent writer, which could be done without a comma being changed.

**So, it was a very exciting time.**

Of course, we did a lot of adaptations as well, because we did one series we did sometime in the middle 1950s, and this was part of a kind of opening up and democratisation of things what's going on just after the war. We did a series called Between Two Worlds, which was meant to exhibit the changes that had come over society, and thinking, and the different genres between the two world wars. This was an enormous, gigantic project, which consisted of original material, adaptations of stage plays, and adaptations of novels. Antic Hay was one of the things we did, and Passage to India. This was done simultaneously on Light Programme, Home Service and the Third Programme, and we cross-trailed them and then cross-scheduled them. We, of course, in those balmy days, we had a brochure that went out, and that was extremely interesting because it was part of the, kind of, melting pot that was going on and it mixed up the different fields of activity, and we hoped would break down the barriers.

**You mentioned the brochure, the Third Programme quarterly plan. It was really a rather splendid publication, wasn't it?**

Yes, and the wonderful thing about it then was that everybody took it all for granted.

**This was issued free to people on the mailing list?**

No, I'm not thinking about that, I'm thinking about the fact that the noblest that was thought and said was being continuously put out.

**What about the 1957 cuts?**

I can't remember their affecting drama very greatly. I know there was a great to-do about it because the starting time was late, and the actual broadcasting time was less, but as far as our output was concerned, it wasn't greatly reduced.

**I mean, my impression is that it was actually, in a sense, an improvement because the programme had been too long, there hadn't been enough time to keep standards up for everything, and now it's concentrated, the mind was concentrated, yes. Now, I mentioned broadcasting in the 1970s, you'd gone by then, but you did say that later on there was a divorce between drama department and the Third, tell me about that.**

Well, I wasn't in on it, but I know that there seemed to be a kind of hiatus. There was a time in which no drama was done on the Third Programme at all. I don't know what the ins and outs of it were, but it seems to me to be inadmissible.

**You're thinking of after broadcasting in the 1970s here, when it became Radio 3, you mean, when the drama content was cut drastically?**

I don't know what the story was, perhaps you will happen upon it, but there seemed to be some personal thing between the people concerned, and it was left unresolved. I mean, the legacy of that is still there because the amount of spoken word, the amount is just ridiculous, I think.

**The change of head of drama from Val Gielgud to Martin Esslin was a fairly remarkable one, wasn't it?**

Yes. I mean, the thing then was, you see what happened was that Donald had been Harold's sponsor and so on, and so when Harold wrote the Caretaker, the asked Donald if he'd like to do it. Donald came into my office with the script one day and said, 'Do you think I ought to do it?' The question was a crucial one because in those days, if you did a theatre production, you had to leave the BBC. So, it was rather a momentous thing to do. I had no hesitation in saying, 'Yes, of course, you have to do it.' I think it was a shame, really, that Donald didn't succeed Val as head of drama, because I think the tale would have been different, the sort of vital connection between the theatre, and the English theatre, and the drama department, and probably with television as well would have been maintained.

**Whereas Martin Esslin was more interested in work in translation. Tell me what his preference was in general terms.**

Well, I knew him and know him, but I didn't work with him. I think he came from Bush House, a lot of people came from Bush House into the echelon. In fact, there was a silly, sort of, ceiling between programme people and higher administrators, which sort of meant that if you wanted to spend your whole professional life as a programme person, it meant you couldn't ever get beyond a certain height, which was self-defeating. No, I haven't ever put my mind to appraising Martin's contribution. I think he was really academic, and that's a pity, really, because he probably did a lot of very good work, but I think it's really essential that somebody in that position should be much more broadly qualified and interested.

**In your own days, there was a constant looking at what theatre was doing, going to the theatre, keeping in touch with television as well, television drama?**

There was a sort of abortive attempt to amalgamate the script unit in drama, television and drama, BBC, and that came to nothing. There were secondments of directors between one and the other. It never really came to much. There seemed to be some sort of jealousy or rivalry or something, it never really got properly realised. What we used to do, again because there was lots of money then, we all used to go and see all the films and all the plays, and that was partly to know what was going on. For example, when the Wooden Dish with Wilfrid Lawson was a fair catastrophe in the box office, we would hastily put it on Saturday Night Theatre to try to give it a new lease of life. That sort of thing we tried to do. The other reason we went to see all the plays was that, as you know, there was the drama repertory company, which helped to cast the Third Programme plays as well as the others. This sounds frightfully smug, but we did, we were frightfully public-spirited. We thought that one of the things we ought to do was to give as many actors a chance as well as writers. So, some of us, the younger ones, made it our duty always to include at least one new actor in each production so that you had people getting proper-, a shop window, and also experience.

**There was a constant feeling, I think, wasn't there, that not enough writers were writing for radio. That was perhaps less so with drama than with talks and features, but that is a recurring theme throughout the history of the Third. 'We need more writers.' Did you share that feeling?**

I can't remember that. I mean, up until the beginning of the 1960s, I don't think-, I mean, when Giles was alive, and Reese Adrian was going, we did a lot of adaptations of-, and we also did a lot of translations of foreign works. I mean, we didn't do any Ionesco, although I knew Ionesco, but they weren't very visual. In those days, we weren't doing things simply as representations of what was going on. We commissioned a work from Adam (? 39.49), and we were the first to do Marguerite Duras, in fact it was Beckett who suggested to me that I should translate it. I translated it and directed, and that was the first of her works (TC: 00:40:00) that was ever done in England. We did a lot of work in trying to-, I did an adaptation of La Nausée, and Les Gommes, and we did actually reflect most of what was going on in writing. That was a big source of material for the Third Programme.

**What about audience reactions? Did you have to cope, it wasn't you, probably, but were there a stream of, sort of, fogeyish letters objecting to avant-garde writing?**

No, the audience research reports, I mean, people offer to be on the panel and wrote reports on selected number of things, and I think everything that was done on the Third Programme got an audience research report. Well, it varied from the sublime to the ridiculous, because there was always a, sort of, set question, 'What did you think of the music?' So they hate the music, and then there wasn't any music, that sort of thing. I think the people who listen to the Third Programme were fairly serious. What was interesting then was to see the development of audience reaction between the first original

broadcast and then the third or the fourth, because then you were able to see the poet doing what Wordsworth said he had to do, which was create his own audience.

**That's interesting because Pamela Hansford Johnson and V. S. Pritchett both said, both at different times, that writing for radio was like, she said, 'Like shouting into a hole in the ground,' he said, 'Like shouting into the sky,' i.e. you weren't getting an audience response. That's writers thinking of just one broadcast, is it?**

Well, I don't know what they wanted, I mean, writers and audiences, I don't think writers should think about audiences too much. Programme planners might have to think about them, but I think writers just have to hope for the best.

**Well, thank you very much, it's lovely, there's some wonderful stuff there. Anything we haven't mentioned?**

Well, various scandalous things which I don't feel like-, (laughter).

**Alright, you're very welcome to, I have no objections. I'll just-,**