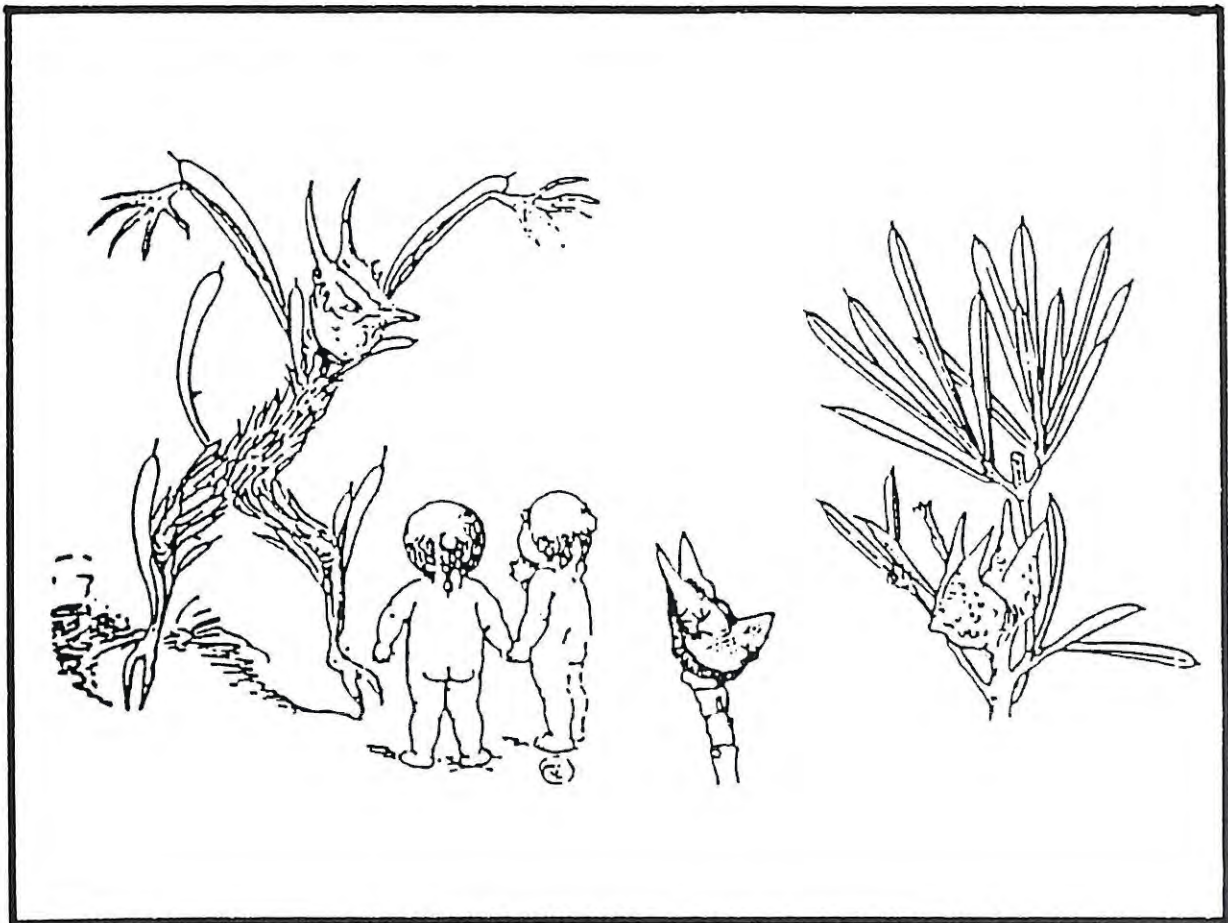


# HERITAGE

LINKING THE PAST WITH THE PRESENT — FOR THE FUTURE

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 1991

No. 61



TWILIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF GUMNUTS

PHONICS: THE HOLY TOOL



**Front Cover:** *May Gibbs' "Dancing Lucky Devil" (Lambertia formosa)*

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# HERITAGE

No. 61 September–November 1991

## CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

On 11th November, 1991, a former Lieutenant Governor of South Australia, Sir Walter Crocker, stood outside a magistrate's court and protested (with others) against the war crimes trial of an elderly Adelaide pensioner, Ivan Polyukhovich.

Listing a number of reasons why Australia should not "be mixed up in this costly folly", Sir Walter wanted it known he believed the war crimes trials were driven by hatred and revenge. "And worse," said Sir Walter, "the spirit of hatred and revenge unleashed by the trials can poison and destabilize whole communities as well as persons", giving examples such as Ulster, the Middle East and the "fratricidal violence of (the) Serbs and Croats."

On behalf of the nation, in the Federal Parliament on 22nd March, 1961, Sir Garfield Barwick announced the Government had decided -- with the agreement of the Opposition -- to close the chapter on war crimes and allow post-war migrants to make their homes in Australia and to live 'in security ... under the rule of law'.

Thirty years later, the Hawke Government -- with the consent of the Democrats -- broke the agreement.

In his history of the British people (*Set in a Silver Sea*, Volume I), Sir Arthur Bryant shows us what happened to a nation when the King, who had the military and legal power to take revenge, chose instead, to forgive his conquered enemies and offer them peace.

Over two decades the Vikings had terrorised, plundered and destroyed Christian kingdoms until finally only one remained - Wessex. In 871 AD Alfred was hastily elected to defend the last Christian kingdom in England. In battle he proved his courage, but "it was in victory that his full grandeur became apparent". Although his enemies had proved to be very treacherous, "... he took pity on them and fed them and offered them peace".

Sir Arthur Bryant wrote, "No greater act of statesmanship was ever performed by an English king." Alfred "had the wisdom to realize that the sword, though powerful to defend, could settle nothing permanently, and that only a conquest of the heart could endure. And though he and his people had suffered terribly from the invaders, he was too magnanimous to seek revenge ..."

King Alfred's peace-making marked a turning-point in that nation's history and made it possible for the injured and injurers to live together in peace -- eventually forming a single nation. Australia needs such statesmen today.

## THE AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Australian Heritage Society was launched in Melbourne on 18th September, 1971 at an Australian League of Rights Seminar. It was clear that Australia's heritage is under increasing attack from all sides; spiritual, cultural, political and constitutional. A permanent body was required to ensure that young Australians were not cut off from their true heritage and the Heritage Society assumed that role in a number of ways.

The Australian Heritage Society welcomes people of all ages to join in its programme for the regeneration of the spirit of Australia. To value the great spiritual realities that we have come to know and respect through our heritage, the virtues of patriotism, of integrity and love of truth, the pursuit of goodness and beauty, and unselfish concern for other people - to maintain a love and loyalty for those values.

Young Australians have a very real challenge before them. The Australian Heritage Society, with your support, can give them the necessary lead in building a better Australia.

"Our heritage today is the fragments gleaned from past ages; the heritage of tomorrow - good or bad - will be determined by our actions today."

SIR RAPHAEL CILENTO  
First Patron of the Australian Heritage Society

PRINCIPAL ADDRESS  
BOX 7409, CLOISTERS SQUARE,  
PERTH, 6000.

STATE ADDRESSES  
Box 1052J, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001  
47 McHarg Road, Happy Valley, South  
Australia, 5159  
Box Q364, Queen Victoria Building,  
Sydney, NSW, 2000  
56 Boundary Street, Spring Hill,  
Queensland, 4000  
C/- Australian Heritage Alliance,  
PO Box 187, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 7005

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EDITOR - Betty Luks

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# SUCCESSION: MONARCHY FOR MODERN TIMES

by Randall J. Dicks, J.D.

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A long-time fertile source of wars, squabbles, and strife, and the grist for countless historians' mills, is on its way to disappearing from Europe. It is **Salic Law**, which Shakespeare memorably satirized in one of the opening scenes of *Henry V*:

"There is no bar  
To make against your highness's claim to France  
But this, which they produce from Pharamond,  
'In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant'  
'No woman shall succeed in Salique land' ..."

The Archbishop of Canterbury proceeds to describe to the assembled courtiers, in a confounding jumble, King Henry's convoluted claim to the French throne.<sup>(1)</sup> It turns out that the Germanic *Lex Salica* actually applied to succession to property, not thrones, but Henry made his claim stick anyway, after his victory at Agincourt. Misapplied and misconstrued or not, Salic Law became a part of almost every European monarchy, and others as well, forbidding females, or those descended in the female line, from succession to offices and titles. Britain has long been the major exception to the rule.

At the beginning of this century, nearly all the monarchies of Europe -- empires, kingdoms, grand duchies, principalities -- observed Salic Law, or a modified form of it. By the end of the century, perhaps no European monarchy will follow the ancient rule. Monarchies, in general, are quick to adapt to changing times and needs.

The United Kingdom, Spain, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Monaco presently all allow the succession of females to the throne in one way or another. The Netherlands not only allows it, but that country has had nothing but Queens for more than a hundred

years, and last year observed the 'Centenary of the Four Queens'.

The 'modern' trend may have started in Denmark, as many modern trends do. The King and Queen of Denmark had three daughters, but no sons. The Royal Family was extremely popular, in part because of their exemplary behaviour during the Nazi occupation of Denmark, and most Danes thought that King Frederik IX's eldest daughter, Princess Margrethe, deserved to inherit her father's throne.

Denmark's law of succession was changed in 1953, following several years of study and a national referendum, and Salic Law was abandoned. The new law

made the throne of Denmark hereditary for the descendants of King Christian X and Queen Alexandrine, male or female, sons taking precedence over daughters in order of age. As a result of this change, the then 13-year-old Princess Margrethe became Crown Princess Margrethe, heiress presumptive to the throne, in place of her uncle, King Frederik IX's brother, Prince Knud.

Another Scandinavian country took the process a step further, when Sweden amended its law of succession in 1979. The changes to the Act of Succession provided that 'male and female descendants ... of King Carl XVI Gustaf, shall have the right of succession to the



*Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark (right)  
with his brother, Prince Joachim*

throne of Sweden'. This not only struck down Salic Law, but removed male precedence over female heirs. Young Crown Prince Carl Philip was supplanted as heir by his elder sister, who became, and is, Crown Princess Victoria, heiress apparent to the Swedish throne.<sup>(2)</sup>

The third act of the Scandinavian drama came in Norway in 1990. The Norwegian law is now like the Swedish; the first-born child of the monarch will be the heir, whether male or female. However, unlike the amendment process in Sweden, the Norwegians did not make the law completely retroactive. The new King of Norway, Harald V, has two children, Haakon Magnus and Martha Louise. Haakon Magnus, though younger than his sister, Martha Louise, is Crown Prince. Princess Martha Louise is next in line, however (at least until Haakon Magnus has children). Now it is up to the Danes to decide whether they wish to give females equal standing with males.

The Spanish Constitution signed by King Juan Carlos in 1978 provides for female succession, although males have precedence.

The newest development in the swan song of *Lex Salica* comes in Belgium. European Community policy favours equality between the sexes, at least as far as choosing heads of state is concerned. The Belgian Government has announced that it will propose amendments to the 1830 Constitution which would permit a Queen to reign over the kingdom. The relevant section of the constitution now provides for hereditary succession to the throne 'from male to male, in order of primogeniture and to the perpetual exclusion of women and their descendants'.<sup>(3)</sup>

King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola of Belgium have no children. The proposed changes to the constitution would apply to the descendants of the King's younger brother, Prince Albert, but not to the King's elder sister, Grand Duchess Josephine-Charlotte of Luxembourg (nor to her eighteen children and grandchil-

dren). Prince Albert and his wife, Princess Paola, have three children: Prince Philippe, 30; Princess Astrid, 28; and Prince Laurent, 27. Under the present constitution, Prince Philippe follows his father in order of succession, and Laurent follows Philippe, with Astrid not being in line at all. Under the proposed amendment, the order, following Prince Albert, would be Philippe, Astrid and her children, and then Laurent.<sup>(4)</sup>

Once Belgium enacts its changes (which could not take place until after the next general election, now scheduled for January 1992), Liechtenstein will be the only European monarchy which bars female succession to the throne. This is not surprising, as women were not even allowed to vote in Liechtenstein until 1986. However, a change might be just over the horizon; Prince Hans-Adam II is a practical modernist who wants his country to be in step with 20th-century Europe. Liechtenstein became a member of the United Nations in 1990, and princesses might well achieve full dynastic rights before the end of the century.

Succession to the Australian monarchy is not specifically set out by the Constitution, but Section 2 of the Preamble of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act provides that "The provisions of this Act referring to the Queen" [Victoria -- this was written in 1900] "shall extend to Her Majesty's heirs and successors in the sovereignty of the United Kingdom". The succession to Australia's Crown is thus governed by the same procedures and conventions which control the succession to the British Crown, and women may inherit the Australian Crown. However, males continue to take precedence over females; H.R.H. The Duke of York comes ahead of H.R.H. The Princess Royal in the order of the succession, even though the Princess Royal is older than her brother.

One sometimes hears that monarchy is old-fashioned, anachronistic, or even too conservative. Monarchy is, in fact, far more flexible and responsive to chang-

ing needs than most republics are in this century. After years of trying, the United States has not been able to enact an equal rights amendment to its constitution, and has a dismal record of women in high office. The European monarchies include two reigning queens, who have a total of 50 years of experience on the throne. Five of the ten monarchies have (or soon will have) women as either first or second in line to the throne. As far as the European Community's equal rights policy goes, monarchical Europe has an excellent record. The monarchies, far from lagging behind, as one might expect of old-fashioned, anachronistic institutions, are taking the lead; as exemplified by the motto of the King of Sweden, the monarchies are indeed moving 'with the times'.

#### NOTES:

1. *King Henry V*, Act 1. Scene 2. The scene is nicely done in the recent Kenneth Branagh film version.
2. Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden is heiress apparent because the Swedish law gives males and females completely equal rights. Crown Princess Margrethe was heiress presumptive, because of the theoretical possibility, however unlikely, that her father might yet have had a son who would have become Crown Prince and heir apparent in place of his elder sister. Queen Elizabeth, while her father reigned as King George VI, was also heiress presumptive.
3. Belgian Constitution, Section 60.
4. It is generally believed that Prince Albert would immediately renounce the throne in favour of his elder son, Prince Philippe. Should Astrid ever come to the throne, it would present an interesting situation, for she is married to Archduke Laurent of Austria, grandson of Austria's last Emperor, Karl I. Astrid is in fact, by her marriage, Her Imperial and Royal Highness Archduchess Astrid of Austria. Her ascent to the throne of Belgium would mean that the House of Habsburg would replace the House of Coburg as Belgium's dynasty. Neither Prince Philippe nor Prince Laurent are yet married.

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# SIR DOUGLAS MAWSON: THE GREAT SURVIVOR

by Christopher Ashton

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The score of years at the beginning of this century marked man's commencement of Antarctic exploration with new determinism and heroism. In 1908 Mawson, aged 26 years, led an important expedition to the South Magnetic Pole. The strength, vitality and leadership he displayed was to stand him in stead for an even greater test that was ahead of him.

From 1911 to 1913 he led the Australasian Antarctic Expedition into the unknown country west of Cape Adare; the voyage commenced on 2nd December, 1911 and on January 8th, 1912 they came at last to the sweep of water Mawson named Commonwealth Bay. The main base was established on a small headland on Commonwealth Bay and the following months were used for scientific research and assimilation, preparation and training for the planned exploration.

Blizzards raged all April and May. Into August Mawson chose a spot 5.5 miles from the camp as a refuge for men fighting their way back from weeks on the open trail. With Ninnis and Madigan a vertical shaft was hacked into the blue-green ice and a room carved back into the solid frozen mass; it was named "Aladdin's Cave" and marked by a flag pole.

During September food depots were laid along the trails leading beyond Aladdin's Cave to the south, southeast and to the west. September was flitting away and full surveys of the 2,000 miles of coast and its hinterland was now a pipe dream. The best that could be done was to stay with his fanwise method of exploration and meet his undertaking to make a better scientific job of locating the South Magnetic Pole.

\* The first party to be appointed was led by Bob Bage an all-round technologist, Eric Webb magnetician and Frank Hurley photographer on a hard journey south-southeast, up and over the plateau, the most southerly of all their exploration.

\* With the understanding that Frank Wild - somewhere in the west -- would drive eastward, Mawson decided to send a trio,

Bickerton, Os Whether and young Arthur Hodgeman the government mapmaker, in that direction to cover as much coast and upland as possible. This party would have the aid of the aircraft as an airtractor, pulling a loaded sledge.

\* Mawson decided to send three parties in the general direction to the east.

\* One party formed partly from other support groups would scout the nearby shore region east of Cape Denison -- Dr. Frank Stillwell would lead this group.

\* Another shoreline trio was to leapfrog the first party and would be led by Cecil Madigan.

\* Mawson would lead the toughest of all journeys, a deep probe across country into the unknown territory running back east toward the point he had reached in 1909 with David and MacKay when they crossed the Prince Albert Mountains.

The far inland called him, but he wanted to stay near enough to the coast to plot its geography for map making, for claiming the terrain for the Crown and yet able to move far enough inland to find the mountains, perhaps to find the *moraines* of glaciers that would reveal clues of a geological nature or the mineral treasures under the ice shield.

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## MAWSON CHOOSES HIS TEAM

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He at once selected his two companions: Lieutenant Belgrave Edward Sutton Ninnis (Cherub) of the British Royal Fusiliers, unassuming, patient, loyal and excellent with the animals, and Dr. Xavier Guillaume Mertz, a 28 year old German-

speaking law graduate, fine mountaineer and world ski champion.

Not until noon on November 7th did the first party move off, only to be driven back 2 hours later by the strong headwind. Next morning when the wind dropped three parties were sent off. On the afternoon of Sunday 10th November, Mawson, Ninnis and Mertz, with 17 dogs and three sledges set off. Racing off into the ice shield they made 5.5 miles in four hours in bright sunshine and almost calm weather. They caught and shared a meal with the Magnetic Pole Party at Aladdin's Cave, staying overnight in the cave -- 36 degrees below freezing, a cosy retreat with the wind only at 25 mph.

Two-thirds of their load was food and on leaving Aladdin's Cave, to the ounce, food and fuel weighed 1,260 lbs, and 700 lbs of that food was dried seal meat, blubber and biscuits for the dogs. Some 463 lbs comprised items essential to life and to the needs of scientific exploration. Each man was allotted 32 ozs of concentrated food per day -- pemmican, dry hard wholemeal biscuit, cocoa mixed with rich dried milk, sugar and minor amounts of cheese, chocolate, raisins and tea.

They were fed, packed and away south by 8:30 a.m., Mawson breaking the trail ahead. The first dog team pulled two sledges with half of the entire load to lighten wear on the sledge runners. The second team, driven by Ninnis, carried the other half and was to be discarded when the food load was reduced. By noon they had travelled 7 miles and turned east with the looming clouds bringing heavy snow showers and wind above 45 mph. With blown snow drifting higher than their knees they could not go on and camped 8 miles from Aladdin's Cave. It was a disappointing start.

All through Tuesday they huddled down on the unyielding ice; by noon on the



*700 lbs of the food for the journey was dried seal meat*



*Mawson's Hut, Commonwealth Bay, 1912*

(This photograph was taken by Frank Hurley, member of the expedition)

13th the air cleared sufficiently for a forced march to the rendezvous spot 18 miles from the cave. At 7:30 p.m. they had made it and pitched tents with difficulty against a wind rising to 80 mph overnight. The blizzard buffeted them for three days. They were only able to light the primus on the third day -- a rigorous introduction to long-distance travel.

Under a clearing sky they could see no sign of the six men of the two coastal parties and started off in one sledge filled with apprehension back to the cave, when they saw a moving black dot through the field glasses and turned around and travelled to intercept the six men and two sledges.

The three parties travelled on convoy the next day parting in the afternoon -- Mawson travelling due east on a rising ice field. By 5 p.m. Mawson had topped the rise at 2,600 ft. altitude. Breathless with effort they turned south and marched into rising, rolling ice hills. On level terrain they camped, fed the dogs and tethered them with traces tied to ice nails driven into the frozen surface. Fourteen miles covered, close to Mawson's planned average for the whole journey.

After the assault of white glare it was nice to look at the blue flame and the yellow, red and orange personal bags. Socks, mittens, woollen helmets and wet finnesko were hung on a lampwick line and moulded into shape for donning the next morning -- frozen stiff.

The first days of their eastern journey met them with hostility, imposing exertion eating at their reserves of strength and sapping their stamina; heart-pounding, steep, slippery slopes, with precipitous declines and impassable upheavals of ice; winds scouring faces and chilling blood, and light a blinding refracted glare. Next morning they detoured southward around an unknown bay before they could turn east having difficulty with *sastrugi* on which dogs slipped, sledges turned over and men fell off. Mertz discarded his skis as front runner and found difficulty with the 5 ft. distance

between peaks so Mawson took the lead himself giving the dogs an object to pull for -- hopping 5 ft. strides from ridge to ridge. They found their first mountain, Aurora Peak, a 2,000 ft. steep, ancient pre-Cambrian gneiss mountain with a bare rock peak.

Next morning brought a 40 mph wind and an ice floor canting steeply downward for 400 ft. They tethered the dogs and with a slipping tackle lowered the three sledges to the ledge below, and then to another ledge to a total fall of 800 ft. They brought down the dogs and camped for lunch. Mawson reconnoitred and found they were camped in the crater of an extinct volcano 800 ft. deep and at least three miles in diameter. They fought their way out scaling terraces of hard blue ice and banks of snow.

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#### PARTY IN CRISIS

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On the flat again the dogs were reharnessed, but during the afternoon trouble struck. A bitch in late pregnancy and a husky with a foot injured by a falling sledge were allowed to run free and this freedom excited one of the other dogs to wriggle free from her harness and run off back out of sight into the crater. Two hours later with Mawson guarding the two connected sledges from behind in the low snow drift they were in crisis -- the front six dogs fell through the snow bridge and plunged screaming with fear into a crevasse 25 ft. wide. Their struggles dragging the other dogs and sledges towards the edge of the abyss. Instantly Mawson dug his heels into the hard snow gripping dog traces with one hand and the rear sledge with the other -- realizing suddenly that they were all on a single wide snow bridge.

He yelled to Ninnis sending him back for a rope that might save them from final disaster but he couldn't wait with frantic dogs hanging over the edge and the strain growing on his legs. He had to move back slowly, easily, sliding one foot at a time.

Foot by foot he reversed, his gloved hands aching with the weight of the dogs

and heavy sledges dragging at his muscles. Slowly his immensely powerful frame won ground and he stood on solid ice; Ninnis helped him drag all the dogs and the two sledges to safety.

He had no time to recover. A startled Mertz aroused them to the plight of the two loose dogs ahead of them at the edge of a broken snow bridge with their hindquarters below the surface and front paws madly scrambling at the rim. Mertz reached one and Mawson was just in time to catch the other by her hackles. He carried her back in his arms where she gave birth to the first of fourteen pups; poor litter, shrivelled mites with no hope of survival.

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#### SNOW BLINDNESS

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They backtracked southward to avoid this area and in the evening, Ninnis, who was taking a turn as front runner, suddenly crumpled up in pain -- the first victim of snow blindness. They pitched the tent and applied the stock polar remedy -- the insertion of small tabloids of cocaine and zinc sulphate under the eyelids, there to dissolve and ease the burning pain.

The number of dogs began to dwindle in this nightmare country, a land of wayward, whirlwind columns of sucked-up snow, gigantic frozen cauldrons in the ice from which winds spewed geyser-like drift into the air, domes of ice, open and snow-choked crevasses, frozen sinkholes 60 ft. deep. To the south, great icefalls where the plateau canopy descended the canyon, the glacier had carved and moved downward to the sea, spreading out to 45 miles wide, feeding the floating tongue of ice thousands of feet thick. They fought their way through a labyrinth of winding crevasses onto the bed of the greatest glacier then known; it dragged on their time and energy.

One morning, trudging five miles to advance only two miles, Mawson slipped into a crevasse to his armpits and was pulled out by the rope attached to the sledge from his own harness. They all



roped themselves now to the sledges. Ninnis fell into a crevasse to be held up only by gripping the legs of the camera tripod; a pit of ice too deep to estimate. Again and again they turned back on their tracks, edging forward a few miles, but actually walking, climbing and hauling down slopes, as many as 16 miles a day. Slowly, remorselessly, the continent was wearing them down.

They hitched all three sledges together, but the last and weightiest fell into a crevasse twice, and each time Mawson was lowered on a rope for hours of carefully lifting each 70 lb. tank of dog food for hauling to the surface, hanging and straining in a situation where a false move would have sent the whole sledge-load crashing to a bottomless pit.

Mawson was so drained that he fell into his sleeping bag and forgot to wind his timepiece. The watch stopped during the night and the aid of knowing the exact time and the longitude of the hut was lost.

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#### THEY NOW TRUDGE INLAND

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They crossed the glacier, turned their backs on it and trudged inland -- two weeks of marching towards a point 380 miles east. For two days they slogged across the ice of the upper plateau until they came to the point where the frozen plateau tilted downward to another immense glacier, much bigger and more impressive than the last one -- another daunting fearful barrier. They spent a week in its vastness. Men and dogs fished down, all being ravenous for more food, the dogs snarling, having established a hierarchy on the basis of brute savagery. Here a dog with enough trace reached a sledge, ripped open a food bag and gulped a 2.5 lb. pack of their energy-giving butter -- it was to be sadly missed. They emerged from the glacier with Mawson solemnly saying, "I vow never to lead you again into such terrible ice. We shall do everything possible to avoid a repeat of that experience."

December 1st and the temperature rose above freezing for the first time -- making uphill travel through sticky snow possible only by the greatest exertion.

On top of the plateau they came upon flat-topped *sastrugi* by the thousands blocking their way; all were about three feet high and shaped like anvils. Immobilised by 50-70 mph winds, Mawson cut their daily rations to 14 ozs. and they rested. For four nights and three days the blizzard raged, then at 5:00 a.m. on December 9th, silence. At first the newly-laid snow enabled skis and sledges to glide across the surface, but soon the sun pierced the haze and softening snow made progress hard again.

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#### CONDITIONS WEARING THEM DOWN

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The awareness of what this land was doing to himself and his comrades was thoroughly apparent. Jolly Mertz becoming emotional, Ninnis losing zest, growing apathetic, and his own condition deteriorating -- painful gums, swollen underlip and the left side of his face aching constantly with neuralgia. He knew he would suffer more than the others; he was bigger, with consequent greater heat loss and heat was body energy generated by food -- and they all had exactly the same amount of food. After two days of solid marching and a further 30 miles across the plateau Mawson had to open Ninnis' finger plagued with an inflammatory tumour (whitlow), giving him constant excruciating pain and the risk of septicaemia.

While Ninnis slept, Mawson and Mertz revised their sledges; Ninnis' now well-worn and damaged sledge had to be discarded. The food loads were stowed on the best sledge to run in the rear. It would carry their tent and the main essentials, the reasoning being that where the front runner and first sledge had gone would be safe travelling. They threw away old clothing, worn mitts, a spade, tattered finnesko and straps. They would travel faster now with only two sledges. There were twelve dogs left with six being the strongest -- these would pull the heaviest sledge at the rear and the other six inferior dogs would be shot and fed to their mates when their food ran out and hunger would make the animals wolflike. Ninnis awoke refreshed, his finger very sore, but no longer throbbing.

Onward their convoy wended, with Ninnis' right hand in a sling.

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#### A FATAL JUMP

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On 15th December a lovely day dawned and after a late start they stopped to make the noon sighting of the sun. An hour later with Mertz breaking the trail about thirty yards ahead of Mawson, Ninnis looked up to see Mertz indicating that he had skied across a crevasse. Ninnis knew exactly what to do; to cut short his time on the snow bridge, he would go directly across rather than an angled path, directing the dogs from the ground rather than from the sledge, with his good hand tugging at the traces.

He jumped from the rear of the sledge, his toes hitting the snow like a heavily weighted dart and his body plunged through the disintegrating snow with his sledge and the wailing dogs. Down in the cold blackness, 150 ft. down, his falling body smashed into a projecting ledge of iron ice. With the shattered remains of the sledge and dogs, Belgrave Ninnis plunged deeper and deeper into the abyss.

Appalled, Mawson and Mertz both circled the crevasse to lie on the edge of solid ice, to call and call into the depths. With his binoculars, and held by Mertz, Mawson peered through the green-blue into deep darkness, beyond light into the black. For three hours Mertz, frenetic in his grief, and Mawson circled the broken snow; then Mawson faced the savage fact -- this was their companion's grave -- he threw his arm around Mertz' shoulders and led him away to the remaining sledge. Left aboard this was a single food bag, sledging rations for three men for one week; in Mawson's personal bag, a small box of dark chocolate sticks and a bag of raisins. All reserves of food, all dog food, their heavy-weather tent poles, their ground cover, the spade and pick axe, the mast and spar for a sail, their mugs, plates and spoons, Mertz' waterproof burberry pants and helmet and the six strongest dogs -- all at the bottom of the icy abyss.

They were now 320 miles from the hut, out for five weeks and the barest re-

sources to get back. In this dire plight the broken sledge and the throw-aways at the camp of December 12th, fourteen miles back, were suddenly precious and had to be reached for even a rudimentary shelter.

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### THEY HONOUR THEIR COMRADE

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Before leaving they paid their last respects to Ninnis. At the rim of the crevasse Mawson read the burial service from his battered prayer book. They would honour their lost comrade by naming the second glacier they had discovered the Ninnis Glacier. Thus, while his grave would be eventually lost in the shifting ice, his name would remain on the maps of the world.

Driven by the crucial urge to reach the previous camp they pressed on not stopping that night. Through the hours of midnight sun, silently praying that there had been no snow fall to mask the location, they came to the dark blur at 2:30 in the morning, to drop trembling into the snow. The dogs crying from hunger and tiredness, Mawson regarded them with utter pity -- old Battler Johnson, gallant Ginger, old George, Mary, Haldane and dear Pavlova. Something had to be found for them this night. He rummaged and found two holed wolfskin gloves, a pair of finnesko boots and a short length of hide strapping. He cut them into six equal portions and with Mertz, fed them to the dogs, each gulping its portion in a flash.

With runners from the old sledge, snow shoes and a light cover, they fashioned a crude, blessed shelter without which they would be frozen corpses in a day or two. They decided not to eat, drinking water with a few drops of alcohol instead -- and both wrote up their diaries.

The next day Mawson shot the first of the remaining dogs, keeping the fullest of the leg muscles and the liver for themselves and feeding the carcass, offal and head to the other dogs. Mertz fashioned spoons from a wooden sledge strut and repaired the vital spade whilst Mawson shaped two tins into food and drinking

pannikans and then sewed up tears in the tent cover.

It was past six in the evening when they were ready to march that Mawson stood to attention and claimed the land in the name of the Crown and named it King George V Land. They marched away leaving the Union Jack flapping, Mertz and Mawson pulling with the dogs. A rising icy wind after midnight gave Mertz relief; it froze his wet pants and helmet into solid windproof shields. For ten hours without halt they trudged into the west, the sledge meter showing a marvellous 18.5 miles. For three nights (to avoid the drag of soft snow during the day) they marched upwards of twelve hours without break, aiming at 15 miles per day, guessing their westerly path by the south-north *sastrugi* alignment, their compass useless because of the proximity to the South Magnetic Pole.

They were a sorry sight, two men slipping, staggering and falling, pulling with five matted, scrawny dogs -- Mertz leading, tied by 20 ft. of rope to the front trace of the sledge, Mawson trudging in the dog trace to take the missing place. Mertz walked with one eye bandaged against snow blindness -- after five applications of cocaine and zinc.

Onward at a funeral pace, their mouths parched, longing for liquids but unable to afford the time and effort of erecting the tent to light the primus. In four nights they covered 60 miles.

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### DECISION TO EAT LIVERS CATASTROPHIC

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The second dog was shot when he collapsed; carcass and offal were fed to the ravenous four remaining, muscle and liver kept for themselves. They found it repellant, even chopped into fine pieces and stewed. The remaining dogs were nothing more than furry skeletons pressing dumbly forward in their harness.

The men relished freedom from chewing when eating the dog liver and the time saved in not cooking it, believing it also to be nourishing. They had not heard of the law of Arctic Eskimos, of the writ-

ings of Nansen on men who were reported to have died from eating such livers. Not for another eight years would Vitamin A be isolated and a further twenty years would pass before medical science could elucidate the havoc that overdosing on this vitamin created in humans.

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### BIOLOGICAL CHAOS

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Not until 1971 was it shown by biochemists in Adelaide that there was a peril in eating husky livers -dizziness, stumbling, nausea, scaling, splitting of skin, loss of hair, cracks around the mouth, nose and eyes developing into painful fissures, drying of oral and nasal membranes, irritability, skeletal and stomach pain (caused by chaotic swelling of liver and spleen), loss of appetite, dysentery, loss of weight, lassitude, morbid sensitivity, irrationality, delirium and dementia and finally, convulsions and probable death from brain bleeding.

The decision to eat husky livers was catastrophic, for with six dogs to eat at two pounds per liver, the two men swallowed 60 toxic doses of Vitamin A. The marks of illness were on them within a week.

A week after Ninnis' death they were down to two dogs, Ginger and Pavlova. The temperature was down to 31 degrees below and the sledge meter froze and broke when Mawson tried to free it. Shortly after they had to shoot Pavlova and in an effort to reduce weight, they used a couple of gallons of kerosene to boil up the remaining dog bones into a jelly. On the morning of Christmas Eve, his mind dwelling on the problem of faster movement, Mawson decided to lighten the load further; it was to lead him into an error of judgement that came near to having fatal consequences.

The box camera, all the heavy glass plates would be thrown away, he decided. Why carry rifle and bullets? Instruments, old socks, unwanted almanacs and log books, all could go. Heavy pieces of sledge runners used for tent props could go and be replaced by the theodolite legs. All the bones boiled

(Contd. on p. 22)

# The Return of PHONICS-FIRST, the Holy Tool

by Nancy Albrecht

Manchuria is the home of the soya bean, where it has been known as the holy bean, because its complete protein-value makes it the equal of meat. In a similar way, phonics could be called holy, or complete, in that it is defined in a dictionary as a method of teaching reading, punctuation and spelling based on the phonetic interpretation of ordinary spelling.

Reading and writing had their origin in the dim past, yet today in Britain, America and Australia, we find ourselves in conflict and confusion, as to how to teach it. Children naturally learn to talk, but they have to be taught to read and write.

The dawn of English literature was beginning to break at the time of King Alfred the Great, 849-901. "Now, out of you five boys," Alfred's mother coaxed, "the first to learn to read will receive a prize." It was he, the youngest, who won a book of Saxon poems. At the age of twenty-five Alfred became King of Wessex; later, King of all England.

From that time on, glorious progress was made in English literature with the contributions of such writers as Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, the highest peak of excellence being reached in 1611 with the King James version of the Bible.

Great prose such as *Pilgrim's Progress* could not have been written by an ignorant tinker, except that his ear was attuned to the language and cadence of the Authorized Version of the Bible, which was, in times past, the staple literature of the common people, and so profoundly influenced speech and writing.

It is something of a revelation to handle the set of Victorian Primary School Readers, which were remarkable in that the children were exposed to the classics, their traditional legacy, and the vocabulary has not been dumbed, limited, to suit their capacity.

At this point let us consider the nature and history of our alphabet, which, after all, has been the vehicle for all our written communication.

Alphabetical letters have names, but their office is to represent the sounds of the language on paper. Both names and sounds must be learned. Some dictionaries include a pronunciation key for this purpose. Tradition had it that teachers of infants drummed in lessons that left impressions more lasting than ever imagined. For instance a jingle sung in a primary school in the early 1920's comes to mind:

"We say  $\check{a}$ ,  $\check{e}$ ,  $\check{i}$ ,  $\check{o}$ ,  $\check{u}$ ; that is true.  
But, when Mister E comes near,  
We say  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{e}$ ,  $\bar{i}$ ,  $\bar{o}$ ,  $\bar{u}$ ."

The written letter symbols for our speech sounds are phonograms. Phonograms are alphabetical letters used singly or in combination such as *qu*, *dge* and *ough*, representing one only sound of our speech. More of these may be discerned in the following verse:

## ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE

I take it you already know  
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?  
Others may stumble, but not you,  
On hiccough, thorough, slough and through?  
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,  
To learn of less familiar traps?  
Beware of heard, a dreadful word  
That looks like beard and sounds like bird,  
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead --

For goodness sake don't call it 'deed'!  
Watch out for meat and great and threat.  
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.)  
A moth is not a moth in mother  
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,  
And here is not a match for there,  
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear.  
And then there's dose and rose and lose --  
Just look them up -- and goose and choose,  
And cork and work and card and ward,  
And font and front and word and sword,  
And do and go and thwart and cart --  
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!  
A dreadful language? Man alive,  
I'd mastered it when I was five!

Speech is a prized possession. Communication would be very different if we were all deaf-mutes. Consider the range and versatility of the voice, which can mumble and murmur, chant, blubber, croak and croon, growl and whisper, not to mention inarticulate sounds such as chortle, giggle, guffaw, yodel, whistle, yell and scream.

We appreciate that voices have accent, resonance, lilt, import, cadence, and many other values. They can be poetic and lyrical, harsh and shrill, melodic, clear, soft, feeble, sharp, raucous, savage, sonorous, musical, eloquent.

Even babies succeed remarkably well in making themselves understood - whether by means of a coo, a whine or a bawl. In later life, they may learn to pronounce, to prophesy, to implore, to lecture. How wonderful to be able to put different forms of utterance into manuscript, print and computer!

The dictionary definition of spelling is a group of letters representing a word. Spelling is aided by good pronunciation, for correct sounds lead to accurate interpretation when writing. Demosthenes, the outstanding orator of Ancient Greece, had a speech impediment, so he practised oratory with pebbles in his mouth, making himself heard above the roar of breakers on a beach.

The words 'language' and 'linguist' are from Latin (*lingua* =tongue). 'Glossary' is from *glossa* Latin (going back to Greek) = tongue. Not only the tongue, but the whole apparatus of mouth, lungs, throat, larynx, teeth, lips, jaw, nose and cheek-cavities all contribute to speech.

To read any language built on an alphabet, it is essential from the outset to know the vital factors of its phonic code. The word alphabet is defined as the letters of a language in a certain order. The whole purpose of language is to convey meaning. Its departments of semantics, phonetics and syntax overlap.

Semantics (the science of meanings), phonetics (the science of sounds), and syntax (from the Greek, *syn-tassein* = to put in order), provides for the building of phrases, sentences and paragraphs from words.

## GRAMMAR IN RHYME

Three little words you often see  
Are Articles A, An, and The.  
A Noun is the name of anything,  
As School or Garden, Hoop or Swing.  
Adjectives tell the kind of noun,  
As Great, Small, Pretty, White, or Brown.  
Instead of nouns the Pronouns stand:  
Her head, His face, Your arm, My hand.  
Verbs tell of something being done:  
To Read, Count, Laugh, Sing, Jump, or Run.  
How things are done the Adverbs tell,  
As Slowly, Quickly, Ill, or Well.  
Conjunctions join the words together,  
As men And women, wind And weather.  
The Preposition stands before  
A noun, as In or Through a door.  
The Interjection shows surprise,  
As Oh! How pretty! Ah! How wise!  
The whole are called nine parts of speech,  
Which reading, writing, speaking, teach.

It was this idea of structure that was used by the Phoenicians to make written language work in business and administration. They flourished in the Mediterranean lands around 1200 B.C. They were traders and money-makers, a vigorous maritime people. They circumnavigated Africa, brought tin from Cornwall, amber from the Baltic Sea. Their ships even reached Java.

So desperate were these seafarers for accurate communication that their minds came up with written letters for the speech sounds that they uttered to form their words. These speech sounds were of the order of vowels and consonants. The Phoenician letter symbols were for consonants only.

The Ancient Egyptians had about twenty-four letter sounds, and thus were on the brink of inventing the alphabet. But they never quite did so, because instead of discarding their ideograms and concentrating on the use of their phonograms, they continued to use ideograms mixed with words spelled out by phonetic signs. An ideogram is a written symbol representing the idea of something directly, and not its name or sound.

It was from the Phoenicians that Europe received the priceless gift of alphabetic writing. It is a byword that 'the Greeks had a word for it'. With their genius for sound and language, it is not surprising that history records that the Greek children 'caught' the alphabet from their interaction with the Phoenician traders on the beaches, and consequently the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet, and perfected it by using some of the surplus Phoenician consonantal letters to represent their vowel sounds.

It is interesting to note also that initially the Greeks wrote from right to left, as did the Phoenicians, but later they changed and wrote from left to right. Literature had long remained an oral matter, and was much slower than business to resort to writing.

Somewhere about the 6th century B.C., the Greek alphabet found its way into Italy, where it became the medium of the classical literature of Rome.

It was this Latin alphabet which was first used in Britain and has survived with certain changes till the present day. With all its faults the alphabet is far more servicable in speech and writing than the picture-signs from which it developed. Not only does it enable us to write with far greater speed, but it also rules out the possibility of misunderstanding to which picture-writing is liable. Just imagine what a vast and wonderfully expressive language we have been able to build up out of the twenty-six letters we call our alphabet.

Educational psychologists of the present century have persisted in steadily pushing the full-scale adoption of the 'look-say' theory of teaching the reading of the English language. This is a picture-language approach.

Recently I was an observer at a primary school reading class. The teacher was very competent, but had to attempt to teach children

to memorize whole words instead of teaching the phonic facts of the letters by which pronunciation could be worked out. It was hardly surprising that one seven-year-old could not distinguish between 'wait' and 'what'; another, between 'will' and 'with'.

The school librarian had attended a remedial-reading training course; but her task was mainly to reiterate the classroom teaching as laid down in the official non-phonetic programme. This makes little use of the facts of alphabet, and certainly includes no systematic teaching of the total range of phonograms which translate our speech sounds on to paper.

Marie Clay, a New Zealander whose book is used in the remedial-reading training course, was quoted as having said, "In the first two years, children teach themselves how to learn to read." Perhaps too many people have forgotten the long tradition of mothers teaching the rudiments of reading to their children.

As a result, armies of remedial teachers are now working to correct a situation in which increasing numbers of children have stumbled by the wayside and virtually lost interest in learning to read. When a child has failed to master reading, the parent is reassured that "He will read when he sees a purpose in reading" or "He will read when he is ready".

The proponents of whole-word recognition seem to have a vague belief that, if children can be saved from intellectual effort, they will be the happier for it.

In 1810 the ingenious American, Thomas Gallaudet, devised the method of look-say as a means of teaching deaf-mutes to read. He used a whole-word recognition process, with sight-vocabulary, to get through to those without hearing or voice.

Psychologists who have written of the spate of reading failure over the last few decades reason that it is phonetic teaching that has true wholeness because it is scientific, with structure assembled correctly from known components, rather than a hill of beans.

Much is made by some of the spelling exceptions. They certainly try, or test, the rules, but do not lessen the importance of those rules in holding the language together. Learning by recognition of whole words is rather like becoming acquainted with Chinese ideographs - perhaps four hundred in the first year, a thousand in the second, and so on throughout both primary and secondary schooling. It is difficult to imagine how a student so taught would decipher a word such as 'unexpectedly', with its two prefixes and two suffixes.

Being first taught the phonograms equips from the outset, and it is a wonderful moment when a child grasps the fact that this key opens the door to reading. The phonic rules send children up and running, whereas the conditioned reflex arising from the look-say process contains no understanding of how each word is built up.

Mrs. Sonia Chanter, Certified Spalding Teacher Instructor for Australia in lecturing and tutoring teachers, students and professionals, aims to make the learning of basic writing, spelling and reading of the English language so captivating that problems of discipline in classes of children simply do not arise.

Mrs. Chanter is qualified to expound the world-renowned method pioneered in America by Mrs. Romalda Spalding. An extensive college and university training was found wanting when it came to Mrs. Spalding's teaching of normal children to write and read. Then she had the opportunity to work for three years with some typical reading-problem children under the precise direction of the late Dr. Samuel Orton, an eminent New York neurologist and neuropathologist whose work was centred on the language problem. She then applied his teaching in the normal classroom and proved that the integration of correct speaking, writing (spelling) and reading prevented the occurrence of non-readers.

Mrs. Spalding's work was so successful that a White House spokesman for the Domestic Policy Council, Office of Cabinet Affairs wrote: "The method of teaching children the English language, with all its richness and variety, is captured in Romaldo Spalding's *The Writing Road to Reading*. For thirty years classroom teachers across America have found that it works. ... I enthusiastically endorse this program with the full knowledge that if these teachings were applied in America's classrooms, illiteracy would vanish." The system has flourished for a further ten years since the writing of that statement.

The Spalding method points out that English has seventy common phonograms (twenty-five letters and forty-five fixed combinations of two, three and four letters) to record on paper the forty-five basic sounds used in speaking it. A beginners' class starts by learning fifty-four of these phonograms through saying their sounds and writing them. Then they write, from dictation, as they pronounce the sounds of the most-used one hundred and fifty words; write original sentences to show meanings, and within two months, commence reading good books. It is claimed that a teacher can learn and can teach the Spalding method correctly by studying one book, *The Writing Road to Reading*. The method is distinguished by its direct use of the correct phonics along with the rules of English spelling, and taught by writing from the sounds of spoken words.

Children are taught first the lower-case letters, beginning with those that start at two on the clock and are written anticlockwise: a, c, d, f, g, s. They are fixed in each child's mind by having him pronounce the letter as he writes it. The teacher then proceeds to the letters that begin with uprights: b, h, i, j, k, m, n, p, t, u, y.

The great advantage of learning words by writing them from dictation is that this connects at once the written symbols to their spoken sounds. All children can learn because every avenue into the mind is used. They hear the teacher say the word and each child hears himself make each sound while he uses his mind in saying it and directing his hand to write it. He sees what he has

written as he then reads it. No other way can fix sooner or more securely in his memory the words he can write, and so can read at a glance, thus building his sight-vocabulary.

In the first grade, on average, the pupils know the seventy phonograms, can write at least seven hundred words before mid-year and read many times that number. Progress in successive grades is also rapid, and classroom-reading is not restricted to set readers, but is centred on the literature of interesting and educative books. Precise techniques for good hand-writing, and also correct pronunciation, are permanent advantages which are taught from the very start.

These techniques are part and parcel of learning phonograms by writing them (not by copying) directly by saying them aloud. It is recorded that many third- and fourth-grade pupils have learned the 1700 words found to cover almost every English spelling problem, and that many in grades five and six are at university-entrance level in spelling. A Chinese proverb puts it this way: "Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand."

This complete involvement of faculties allows children to be so well-grounded in letter-formation that dyslexia is nipped in the bud and does not arise. The mental effort brought into action develops powers of concentration, and the training introduces young children to an absolutely invaluable study-habit -- that of analysing and reasoning when tackling any subject rather than of being content with memorizing without necessarily comprehending.

What should appeal to all except suppliers of equipment is that the directness and arrangement of the Spalding method requires that the children use only paper and pencil and their minds. No games, devices, workbooks or films are needed. The direct use of their minds to work and learn, and to produce on paper, is far more interesting and instructive to children. Parents as well as teachers have been inspired by their enthusiasm. This comes from the careful order and insight built into the method to arouse in children their natural eagerness to learn and use their latent capacity for mental work. Adults tend to underestimate greatly the mental abilities of children.

The importance of eliminating illiteracy and of making English easier for other peoples, since it is now the one international language, is well recognized. It is reported that sixty million Americans are unable to read and write. School heads and juvenile court judges there have said that the most common characteristic of delinquents is their inability to read and write. This also seems to account for many school drop-outs. Their industrial advances require higher education in workers. Illiteracy is clearly one cause of poverty, delinquency and crime, the racial crisis, drug abuse, welfare problems and unemployment. The same could well be said of Australia.

One definite remedy is a basic education that teaches all to read

and write everyday English well. This is a prerequisite for all further education. Our language is probably the most valuable heritage the past has to offer us. Our first duty then is to teach it so well that illiteracy, and with it mass-ignorance, will disappear.

Acknowledgment goes to The Language Foundation of Australia, in Brisbane, for promoting the phonics-first approach, for its production of a regular newsletter; and its supplying of the book, *Spelling Made Easy*.

Appreciation and particular thanks go to the pioneer, Mrs. Spalding, for laying down a thorough system of teaching direct intensive alphabetic phonics, to halt the rising tide of illiteracy.

Thanks go to Mrs. Chanter, the Spalding Education Foundation representative for Australia, for promoting a systematic phonics-first approach. She is responsible for achieving the certification of Mrs. Hyslop and Mr. Henderson, so that in Australia there are now three C.S.T.I.s (Certified Spalding Teaching Instructors).

Thanks to the Kirby Book Company for importing *The Writing Road to Reading*.

Thanks also to Mr. Harrison of the computerised Harrison-Winter Reading & Spelling Programmes, a system of assessing and remediating reading difficulties. He imports Martin Turner's *Sponsored Reading Failure* from the U.K., and advocates proper and early Primary School assessment and a change in teaching practices.

**Mrs. Sonia Chanter**, PO Box 578, Shepparton, Victoria 3630.  
Phone: (058) 214-285

**Mrs. Dorothy Hyslop**, 63 Shumack Street, Weetangra,  
Canberra, 2614.  
Phone: (06) 254-4750

**Mr. Craig Henderson**, 26 Inverary Crescent, Hainersley,  
Perth, W.A., 6022  
Phone: (09) 247-1431

**Mr. Byron Harrison**, F.S.M.C., 209A Centrepoint, Hobart,  
Tasmania, 7000  
Phone: (002) 310-994

**Kirby Book Company**, Private Bag 19, Alexandria,  
N.S.W. 2025.  
Phone: (008) 225-271

**The Language Foundation of Australia** (Mrs. Noelle Younger, Secretary), P.O. Box 625, West End, Qld. 4101  
Phone: (07) 878-1930

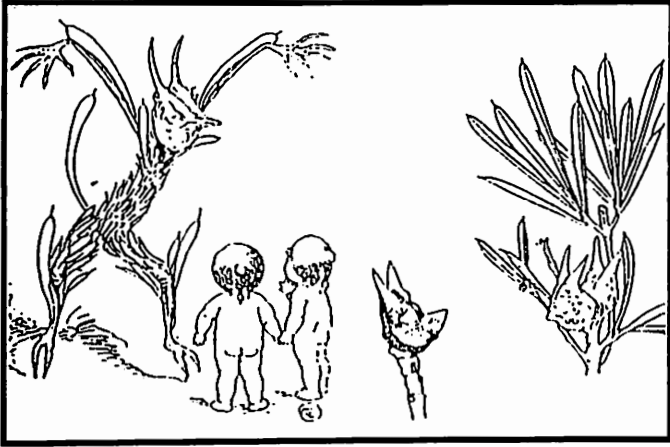
LET'S KEEP  
THEM!



OUR FLAG  
OUR HERITAGE  
OUR FREEDOM

## TWILIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF GUMNUTS

PETER BERNHARDT



May Gibbs' art embellished life. The dancing Lucky Devil has a head made of the dry, hard, pronged fruit of the mountain devil (*Lambertia formosa*). The devil's tail and scales are the long narrow leaves of the shrub, each leaf with a prickly point.

My vision delicious, then and since,  
is of **Snugglepot and Cuddlepie**

-- Patrick White, 1987

NUTCOTE, the home of the late May Gibbs (1877-1969) is still not open to the public. There's an excellent chance it may never be open to the public. By Christmas I may be telling my Melbourne nieces and nephews that I was privileged to walk the grounds a few months before the property was lost to subdivision. It happened this way.

Once upon a time (last April), the Nutcote Trust invited two authors from the Royal Botanic Garden, me and poet/publicist Ed Wilson. Nutcote would be opened for the day, and we would be asked to contribute to new strategies for saving May's home. We arrived an hour early and this gave us time to explore the house and garden.

Contrary to public expectations May Gibbs and her husband James Ossoli Kelly didn't live in a bark humpy or a gingerbread cottage. The house appears to be the only example of the Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style ever designed by the architect, B.J. Waterhouse (known more for his Georgian Revival buildings). Despite theft, minor vandalism and a thwarted attempt at arson, Nutcote remains a beautiful villa. The hacienda-style entry hall is so spacious it could be used to stage flamenco concerts. The North Sydney Council allows a tenant to reside in Nutcote as a guard against further disturbance.

The gardens around a person's home reflect a private refuge and I was most curious as to what remained of Biggs' special vision 20 years after her death. Gibbs was noted as a gardener after the English cottage style. As expected, the front yard with its pampered semi-herbaceous borders, crammed with bedding plants and rose trellises, exists only as treasured photographs and colour slides.

What came as a refreshing surprise was that Gibbs practised what she preached. Here was someone who wanted to have the bush around her long before the fashion for 'growing native' became acceptable to suburbanites. Instead of segregating the Australian species they were mingled with the usual trees and shrubs associated with the combined heritage of gardens in China, South America and the Mediterranean basin.

An ancient pittosporum had collapsed at the base of a neighbour's wall but it was still sending up stout, erect branches and the original trunk looked like a giant python. Shade in the back garden (facing Neutral Bay) was manufactured by grey buloke (*Casuarina glauca*), a native fig (probably the Port Jackson, *Ficus rubiginosa*), a fern tree (*Cyatha sp.*) and bangalay (pronounced bang-alley; *Eucalyptus botryoides*).

Yes, there was a banksia literally at the bottom of the garden. Walk past it and you'd fall onto the rocky slabs of Neutral Bay. Recently the magazine *Gardens & Backyards* published a picture of this spreading tree with a caption proclaiming it 'the original inspiration for the Big Bad Banksia Men'. This is most unlikely.

Gibbs and Kelly didn't move into Nutcote until the mid-'20s, long after the publication of the original *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*. Our inspection of the fruiting cobs revealed that they didn't become 'bristly and menacing' at maturity. Instead, the cobs lost their dried up flowers and pollen presenters as the hard, bulbous fruits (follicles) expanded. These cobs were bald, greyish black and 'pot-bellied'. The lack of 'teeth' on the margins of the leaves confirmed it was probably a coast banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*), native to the Sydney region, but also distributed from Queensland through Victoria. Check May's illustrations of banksia men perched on their branches and it seems more likely she used a species like the saw banksia (*B. serrata*) for her enduring model of villainy.

Generations of Australian children have taken their first, impromptu lesson in Botany from a Gibbs illustration. Sometimes it's their only lesson. While none of her books were intended as manuals to the anatomy and morphology of Australian plants,

her draughtsmanship was so sharp that plant structures are always recognisable, even after they have been 'humanised'. That's what makes them so unforgettable to children. Have you ever wondered, for example, about the lucky devil who performed his dance for Snugglepot and Cuddlepie? He's another member of the banksia-macadamia nut family (Proteaceae). His head is the bizarre, woody fruit of the honey flower (*Lambertia formosa*) with the two longest spines forming his devil horns and the third, shorter prong making his nose.

While admiring the coast banksia I looked down into the bay and Mr. Shag, as if on cue, paddled by. Was he looking for John Dory? So much of Gibbs' later work features her characters in pod-shaped ships and canoes (see the boat race in *Nuttybub and Nittersing*). Did May let her imagination run while she sat on the balcony at Nutcote? It's a glorious view encompassing parts of the Harbour Bridge, the Royal Botanic Garden and Fort Denison from different angles. There is a continuous procession of ferries and 'vanity boats' with indulgent names like Moomba, Polar Bear and Rampant II. Of course, that's one of the main reasons why it's so expensive to save Nutcote.

Nutcote has been valued as a subdivisible block, not as an estimate of the house and garden. Look at the mushrooming of waterside flats and townhouse complexes in North Sydney and you can imagine the fate of this property. May Gibbs would have been shocked to learn that people are attempting to raise \$2.86 million to save Nutcote. Neil Shand, who married a cousin of May's, has read her letters to the town council asking them to spare her from a raise in rates. She illustrated her pleas with drawings of her tatty old underwear on the washline to prove she had trouble making ends meet. It was a novel approach but Neil said it didn't work.

What I don't understand is why there remains such reluctance by many Australians to help save Nutcote and why there has been a negative response when the Nutcote Trust requests sponsorship from corporations and the NSW Government. Are you ashamed at the thought of protecting the memory of an author/artist whose life's work was directed primarily at children?

Max Harris wrote recently that the United States has 'a degraded and degrading culture'. If Max said it, it must be true. The funny thing is that we degraded/degrading Yanks have never doubted the value of protecting the homes of our children's authors at the most local level. Even my drab midwestern city of St Louis turned the home of Eugene Field into a museum decades ago. You've never heard of Eugene Field? Quite right, but how many Americans have heard of May Gibbs, and she's worth ten Fields. Field is remembered among America's first poets for children although he is not anthologised much anymore. Children are more likely to stumble across him when their parents rent the video of Disney's luminous cartoon of *Wynken Blynken and Nod*.

The good news is that a third of the ransom of Nutcote has been raised. What are you going to do about the remainder? You have

one year. Remember, the purchase of Gibbs' books and paraphernalia contributes nothing towards the purchase of the property.

In South Australia, send your donations to:

The Nutcote Trust, PO Box 700,  
Burnside, South Australia 5066.

In New South Wales:

The Nutcote Trust,  
Shop 7, The Colonnade,  
The Oval,  
283a Miller Street  
North Sydney, N.S.W. 2060.  
[Telephone (02) 954-5935]

Donations from individuals are tax deductible.

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(CANADA CALLS *Contd.*)

wanted to be called instead of 'President of the United States'.

**Question:** What about the monarchy as a rallying point for Canadians?

**Forsey:** Well, to a great many people history and tradition don't really mean anything. They are tone-deaf to it. I'm not sure that this can last. I think that there is some sort of psychological need for traditional roots. If a French-Canadian says, 'Let's keep our traditions', some English-Canadians think that it's all right, but if some English-Canadians say, 'Let's keep our heritage', that is considered to be very wicked and un-Canadian.

Some consider French-Canadians to be the only true Canadians even when some of them applaud General De Gaulle's statement, 'Frenchmen in Quebec, we are behind you.' If a British Minister (of the Crown) came and said, 'Englishmen of Canada, we stand behind you', I think he would have to run for the nearest airport with a mob behind him telling him to go home and stay there.

**I'm inclined to think that republicanism in Canada is a matter of fashion and one of the depressing things is that a great number of things today are decided by fashion even though there is no reason for a change. ...**

The Dominion of Canada lost a great and good man when the Honourable E.A. Forsey, P.C., Ph.D., passed away in early 1991. These fragments from a recorded conversation, along with millions of words of his writings and his memoirs entitled *A Life on the Fringe*, are a gift of enduring wisdom to us all.





## CANADA CALLS

Hon. E.A. Forsey. P.C., Ph.D.

by John Wiebe

It was a cold, bitter January in Ottawa that winter of 1972. A small political club at the city's Carleton University invited various eminent Canadian politicians to its weekly meetings. Some came, many did not.

One who did come to talk informally with the students was a short, dapper man of 67. The Honourable Eugene Forsey became a member of Canada's Senate in 1970 after flatly turning down various other jobs offered to him.

Forsey was a man of both genius and character. During his lifetime he variously quit the Canadian Conservative, socialist and Liberal parties when he felt they were not acting in the nation's best interests. He served as a one-time lecturer at Montreal's McGill University after taking up a Rhodes Scholarship, but quit the post to take a research director's job with the Canadian Labour Congress. Some at the time dubbed him, "Joe Stalin's man in Canada".

He wasn't of course, nor could anyone or anything buy Eugene Forsey. During a later appointment he was disgusted at the number and worth of gifts showered upon him as a member of the Board of Broadcast Governors. He angrily said he would return every gift with a value of over one dollar, and did exactly that.

His greatest achievement was a book, *The Royal Power of Dissolution of Parliament in the British Commonwealth*, published in 1943, which is still the standard work on the crown's powers respecting legislatures. The book made Forsey a sought-after commentator about

constitutional matters until his dying day as a 'constitutional expert'. Characteristically, Forsey told questioners that this made him someone who simply "knew a great deal about very little".

*Heritage* readers may judge just how wise a man Eugene Forsey was by his own words, recorded on that freezing night in 1972. The words were important to all those who loved the Crown and the parliamentary system then. They remain just as important today.

**Question:** If the monarchy was replaced, under what kind of system would Canada operate?

**Forsey:** No one knows. I've never been able to find out from the republicans what they do propose. Certainly there are an infinite variety of republics in the world. However, I should assume that it would be a republic Indian-style with a president chosen by some means and a parliamentary government with the president simply replacing the Queen and the Governor-General, with substantially the same paper powers and the same real powers. On the other hand, some people simply talk about having "a" Governor-General. Then you would have a republic, but you wouldn't call the head of it a president, you'd call him the Governor-General. This seems to me to be a rather curious kind of thing. I don't know what you'd call the country. The only thing I can think of is the French term, "*Gouvernement General*". And as far as I know the only state that had that was Poland under the Nazis. I suppose you could do it, but I doubt that would satisfy the people who want change.

One very prominent person has told me that there had been a good deal of embarrassment when the Governor-General went to certain foreign countries recently because people couldn't understand that he was really the effective head of state for Canada. They said, "But he isn't -- he's only the Governor-General!" This man seemed to think that the only way to get rid of this would be to have something called a president. It seems to me that it is quite clear that if you said, 'Well now he's the Governor-General and has no connection with the Queen', the foreigners would still be as much in the dark as ever. They'd say, 'But whose Governor-General is he?'

**I can't understand this feeling that we must at all costs make our political arrangements so that ignorant foreigners will understand them. If foreigners don't understand how we run the country, then so much the worse for them. Why should we change our government because foreigners don't understand it? Let's explain it to them instead.**

The idea people have when they talk about having a Governor-General is that it would be less of a shock to the sensibilities of people who believe in the present system and that everybody would somehow gloss it over and say that everything is just as it was before and that people who didn't want it to be the same as before could say, 'Well, now we have a Canadian head of state who has no connection with anyone else.' He could be called the Governor-General but he could be called anything else -- even 'The Lord High Mightiness', as Washington  
(Cont. on opposite page)

## The Blue Mountains

Above the ashes straight and tall,  
Through ferns with moisture dripping,  
I climb beneath the sandstone wall,  
My feet on mosses slipping.

Like ramparts round the valley's edge  
The tinted cliffs are standing,  
With many a broken wall and ledge,  
And many a rocky landing.

And round about their rugged feet  
Deep ferny dells are hidden  
In shadowed depths, whence dust and heat  
Are banished and forbidden.

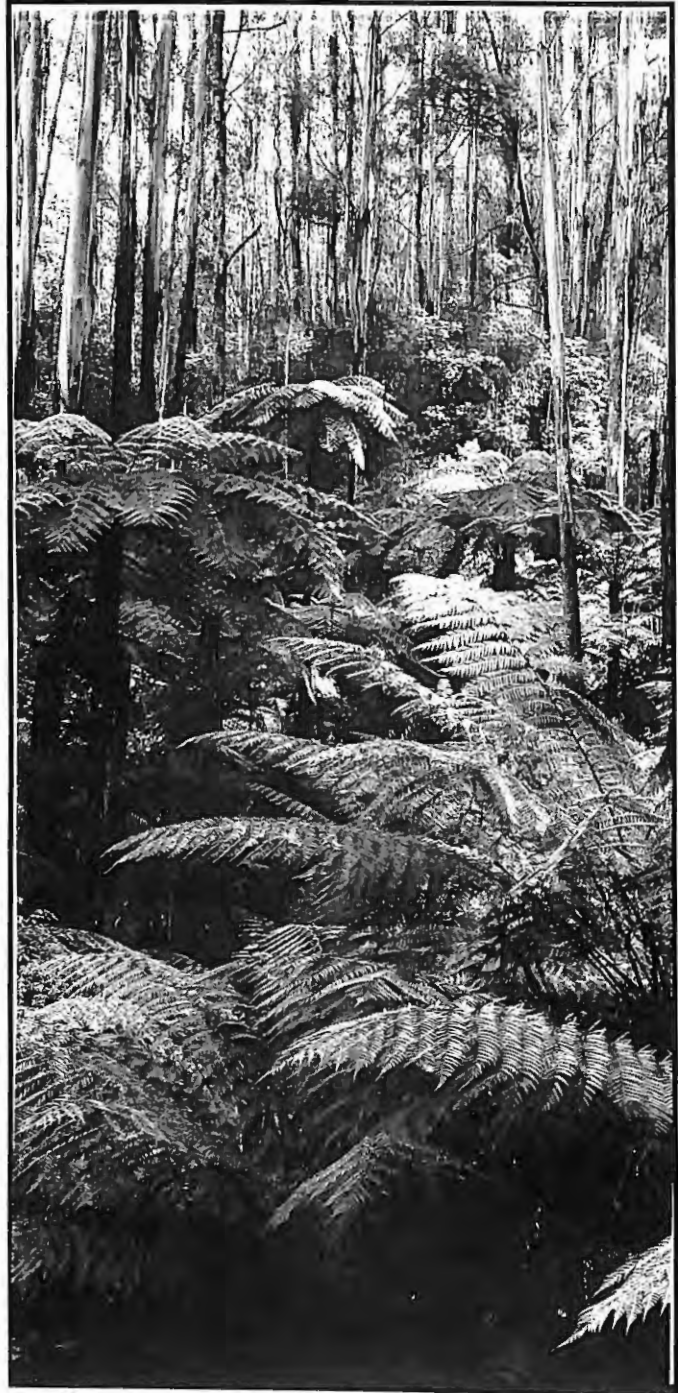
The stream that, crooning to itself,  
Comes down a tireless rover,  
Flows calmly to the rocky shelf,  
And there leaps bravely over.

Now pouring down, now lost in spray  
When mountain breezes sally,  
The water strikes the rock midway,  
And leaps into the valley.

Now in the west the colours change,  
The blue with crimson blending;  
Behind the far Dividing Range  
The sun is fast descending.

And mellowed day comes o'er the place,  
And softens ragged edges;  
The rising moon's great placid face  
Looks gravely o'er the ledges.

*Henry Lawson*



THE

WATER LILY



A lonely young wife  
In her dreaming discerns  
A lily-decked pool  
With a border of ferns,  
And a beautiful child,  
With butterfly wings,  
Trips down to the edge of the water and sings:  
"Come, mamma! come!  
Quick! follow me!  
Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!"

And the lonely young wife,  
Her heart beating wild,  
Cries, "Wait till I come,  
Till I reach you, my child!"  
But the beautiful child  
With butterfly wings  
Steps out on the leaves of the lily and sings:  
"Come, mamma! come!  
Quick! follow me!  
And step on the leaves of the water-lily!"

And the wife in her dreaming  
Steps out on the stream,  
But the lily leaves sink,  
And she wakes from her dream.  
Ah, the waking is sad,  
For the tears that it brings,  
And she knows 'tis her dead baby's spirit that sings:  
"Come, mamma! come!  
Quick! follow me!  
Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!"

*Henry Lawson*

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# BOOKS THAT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN

by Nigel Jackson

## WHEN BLACKBIRDS SING by Martin Boyd

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Australians who cherish the British connection will enjoy reading the Langton Quartet of which this is the fourth and final volume. Martin Boyd spent most of his youth in Australia and most of his adult life in England. He imbibed a deep love of both nations, which was later extended to Italy and especially Rome (which he saw as fountainheads of European culture). He was born into an upper middle class family and enjoyed membership of a cultivated patrician family circle in the "high culture" of Melbourne in the two decades before World War I. An excellent critical biography of Boyd was published in 1988 -- *Martin Boyd - A Life* by Brenda Niall (Melbourne University Press).

Although Boyd was already a successful author when he wrote *When Blackbirds Sing*, he experienced a surprising lack of encouragement of it. Several publishers turned the manuscript down and, after it had eventually been published by Abelard-Schuman in 1962, it was ignored by British critics except for the novelist Olivia Manning, who praised it highly. Even Brenda Niall does not seem to have any deep understanding of the way in which this novel challenged the anti-traditional forces which have been leading the British people towards destruction all this century.

*When Blackbirds Sing* continues the story of Dominic Langton that was begun in the second novel of the quartet, *A Difficult Young Man*. Dominic is an outsider figure, a passionate aristocrat with endowments of Spanish blood in his complex make-up. He is authentic, does not deliberately wear masks, does not calculatingly compartmentalize his life, repeatedly acts with a gallantry that egalitarian mediocrities and self-serving placegetters misunderstand or resent and finally marries his childhood sweetheart in defiance of both parents and social decorum (stealing her while another and lesser man waits at the altar for her). In *When Blackbirds Sing* Dominic goes to war in 1915.

Martin Boyd was a serving officer himself in the Great War and had plenty of first-hand experience of the trenches with the Buffs. He also did a stint with the Royal Flying Corps. Dominic's central

experience in the fighting led to a dramatic reorientation of his character and his attitudes to modern warfare. Here is that experience, which forms the end of Chapter 8:

At last in all the row and confusion, when he hardly knew what was happening, when from his limited view the battle had no order or design, he found himself face to face with a German soldier, and lifted his revolver to fire.

As he did so he looked in the German's eyes. He was a boy of about the age of Hollis, to whom he had an odd resemblance. In the half second while he lifted his revolver, he gave a faint glance of recognition, to which the boy made an involuntary response. But Dominic did not stay the instinctive movement of the hand, and in that instant of mutual human recognition, with eye open to eye, he shot the boy, who fell dead a yard in front of him, rolling over and over as Hollis had rolled in the dew. He stood for a moment, bewildered, and another German soldier stepped over his dead companion and plunged a bayonet into Dominic's body. His part in the orgasm had become passive.

Dominic survives this dreadful wound, but he can never fight again in such warfare, for its inherent evil has been made too apparent to him. It is a personal decision, a manifestation of *noblesse oblige*, and it is carefully distinguished by Martin Boyd from pacifism. As for the "orgasm", this was a possession by hatred and war propaganda which had unexpectedly captured Dominic shortly before this episode of combat. Brenda Niall makes it clear that the whole com-

plex of experiences is based on those of Boyd himself, experiences which were so painful that it was forty years before he could write about them so candidly.

Dominic later endeavours to explain his position to the sympathetic figure of Lord Dilton, a nobleman who is a senior serving officer and also a patriot deeply distressed by the growing corruption of British society. In Chapter 10 Dominic argues that his refusal to return to his unit is not "anarchy" (as Lord Dilton suggests): "It's the real law against artificial law." Pressed to explain further, he adds:

It's natural to kill your real enemies, those who threaten you; or to kill animals you want to eat. It's not natural to kill people you don't know, because you and they are told by Lloyd George and Bethmann-Hollweg, or whoever it is, to kill each other. Lloyd George and Bethmann-Hollweg are not greater than God, to vet his laws, but we behave as if they were.

Dominic's full position is more clearly explained by Boyd in an earlier insight into his unexpressed thoughts:

What made it impossible for him to fight again was the brief exchange of human recognition as he shot the German boy.

He believed that then he had violated every good thing he knew, all his passion for the beauty of the created world, which he had felt when he watched the Spanish divers, when he had held the chestnut bud in his hand on the steps of the village church. More, that glance came from the recognition of their deepest selves, a recognition of kind, which wiped out all the material obligation of their opposed circumstances.

In that act he had violated the two things to which his whole being responded in worship; the beauty of a living human body, all the miracle of its movement and thought; and the relation of two souls in brotherhood. He had affronted both nature and God, which cannot be separated.

Dominic's stand is a chivalric protest against the corruption of honourable modes of combat.

That Boyd understood the nature of this corruption is attested by an important speech of Lord Dilton to Dominic in Chapter 7, when this conservative aristocrat unguardedly speaks from the heart. He is deeply anguished by having to send out wave after wave of young trainees to "the Moloch jaws" of the War. So he unburdens himself, after dinner:

I thought you went to war to get some advantage out of it. We seem to be going to war to ruin ourselves. I don't like the Germans much. The Kaiser's a pompous ass, but I'm not prepared to commit suicide out of spite: and I'd rather have a German general than that damned Welsh Baptist. What the devil has "the sword of the Lord and Gideon" got to do with the Prime Minister of England? He wants a "knock-out blow" and he'll knock out Europe, England included. He hates us. He declared war on us long ago.

By "us" Lord Dilton means the land-owners. He amplifies his complaint:

Now he has found an easy way to wipe us out. Look at the Wolverhamptons. Old Wolverhampton died. They had to pay death duties. A week later his eldest son, "the first of the litter", was killed. The second son was killed a month ago -- a third lot of death duties. The family exterminated and the estate confiscated, the reward for serving your country. What's left goes to the daughter who has married the son of one of those damned newspaper peers who are hounding us on to ruin. When you pretend you're waging war from high moral principles, you're on the way to hell. You've taken off the brakes. The war is really to make fortunes for the men who are going to buy our confiscated estates. Lansdowne is the only one with the guts to point it out, and they all attack him, and say we're not going to stop the war to preserve Lansdowne House and Bowood. What sort of country will this be when Bowoods are gone, and the Diltons and Waterpark too? I always thought that England was the Bowoods and the Diltons and the Waterparks, with the farms and cottages around them.

The self-censorship that inhibits even decent patriots like Lord Dilton is sensitively shown by Boyd when Dilton adds:

Perhaps I should not talk to you like this. You're a serving soldier. But I feel that I have a responsibility that I'm avoiding, and there are not many people I can talk to freely. You have always seemed to me honest in your opinions. But you'd better forget it.

An even worse form of self-censorship has been shown in Boyd's earlier comment about Lord Dilton's stuffed shirt son-in-law, Major Maurice Wesley-Maude:

Everything Maurice said and did was absolutely correct. He did not appear self-conscious but he inhibited any natural ease. He was, as Lady Dilton said, "a gentleman" and this was his religion. He would not dream of holding any viewpoint which was not correct, and so, though naturally honest, his character was at the mercy of the increasingly powerful forces that controlled opinion. (Chapter 4)

There are plenty of Wesley-Maudes in Australia today. For them, respectability means ensuring that there is not a drop of "racism" or "anti-semitism" in their expressed opinions. They may still look on themselves as defenders of tradition; they may well labour mightily for the Liberal Party or the National Party or some other political action group; but they do not grasp (usually) that their act of intellectual self-castration has deprived them of essential critical insights without which a true restoration of a decent political order is impossible.

Lord Dilton's misgivings are analysed by Boyd again in Chapter 10 after his talk with Dominic about the latter's refusal to rejoin the fighting:

If the war continued he did not see how they could escape the fate of the Wolverhamptons. So far his two sons were alive. Dick had been wounded but was back at the front. His elder son was on the brigadier-general's staff, near the front line. Either or both of them might be killed any day. They could not last indefinitely under these conditions. If his boys had to be killed for their country he could say nothing; he must accept it. But he did not believe it was for their country. The war was continuing to destroy their country. It should stop at once, by agreement, before the European social structure was wrecked beyond repair. He admitted to himself that Dominic

was fundamentally right, and his anger increased.

Why not let the boy go through with it? Why not support him? Why not mobilize the few peers who had kept their heads, and saw the ruin we were racing for? They would say he was trying to save his sons. Why the devil shouldn't he try to save his sons? Damn the Welsh Baptist! Damn the press-magnates! Not one of those who were hounding the nation to ruin was an Englishman, at any rate not of the kind whom Lord Dilton thought were fitted to rule the country. Weren't there enough decent Englishmen to stop a generation being butchered to satisfy the ambitions of these adventurers?

It is plain that writing like this by Boyd is tearing away the facade of modern politics to reveal something of the evil behind it; and one wonders to what extent the cool reception *When Blackbirds Sing* at first received was a response to its breaking of modern taboos.

The matter is also dealt with in another passage in Chapter 10 about Lord Dilton:

He was a responsible and conventional country gentleman, but the conventions to which he subscribed were being superseded. He believed strongly in authority, but also that authority should be patriarchal and benevolent; whereas now, directed by the press magnates and political adventurers, it was becoming rapacious and destructive of what he regarded as civilization. As with Dominic, his conventions no longer fitted the circumstances, so that, although very different from him, he had in a lesser degree the same inner conflict.

Again, we see the same difficulty in Australia, where many decent citizens are inhibited from effective political action by their attachment to conventions, political and religious, which have been subverted, so that a courageous act of **breaking away** has become necessary. But there is no point in breaking away unless there is something else, firm and viable for the future, to which to adhere. No such movement is yet discernible in Australia.

A third insight into the same difficulty is provided by Boyd's presentation of the conservatism of Dominic's faithful

farmer-wife Helen on their property in New South Wales, which she has courageously managed during his three years away. Her character is studied more sympathetically than that of Maurice Wesley-Maude; but there is the same inhibiting failure of imagination and lack of true independence:

Dominic repeated his argument that when one conscript attacked another, he was only attacking an artificial menace to himself. She was horrified. He was trying to destroy every belief that had supported her during these three years, that had enabled her to run the farm without him, to sack Harry and to dip the sheep herself, to do a hundred things which she would not have contemplated if they had not been necessary in this struggle for their country and their freedom. For Helen was constitutionally incapable of not believing what she was told by authority and by people obviously better informed than herself. She accepted the surface of what was presented to her. (Chapter 12)

Integrity and intelligence, when allied, demand a sustained revisioning of currently accepted views of European history; yet, very often, decent citizens are unable to part from the conditioning they have received throughout their formative years and especially in the educational system.

A separate theme of *When Blackbirds Sing* is authenticity in the sexual relationship of man and woman. Despite his deep love of Helen, Dominic has an intensely rewarding erotic affair with Sylvia, his former fiancée, who is the daughter of Lord Dilton and the wife of Maurice. Boyd handles this daring theme with compassion and cordiality, avoiding insensitive moralising and premature condemnation. He offers one of the most lucid of presentations of why and how an elegant young woman enters into affairs, the initial union being beautifully described in Chapter 5. As the relationship develops, inevitable discords appear. A passage in Chapter 7 clarifies their nature:

On that first evening at Catherine Street he had imagined that the delight in his body, that wild sense of power -- it was not free love that he had enjoyed but wild love -- was enough in itself, that it had banished forever all his

doubts and uncertain aspirations. But he could not change his nature in a night, and he still expected that in Cornwall his love would have some meaning beyond itself, would be linked up with the moonlit castle and the sea.

Sylvia had no idea that this was his expectation. She knew perfectly well what she wanted. She wanted him physically. She wanted to experience his passionate unrestrained love-making without fear of interruption by her maid. She knew her own mind, and was confident that as the daughter of a rich peer, every idea she held was the right one. She was sure she was entitled to the best, and as Dominic's bodily passion was like a flame consuming her, whereas Maurice's was matter of fact and correct like all his other activities, and as she thought Maurice lucky to have married her and therefore in no position to complain, she really believed that it was right and natural that she should have Dominic if she wanted him. It was her *droit de la grande dame*. But she did not think that her feelings for Dominic or his for her had any point beyond their own physical satisfaction.

Here Boyd refused to condemn either party but nevertheless places their joint and separate experiences accurately. Dominic's approach is nobler, but it is not of the very highest quality, as his lifelong love attachment to Helen shows. Sylvia's approach is that of healthy and pure desire.

By contrast, Boyd displays inauthenticity in the sexual relationship in two separate encounters with a French harlot, one experienced by Dominic and the other by his comrade Hollis. The topic is quickly defined in Chapter 6:

Hollis said he wanted to visit a whore. He said: "It would be awful to get killed before you'd done it." Dominic discouraged him, not so much on moral grounds but because he had a poetic feeling that Hollis's innocence should not be wasted on a prostitute. It was due to the lingering of the mood which possessed him as he held the leaf, the sense that our bodies were of the same nature as all creative life, that they should function in innocence, and not as the result of a commercial transaction.

The harlot herself is presented as quite a pleasant, matronly but businesslike woman. Despite that, Boyd sees something soiled and subhuman in the selling

of sex for money. The link between this corruption and that of the political order of Britain is clear: in each case the natural order is disrupted by the power of money.

The question of human authenticity is also brought up in another notable speech by Dominic to Lord Dilton in Chapter 10:

There is something in my mind which normally I don't know is there. Then I do some ordinary thing, reading or shooting, and suddenly I get a kind of jam in my brain. I can't let my thoughts turn in any direction. Then the thing in my mind reveals itself. It's as if it shows me someone who is really myself, not the self I think I am. Then I have to act as that other self wants. I must. I can't help it, and I can't explain it. I couldn't when you asked me about it in London, so I said 'the Holy Ghost', but that is what I meant. Sometimes we say things that are true before we know what we are saying. The truth follows our words.

This discovery of a true self beneath the masks of daily personality is a constant in all genuine sacred traditions. It should not be thought that Boyd conceals the difficulties and dangers associated with acts of adultery. At the end of the novel the affair with Sylvia, as well as the crucial war experience, comes between Dominic and Helen; and he dare not confess it to Helen. While, over in England, Sylvia, recently widowed by the war, has given birth to a son, who is certainly Dominic's not Maurice's, as her brief letter to Dominic shows.

Boyd never wrote what was intended to be the fifth and final novel in this series. It is reasonable to assume, from hints given in the quartet, that Dominic would again have played a central role including the dying of a tragic death. It seems, at the end of *When Blackbirds Sing*, that Dominic is not in right relation with either Helen or Sylvia, with either England or Australia. He has fallen between two stools. There is a message here for Australian patriots. We have to find a new synthesis for the future on which a unified national order can be founded. Whatever it is, it can never be the repetition of some pattern from the past.

Rather, it is likely to draw on aspects of several patterns from the past as well as on the ineluctable facts of the present, whatever these turn out to be.

The 1984 Penguin edition of *When Blackbirds Sing*, which I have used in the preparation of this essay, contains a valuable introduction by Dorothy Green. She views Boyd's work as a whole as "an emblem of the tragedy of our times: the movement to total disillusionment with authority" and comments sharply:

This is not an aspect of Boyd's work which receives much critical attention. Society does not like to hear about what Boyd called 'the sickness at the top'.

Green stresses that Boyd believed that the world is beautiful and meant to be enjoyed.

The main opposition set up in each of his principal novels is between those who do things simply because they take pleasure in them and those who do things from some

other motive, because it will advance their career or push them up the social ladder, or because 'it is good for them'.

She makes appropriate reference to Boyd's vertical notion of class described early in the first Langton novel, *The Cardboard Crown*:

On the Right were all the people who liked their work, quite apart from the money it brought in: farmers, artists, craftsmen, musicians, sailors, clergymen. On the Left were all those to whom money was of supreme importance, stockbrokers, businessmen, anyone who believed that 'living matter was something they could control like a machine' for profit.

It will also be of interest to Australian patriots to know that Boyd was a trenchant critic of Sir Winston Churchill. Green reminds us of the "quiet ferocity" of Boyd as a correspondent:

He denounced in print Lloyd George, Baldwin and Churchill, generals and newspaper tycoons. He wrote furious letters to two Archbishops of Canterbury and recorded his

disillusionment with a third. His letters to Archbishop Temple on the saturation bombing of Hamburg and Dresden do not suggest that the cleric got the best of the argument.

And she draws a powerful arrow in quoting Boyd's statement about Churchill's "extravagant military gestures": "No responsible man creates a chaos greater than his capacity to restore order."

Finally, we may ask what Boyd's position is in the canon of Australian literature. He has been championed against Patrick White by several critics, including Dame Leonie Kramer. There is, however, no doubt that White is a greater writer than Boyd, who cannot seriously be claimed as of the standard of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Unlike White, Boyd could not create a style that emulates Jane Austen and Conrad. However, it is surely correct to state that Boyd, while a lesser writer than White, was a better and greater man.



Martin Boyd in the uniform of The Buffs, c. 1916



Martin Boyd in the Royal Flying Corps, c. 1918

down to jelly and thrown away. Their Christmas meal was a small knob of butter dropped into dog stew.

His recording was meticulous as always -- cloud formations and direction, wind strength, temperature, altitude, position, latitude and longitude, written down day by day.

They were about halfway with another great glacier to surmount and by now strips of skin and hair were falling off inside their clothing, with no nourishment for bodily repairs. On the third night following Christmas, with fifteen miles still to go to climb up the 3,000 ft. plateau above the Ninnis Glacier, the last dog, Ginger, died, with Mawson thinking how she had outstayed, outlasted by days, the biggest and strongest dogs.

The devouring of Ginger left a new loneliness in both men and Mawson noted that his cheerful, non-complaining sledging mate was morose, downcast and depressed. Dragged down by his dreadful illness, Mertz sought the fatal alternative to endless slogging, to lie in his sleeping bag and wait for ideal weather. On 1st January, having only made five miles before having to camp, Mertz wrote his last words in his diary. For three days he lay in his bag then, with some sunshine about, Mawson helped him out of his bag, dressed him and off they set to make a faltering four miles. Mertz' hands were badly frostbitten and they camped for two days.

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#### MERTZ IN COMA

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They set off again on 6th January, it took Mawson three hours to break camp and dress his friend. After two miles Mawson pushed Mertz on to the sledge and pulled him, firstly on foot and then, fearful of falling and breaking bones, on his hands and knees. He covered 2.5 miles this way and then pitched the tent and got his friend inside to cocoa and hot dog stew which he soon vomited. January 7th opened a day of madness, of raving and constant fits. At midnight Xavier Mertz lay in a coma and at 2a.m. Mawson woke to find his companion quite lifeless under

his hand. He was alone with some hundred miles direct to the hut.

Mawson cut some snow blocks for Xavier's burial cairn and with heart pounding, built it to shoulder level and topped it with a cross and read the burial service. A 50 mph river of deeply cold air burst down upon him and he crouched in his tent holding the struts. It took Mawson more than two hours to strike camp and don the sledge harness and lean into it. Every step painful, his body raw, he went down on all fours when pain in his ankles spread to his legs. He resolved to try for ten miles as a target.

With his soles separated from his feet leaving only raw tissue, he smeared them with lanolin, replaced the separated soles and bound them on with bandages followed by his six pairs of socks. The shock told heavily on him. He edged his way across the glacial valley in abominable conditions with only a little help from his makeshift sail to help him pull the sledge. Then the wind came up and blew the sledge from behind him to in front, bringing him down and blowing them both down-slope. When the sledge came onto the edge of a great hole, he instantly pulled against it and for an eternity he hauled it back, inch by inch, against the wind and up the slope. He backtracked to a flat area and with many rests, put up his tent.

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#### SPIRIT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE WITH HIM

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On 17th January he fell into a crevasse, suspended on 14 feet of rope attached to the sledge which thankfully stuck on an unseen ridge. Slowly he spun there, filled with despair. Hand-over-hand he went up level with the rim. Several times he tried to crawl to safety and was halfway to solid ice when he crashed the full length of the rope. Once more he dangled limp and drained. By what he later called a 'supreme effort', he scaled the rope and with a wild flailing kick thrust himself out onto solid ground and fainted.

He camped near the edge of the cold pit. From then on he felt that the Spirit of Divine Providence was always with him. The days grew more harrowing, the winds stronger and the slopes steeper. On the evening of Wednesday, 22 January, he was higher on the ice canopy and saw a fine view to the northeast of the eastern side of Commonwealth Bay and he ate a pemmican hoosh and a whole biscuit.

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#### CAPTAIN DAVIS HOLDS CRISIS MEETING

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On 24th January, Captain John King Davis held a crisis meeting in the hut. He could not hold the ship later than 30th January and sent a search party out to search for Dr. Mawson. A blizzard held them in Aladdin's Cave for 24 hours until 26th January. On 29th January they built a mound of hewn snow and stowed in the top a bag of food wrapped in a waterproof cloth. It was topped with black bunting so that it would show up in the white waste.

On 28th January Mawson, with 2 lbs of food left, crouched in his tent in a driving snowstorm. Next morning he sailed his sledge along, steering it as best he could. After mid-day, fighting illness and hunger he noticed the black blur and plodded 300 yards to his right to investigate. He tore away the snow blocks with frantic haste, found Dr. McLean's message and the food. The cairn, said the note, was 21 miles 60 degrees east of south from Aladdin's Cave with 'Aurora' in Commonwealth Bay. There was ample food for feasting but with three 'dear companions' only five miles ahead, he pressed on. The wind from behind filled his sail so he let it push the sledge along as he ate -- but the cruel land was not quite done with him yet.

By evening the horizon was still lifeless but the gale lifted and for a brief moment he saw open water to his north -- Commonwealth Bay was down there. He had come dangerously far north of his true course and was now on the steeply sloping glacial ice of the coastal cliffs. He saw his peril at once. Now he had to face a grinding climb back to the ridge of the ice dome. His body took a fearful pound-



ing. He fell to his knees and crawled back up the ice, dragging the sledge. He reckoned he had covered eight miles from the cairn and still no sign of Aladdin's Cave. He had to camp. It was near midnight before the blue flame of the primus lifted him from melancholy.

He made himself crampons from wood, screws and nails from the theodolite box -- slow, painful work, taking him until afternoon.

He braved the weather to break camp and for the first time since 10th November he could see the ice-caked Mackellar Islands out in the bay --there was no sign of the ship.

He set off for the ice hole, a new pain from the nails as they pushed up through the wood into his feet, so he wrapped sacking around them. He came to badly crevassed ice and knew once more the awful breathlessness of ground vanishing from beneath. It happened several times. Once, only the spar held the sledge from falling to total destruction. He had no strength to lift it out the few feet so he unpacked it. He was now near total exhaustion. His sledge repacked, he limped on up the ice dome and camped on a small flat section. A blizzard in the morning kept him in the tent, so he rebuilt his shattered crampons.

In the evening of 1st February he clambered from the tent and stood, eyes straining to the west -- there it was -- Aladdin's Beacon. He hobbled 2.5 miles and he was there. Nobody was in it but it was heaven -- after eighty days of tent flapping, here were walls and a roof that shut out the wind and worse. Sunday and Monday a blizzard stormed overhead and in the cave his deterioration grew plainer every hour. On his fourth night he wrote: "Blowing hard as ever. I wait in the bay all day and listen for a cessation of the wind. Thick drift blowing in the evening. Oh, for a clear spell! Will the ship wait?" By the seventh night in the ice hole he felt defeated and trapped by the awesome power of the polar plateau wind.

By mid-day on Saturday the wind

dropped to 35 mph and after 1 p.m. he started out on his again-remade crampons, so near after coming so far, towing his sledge with his creaking, pitiful body. He walked to the second mile post, the sledge now menacing his safety, slipping and sliding, throwing new strain on his crampons. He faltered to a shuffle; he was about a mile and one-half from the hut now. Still no sign of the ship. Then, on the far horizon, beyond the bay, a plume of dark smoke -- a ship sailing westward. Was he now marooned?

One half mile further on he stopped in his track when the hut burst into view. No sign of anyone; then, with leaping pulse, he saw three human frames working together. He stripped off a glove in an eternity of seconds and waved it. It went unseen. He tried to call out. Again he waved his glove, and then, as in a dream, a figure straightened up and looked over to him.

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MY GOD!  
WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

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The figures were suddenly galvanised into action; there was no more to do --

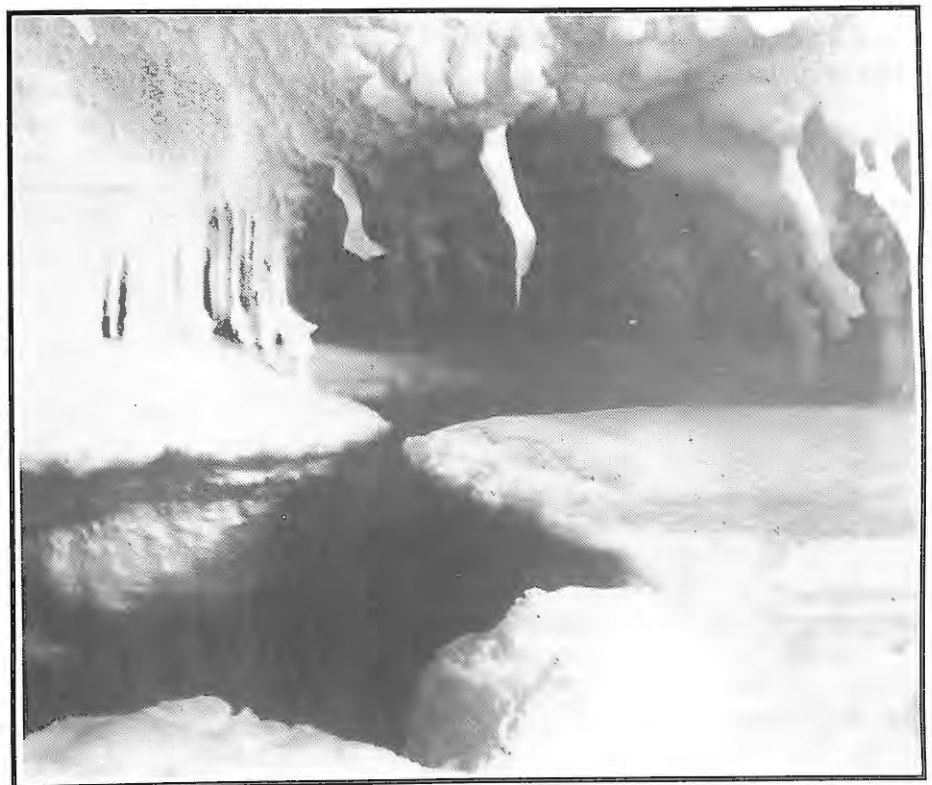
nothing he need now to undertake. He fell against the sledge. An eon later the first man appeared over the ridge -- Frank Bickerton. He reached Mawson and bent over him, anguish and sympathy on his face upon seeing the emaciated wretch in ragged, stained clothing. He put his arms under skinny armpits and lifted the 100 lb. skeleton and propped him on the sledge.

Knocking the ice from around the waterproof helmet and peering into sunken eyes, he was aghast. "My God!" he burst out. "Which one are you?"

The ship had sailed but these dear companions had volunteered to stay behind in case he needed their help.

Mawson later ventured, "The enforced isolation in the hut for a second winter was a blessing in disguise. Had I been in time to board the *Aurora* and sailed immediately, I could not have survived the long sea voyage home."

[Source: *Mawson's Will* by Lennard Bickel, published by Stein & Day, New York]



An open crevasse,  
similar to the one in which Ninnis and his dog team plunged to their death

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### WISE CHILD by Monica Furlong (Corgi pb 1990, \$5.95)

Originally published by Victor Gollancz in 1987, this very beautiful and profound novel centres around the life of a ten year-old girl on the island of Mull in the seventh century.

Nicknamed by the folk of her village 'Wise Child', she is the daughter of an unhappy marriage. Finbar, her father, is nearly always away sailing, while her mother (an exquisitely beautiful woman) is more interested in sex, luxury and power -- and eventually deserts her daughter.

Wise Child is soon taken in by a very strange and much feared woman who hails from Cornwall, Juniper, the local witch or 'wise woman' -- a person much detested, needless to say, by Fillan, the authoritarian Catholic priest.

Most of the villagers fear Juniper but Wise Child discovers that she is a person full of love, kindness, knowledge and common sense. An unusual education then unfolds. Fairly soon Juniper explains what people like her call themselves in the local tongue (Gaelic). "The word we use is *doran*." This derives from another Gaelic word, *dorus*, which means 'entrance' or 'way' (hence the modern English word 'door'). A *doran* is 'someone who has found a way in to seeing or perceiving the energy, the pattern and the rhythm of the living universe'. 'Dorans,' Juniper continues, 'can be healers, poets or craftsfolk. Some don't do anything at all. They often stay in one place, and they just know.'

Juniper later tells Wise Child about a quite different kind of person, often confused with *dorans*: 'There are people, you know, who are not trying to live in the rhythm, but just to control other people, make them feel guilty or do what they want. ... There are much worse people than Fillan who control other people with special sorts of spells. ... Once you start controlling other people, whatever your motive, you become a sort of sorcerer. Those people are not on the side of life, Wise Child, but they are powerful.'

Juniper feels completely at one with Jesus, but believes that the Church has to some extent misadapted His teaching. *Wise Child* appears to be written for teenage girls, but it also has the power to delight and educate sympathetic adults. It is an excellent introduction to the 'Old Religion', that ancient way of celebration and service based around the divinity perceived as 'the Goddess'. It is a mine of information, although the author has allowed herself some anachronisms: I doubt if tarot cards or inquisitors were found in that era.

The tale culminates in a dramatic narrative. Monica Furlong has written several other books, including *Thérès of Lisieux* and a biography of the Catholic contemplative, Thomas Merton.

by Nigel Jackson

### MIDDLETON, V.C. by Stuart Bill (\$24 incl. postage, available from 18 Pollina St. East Bentleigh, Victoria 3165)

When Stuart Bill's book *Middleton, V.C.* was published earlier this year, almost forty years had passed since the operational flight which cost this young pilot his life. The book covers some family history and the recollections of people who knew **Rawdon Hume Middleton** as a schoolboy and jackeroo. For younger readers today who accept aeroplanes as part of everyday reality, it is perhaps difficult to realise how young aviation was in the 1930's, when Middleton himself was a teenager. The exploits of Australians, Kingsford Smith, Bert Hinkler and others, kindled an interest in this new frontier. It is difficult, too, to realise the limitations of aircraft manufactured in the 1940's and the considerable loss of life incurred in the training of war-time air crews.

With care to accuracy of detail and great sensitivity, Stuart Bill describes the raid on the Fiat factory in Turin. It becomes obvious that Middleton saw his duty as bombing only military targets; his responsibility as minimising loss of civilian lives and doing his utmost to prevent his crew having to bale out over enemy territory. He had already decided, before the Turin raid, that, if he were to have to crash land his aircraft at any time, it would be where there was least risk to civilians. That a young man of twenty-six years was able to do exactly this, in spite of his extensive wounds, leaves us with a sense of deep admiration and an awareness that our continuing gratitude should be shown by living equally as responsibly in peace-time as did Middleton during war.

by Jenifer Jefferies

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