PART III

The Second Consultant, Patricia Scott

In the planning stage it was stressed that:

> Patricia Scott who is currently working as a freelance storyteller, lecturer and consultant on children's literature - (with a strong bias towards the use of all forms of oral narrative with people of all ages) - would be mainly concerned with those writers whose interests lay more in collecting and re-telling the folklore of the Australian Aborigines.

This work is related to her interests in language development and the stimulation of creative writing, particularly because of her awareness of 'the overwhelming number of young people who need stimulation'. She also felt herself to be challenged by the fact that

> few writers appear to have the necessary background of Aboriginal source material plus the bent for fantasy that we have so far required. (Letter, 15 June 1980)

She is also the author of: 'A Survey of Australian Historical Fiction for Children' (1971)[86]; *Sharing Stories I*: Storytelling and reading aloud (1979); and the important paper 'Young and Growing: the Uses of Story' (1979).[87] While the paper published in 1971 was available during the School, it may assist if some of the ideas of the IBBY paper are mentioned, not least because of their influence on the School itself.

(a) Her IBBY Paper

The IBBY Conference paper was really a musing over her experiences as a professional storyteller and particularly as the result of a recent period of doing this fulltime under an Innovations Grant from the Schools Commission. Her lecturing on storytelling began as a way to make other educators more aware of the importance of the story told and not read and to encourage others in the use or habit of this means of giving pleasure. The material she had used and continues to develop is culled from folk tale, myth legend and from short-story collections, always selected to match as far as possible age and ability of the hearers.

For her, all story is active, being a continually changing or modifying artifact subjectively handled by both teller and listener, for

> Men search for their own story in the stories of others. And they dream them alone in the dreams of sleep...and in the dreams of day which we all use to order our lives. (*Through Folklore to Literature*, p. 102)

Each of us lives his own story and the landmark or entertainment value of any story fits our personality, or, if it is a (re)telling, develops from our essential self. As chemicals effect body and personality, so stories will have their influence on our perception of experience. Her particular stress is on the *active* nature of story and so on its importance over and above the benefits usually held to flow from the reading process which may well be used as 'retreat from any kind of emotional reference' (p. 104). Following Virginia Axline,[88] she raises the worrying question of the child whose understanding of messages is often far beyond his willingness to communicate with others, or the passive nature of reading as opposed to the personal projecting aspect of telling a story. For her the paramount need of infancy is successful relationships which lead to trust, confidence and self-acceptance, and *then* the stimulation of people, story, all forms of exploration. She stresses the primacy of sense-perception over intellect in learning experiences, approving the value of: shape in story heard; ordering in pre-reading skill games; and tone in playful conversational exchanges.[89]

Patricia Scott is particularly concerned about the value of growing up with an extended family of three generations and many articulate (and extrovert) personalities, quoting with approval the example of Dodie Smith, whose experiences of many kinds of (dis)ordered thought of her elders were catalytic of

> fluent speaking and thinking and which are necessary preliminaries for those who wish to express themselves in writing. (p. 108)

For her, play, talk, dance, instrumental music and the plastic arts are the 'primary ways of storying', but the volition and training are needed for reading and writing. She questions the use of excessive or unduly illustrated story, since this denies the chance to develop visual imagination, something best seeded by

> Places and spaces in the mind, words and images that remain with us always with a sense of loss and longing. (p. 109)

Thus the value of story-telling comes from the relationship which it offers and the 'freedom to respond to the mood of the occasion' (p. 110), a creative process quite unlike the incentive-robbing manufacture of images by television or expressive printed illustration. While a school situation needs to be catalysed by a sympathetic teacher, the isolated or handicapped child is likely to respond even more than his more fortunate peer.

In discussion of the types of story told, she stresses the particular power of: giants, witches and dragons; romantic stories; yarns in a recognizable setting.[90] She found all too many stories 'bastardised by Disney' or watered down by illustrators, but not Australia's indigenous matter

> ...there is a growing demand for Aboriginal stories as part of the very wide interest in their culture...I have moved into this area with considerable diffidence as I believe these stories...need so much more than the English words to give them the life and power which they undoubtedly hold.

Aids to general enjoyment of any story include: puppets; opportunity for hearers to make participatory noises; pleasure experienced by the story-teller; some kind of relevance to the needs of the hearer, or, as another researcher put it

> to the multiple demands both inner and outer on his ego.[91]

(b) Her 'Survey of Australian Historical Fiction for Children'[92]

This highly responsible and articulate overview of many books published in the thirty year period from 1941 to 1970 also establishes the criteria for assessing this 'kind' and for determining the qualities necessary for good historical fiction as:

> that 'the warp and weft of life' be closely woven into the story;
>
> that 'there should be a concern with people rather than with facts and events';
>
> 'an awareness of place';
>
> 'events should happen because of, and through, people'; and
>
> that 'the best historical fiction, whether written for adults or younger readers' should speak to us through things which have changed little, 'the eternal realities'.

Too much emphasis on the external differences between the past and the present, and too little realization of what lies in common 'can lead only to artistic failure'.

She also notes in considering this 'other', how:

> The response of a reader to an historical novel will depend in large part upon his own imagination; whether he is a creative person who likes to be involved in the story, a factual person who needs each detail to be carefully and accurately given, or a combination or modification of these. (p. 45)

She singles out for especial praise Eleanor Spence[93] for her combination of: some feeling for history, a real symapthy with people and the honest attempt to

recreate period, event or place. George Finkel, a migrant from England, is noted for his narrative imagination but observed to lack 'the sensory imagination which would bring people and places truly to life' (p. 50). Yet for its individuality and awareness which left it above the level of other writers she singles out (pp. 45, 48) Nan Chauncy's *Mathinna's People* (1967), a most controversial and satisfying story tracing

> the last years of the Tasmanian Aboriginals from the sighting of Tasman's ship to the pitiful and shameful final years on Flinders Island. (p. 48)

For those who do identify with the whole race as protagonist, it is to be seen as 'a moving and unforgettable re-creation of a past age and an extinct race' (*ibid.*).

(c) Her Thoughts About the 1980 School

Chosen as second consultant in the spring of 1979, she began to think through her position and what she could contribute. And so she wrote on 19th October -

> My interest in Aboriginal folklore is based on my experience as a story-teller with traditional material from all parts of the world...One becomes aware of similarities and differences between cultures, and of basic patterning modes that seem to be common to all peoples. Add that to the fact that Aboriginal story material is the area that I most want to explore at this time, and you will see why I was delighted when...approached.

She concluded by stressing the enjoyment of the 'challenge of something that leads me into areas I have only partly explored'.

Four days later she was asking:

> Could we have any relevant films that might be available for screening? I believe that one of the problems with putting Aboriginal stories into written form for an English-speaking audience relates to the fact that originally these stories are presented through various media and are closely place-related; we then reduce them to a single medium and hope that their universal themes will make them acceptable to a wider audience. While doing so, we should strive to retain somehow their original integrity.
>
> ....
>
> You probably already have in mind to visit some of the local sites. Would it be possible to explore a particular area to which we could relate a range of other available material? I don't know how sensitive such matters are there and I am aware of problems relating to sacred sites and the fact that I am a white woman but I also feel very strongly that an awareness of the overwhelming influence of place is basic to appreciating many of the stories and the way Aboriginal people feel about their own land.

She also mentioned that, at the National IBBY Conference in Sydney in 1979,[94] she had given a paper entitled 'Story-telling for special people in special places'.

It was agreed that she would work mainly with writers using Australian folklore in a non-creative way and with those whose interests might lie more 'in collecting and retelling the folklore of our Aborigines'.

She also requested in April 1980 that there might be available

A - books on Aboriginal art, important because so much of the story-telling is recorded in bark paintings;

B - the Alcheringa series of twelve films, concerned with practical, everyday things;

C - various books on Australian fantasy and folklore, on which list she had starred:

Aboriginal Legends from Eastern Australia (etc.), by Mildred Norledge (A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1968);

Aboriginal Myths and Legends, by Roland Robinson (Melbourne, Sun Books, 1966);

Aranda Traditions, by T.G.H. Strehlow (Melbourne University Press, 1947);

Australian Dreaming: 40,000 years of Aboriginal History, compiled by Jennifer Isaacs (Lansdowne Press, 1980);

Australian Legendary Tales, collected by K. Langloh Parker (1898); selected and edited by H. Drake-Brockman (Angus and Robertson, 1953);

Djugurba Tales from the Spirit Time, (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975);

The Feathered Serpent, chanted and translated by the old men of (the) tribes to Roland Robinson (Sydney, Edwards and Shaw, 1956);

The Giant Devil Dingo, written and illustrated by Dick Roughsey (Sydney, Collins, 1973);

Kwork Kwork the Green Frog and Other Tales from the Spirit Time, (Canberra, ANU Press, 1977);

Land of the Rainbow Snake: Aboriginal children's stories and songs from Western Arnhem Land, arranged and translated by Catherine H. Berndt, illustrated by Djoki Yunupingu (Sydney, 1979);

Legend and Dreaming: Legends of the Dreamtime of the Australian Aborigines as related to Roland Robinson (Edwards and Shaw, 1952);

The Legends of Mooni Jarl (see below);

Joe Nangan's Dreaming" Aboriginal legends of the North West by Joe Nangan and Hugh Edwards (Nelson, 1976);

The Man Who Sold His Dreaming, by Roland Robinson (Currawong, 1965);

Tales from Torres Strait, by Margaret Lawrie (Queensland University Press, 1970); (this is a selection of stories from 'Myths and Legends of Torres Strait');

Tjuma: stories from the Western Desert, traditional Aboriginal stories translated and edited by Amee Glass and Dorothy Newberry (Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Warburton Community Council, Inc., 1979);

Wandjina: children of the Dreamtime, Aboriginal myths and legends selected by Roland Robinson and illustrated by Roderick Shaw (Jacaranda Press, 1969);

Bunjil's Cave: myths, legends and superstitions of the Aborigines of South-East Australia, by Aldo Massola, with photographs by John Gollings (Melbourne, Lansdowne, 1968).

Many other lesser works were also listed, including illustrated catalogues of various art collections.

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The Oral Experience of Literature

The purpose of oral interpretation - by reading or adapting a known story - is the communication of intellectual, emotional and social values, as well as recreating the most ancient and universal form of experience of literature. The oral reader is charged with the responsibility of bringing out the meaning and emotion expressed in the core of the ancient story, or of transmitting the author's concepts and intention from the page to the audience. The major focus must therefore be the author's intent, since in proportion to his understanding of the story-teller's or author's purpose, will he find the basis for his or her own endeavours to reach his listeners. The development of insights into literature is an essential part of one's growth and success as an oral 'teller'. The wider and the more thoughtful one's reading, the greater one's confidence in deciding what might be suitable for a given audience and fitting to the situation.

The important thing to realise is that the literature of the folk - particularly from societies that were not literate or had no ready access to printed texts - is the biography of man from the moment he began to frame is feelings and ideas in words. The particular quality of folk tales, fairy-tales and fantasy story alike, is the weaving into their fabric of the hopes and fears, needs and desires, dreams and wondering of the men who lived and faced the challenges and mysteries of other times and different environments.

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Mary Duroux of Kempsey

One of the poets of the north coast, Mary Duroux, and more recently a member of the Aboriginal Arts Board, may be particularly mentioned in view of her part in helping Aborigines to write. Thus in March 1973, she had been associated with Barry Oakley and the present writer in a creative writing workshop[95] for her people. Then she had produced these lines dedicated to her sixteen year old daughter -

'Inheritance'

I have nothing to leave you
Small daughter of mine
When I'm called to that land up above
The one thing of value that I can endow
Is God's greatest gift we call love.

I can leave you with memories
Of happier days
As you gaily played by my side.
You must always remember the main thing in life
Is God's greatest gift we call pride.

The world may seem cruel, bitter and hard,
When with life you are trying to cope,
You must never lose faith in what you believe
Is God's greatest gift we call hope.

These memories I leave you small daughter of mine,
Guard them and treat them with care
There is one other gift, the priceless of all,
Is God's greatest gift we call prayer.

She had been asked by the Board to assist with the School, once it had various Aboriginal scholarship holders attending. Her advice included the following points -

- that careful plans be made for the first few days;
- that it be arranged for the Aborigines to engage in formal discussion with tutors and among themselves *out of doors*;
- that it is good manners *not to interrupt* when Aborigines are telling a story, even if parts are repeated to make sure that they have been understood;

and suggested

- that the Aborigines be invited to talk about the art objects on exhibition and perhaps write a story about one or more of the exhibits.

These thoughts accorded with those of Bill Scott and were carried out in the event. Her further notions that there should

> be some exhibition of arts and crafts from the places the Aboriginal writers will come from, so that they can talk to us about them;

and

that this would assist confidence to perhaps write a story about them;

were all of considerable assistance in the event.

The actual exhibition which was held during the school and was open to the public included: clapsticks, didgeridoos, dance hats, Aboriginal paintings, gnidle pots, etc., with both groups purchasing various items.

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The Third Consultant - Bill Scott

A third consultant, a 'male elder' who was added to the group, Mr W.N. Scott of Brisbane, was, of course, the collector of folklore for the last thirty years and compiler and annotator of the *Complete Book of Australian Folk Lore*[96] (1976), author of *Joe* (1978), then working on the collection of oral yarns from his own sources, and fresh from the Festival of Bush Music and Dancing in Sydney. In the late planning stage, on 20th August, he wrote to the University as follows:

> The announcement was for a workshop to be in fantasy and folklore - not specifically Aboriginal fantasy and folklore. I will be surprised if all participants want to work in this field...I feel we ought to make sure that anyone who intends to work in the field of the Western heritage doesn't feel overwhelmed by the overall atmosphere. One point well worth making might be that the same animating spirits are extant in BOTH folklores, under different names. Patricia's Nargun and my Wudgies are almost identical with the Troll and Dwarves of Western myth, for example, and the same elementals and nature spirits are very much in evidence in both traditions. Perhaps this might be one of the most fruitful approaches we might adopt. What's in a name?

He went on, referring to the hopes held:

> It is impossible to actually teach anybody to be a writer. All one can ever hope to do is apply one's personal experience to help people who are keen to become writers, and who are eager to work at the job. Every writer I have ever met has taught him/her self the trade, and are still learning it by doing it. We will certainly do everything in our power to foster and encourage what we do find, but there is no magical formula for success. No one can do more.

He also raised the key question, asked by the other consultants, phrasing his views thus:

> What, specifically, do the Aboriginal writers want to do? What do they hope to achieve and how best can we set about helping them achieve it? Until we know this we can do very little about preparation. But I am sure that we will achieve some interesting things, and possibly in areas we cannot now foresee.

His concerns were to be met to some extent by the advice given by Mary Duroux and acted upon.

Two days later he wrote on the dialectic of folklore-fantasy and the method of formulating 'the rules' -

> Most of the rules set for me were motivated by the recognition that in indigenous culture, the rules were set by the established law. Everyone knew the requirements and therefore the correct code of conduct for given situations. Even the Great Powers who established the law in the first instance were later compelled to abide by it, to work within the limitations imposed by it. Hence the Arnhem Land Rainbow Snake suffers when she breaks the Law which she herself has established. As for the

> elementals, sprites, powers great and small: these are for me manifestations of universal forces that exist in Basutoland, Canada and Peru as much as they do here. The inhabitants of those countries have their own particular personifications of these powers just the same as the Aborigines do. But the thing for the writer to be concerned with in using these local representations is to take care that the secret bits remain secret. They may be open knowledge in Ecuador, but if the Law says in Australia that they are secret, then we must respect the Law as it applies to us locals.

His *Boori*, 1978

Boori, the runner-up to the 1979 Children's Book of the Year, is a first novel, a post-Dreamtime literary fantasy of heroic dimension, and in the epic 12 sections, which uses elements of Aboriginal folklore to create a powerful secondary world with the *puk-wudgies*, or spirits in the west of the country of Perentie, the Old Lizard (Chapter 6), who explains to the warrior, Boori:

> The chief of my woes are some of those who live below the sand, those dwellers in the heart of the sandhills, the tribe of little men who never come out into the light of the sun. They are called Puk-wudgies. They are a strong people, small of body but very sturdy. They do not speak with the voices of men but like the calling of little birds. There are many of them and they trouble me over a secret thing....
>
> They have a power to move through sand and what has been sand. They can slip through the stone of the hill as you can wade through the water of your ocean. They are stealing the coloured fire, they take the stones back to the dunes of the desert where they live, where my power is small.[97] Part of my power lies in the crystals, because Gauba made them my business. If this goes on the Puk-wudgies may become able to command me. This must not happen for what are they to me who am the big Boss over all this country. (pp. 50, 53)

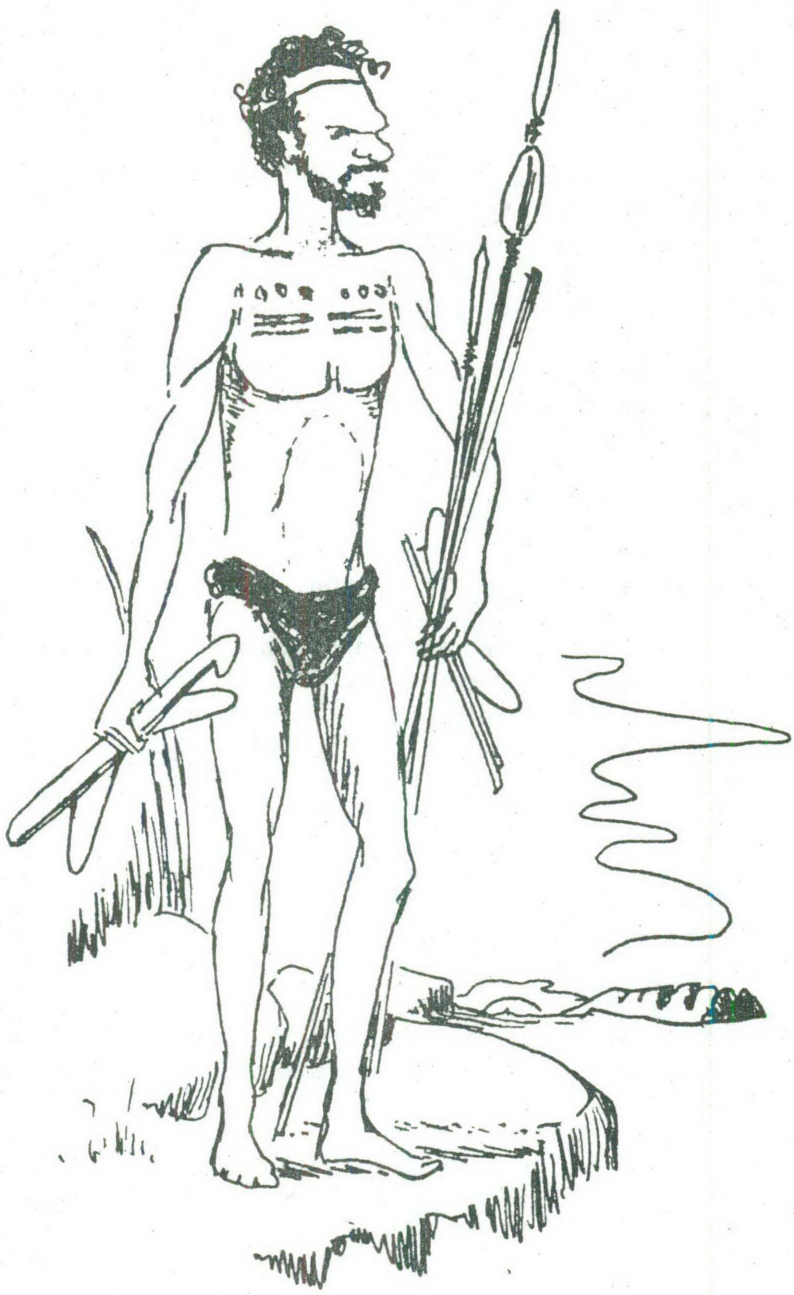
The puk-wudgies 'live in the dark dunes with their cousins, the marsupial moles' (p. 54) and are led by a chief, the Puk,[98] who gloats over his stolen firestones naming them as his 'pretties' (p. 86). Their speech 'sounded like the calling of little birds' (*ibid.*).

> They relied mainly on their thick knobby cudgels, which they called waddies, and on their sharp chipped stone knives. They wore no clothing at all...They never went abroad in full sunlight for they were creatures of the half-light and darkness and sunlight blinded them. They had little skill in magic, trusting for safety to their skill in hiding and the fact that they always travelled in company with their friends. The motto of their tribe was, 'Sing loud, brothers, together we are strong'. (*ibid.*)

Finally, the wudgies are won over by mercy (p. 97), even as their great enemy Perentie seems to lose some of his great 'hatred' (p. 98), due to Boori's wise peace-making.

Before this encounter, the warrior Boori, created in the Cave of Honey, when old Budgerie mixed honey with clay, had had to do battle with the big boss Dingo, chief of all the yellow dog people, and before that with old bad Bookal, an outcast water spirit. The first he had made into a friend and ally, the second into the first crow (p. 20). In all these encounters he has the help of his spirit friend and wise counsellor, Jaree, who lives in a small leather bag worn round his neck. The last task in which the three friends, Boori, Jaree and Dingo work together, is against Melong, the great water spirit and gatherer of storms, and his ally, Deeral, the Whirlwind Man. The battle rages high in the air between the powers of fire and water, and the Melong pushes a cyclone from the sea toward the coastline, but in the end fire is retrieved at the cost of the hand of Boori -

> they saw that from the fingertips to wrist his hand was blackened and dead. (p. 141)



Boori

All the action of the book, after the end of the Dreamtime (p. 1) is governed by the Law and when, although he had spoken the truth, Boori is doubted by his people, he withdraws, crying

> Doubters, I will not come to live among you. I will be a solitary man, living alone and keeping the Law...One day you will need my help, and I will not be here among you. (p. 12)

As the book's motto points out,

> The Aboriginal Law says that a man is responsible for what he does, not what he intends to do. (p. vii)

Boori, a man of the highest integrity, accepts both the slights of his own people and the cruel burning of his hand.

> As for my hand - Truly the Great One spoke when He said one must pay for it when the Law is broken! (p. 141)

At the end he will find welcome and peace amongst his people, since 'It is indeed time to rest awhile' (p. 143), but for the final healing of his body, a last quest on which he will be accompanied by those who love him, he would seem to have to pass beyond this world.

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The 'Author's Note' (pp. 145-146), at the conclusion is of particular interest since the methodology is akin to that used by other writers. Several key points may be tabulated

(i) 'the setting is specific', the details being given;

(ii) a philosophical system underpins the whole, the one Law for the tribesperson which 'laid down rules for every situation';

(iii) the story 'derives largely from Aboriginal myth and custom', though events and shape of the plot are the author's invention;

(iv) one of the names is that used by east coast tribes for 'the Great Spirit';

(v) the greatest foe, the Melong, is the name used by the Fraser Island people for a particular kind of Bunyip; and

(vi) there is a specific localized set of stories used as source for various details, namely *The Legends of Moonie Jarl*,[99] the introduction to which makes certain cultural comparisons and analogies:

> The Melong of our stories for instance, would be the witch in fairy stories, the Jun Jaree the fairies and pixies. (p. 3)

While working independently, Bill Scott has evolved a literary methodology closely akin to that used by Patricia Wrightson.

His personal concepts about the lore of other countries,[100] such as China, were kept largely in reserve during the school, but the odd mention of them may well stimulate or cross fertilize later in the minds of those who were present.

Australian Fantasy and Folklore Workshop, October 10-31, 1980

After initial planning there had come a considerable development when it seemed likely that the Aboriginal Art Board would make it possible for 10 or 11 Aboriginal writers and story-tellers to join the School. This was then seen to be both a challenge and a chance to make the workshop a small but significant bridge between the two cultures and perhaps motivate some Aborigines in the recording of their own culture. Mary Duroux's help assisted very materially here, as did Howard Creamer.

The Sense of Place

Howard Creamer, the Area Anthropologist, and himself an Aboriginal, had suggested that various books - many relevant to this area - be made available. They included:

J. Woolmington *Aborigines in Colonial Society*;
D.J. Mulvaney *Australian Aboriginal Prehistory*;
A.W. Reed *Myths and Legends of Australia*;
I. McBryde *Aboriginal Prehistory in New England*;
National Parks and Wildlife Department *The Aborigines of New South Wales*;
J.S. Ryan *The Land of Ulitarra;*
R. Robinson *The Man Who Sold His Dreaming*;
Janet Mathews *The Two Worlds of Jimmie Barker*;
Roberts and Mountford *The Dawn of Time*; and
Bozic and Marshall *Aboriginal Myths*.

He also made arrangements for the group to be taken to the sacred site, Woolool Wooloolni, accompanied by Herbert Charles of Woodenbong. There was also an evening barbecue at the dramatic setting of Dangar's Falls, east of Armidale, on 24th October, when the moon was full.

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The workshop was finally held with all doubts and tutors' reservations about their own ideologies and ability to assist meaningfully thrust aside. In the end, some 23 participants came to reside in St Albert's College on the campus of the University of New England, from six states. Their ages ranged from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties. As the official report (9 December) states:

> This workshop succeeded well. The tutors consider that five of the books much advanced as a result of it, may well merit publication. Five or six further books are highly promising and, if further work is done on them, may also deserve publication.

The membership of the course included nine Aborigines and one urban Aboriginal woman writer. The Director commented on the novelty and harmony of this occasion thus

> I believe the writers' workshop broke new ground in Australia in bringing whites and tribal Aborigines together[101] in a workshop devoted to the arts. I am pleased to report that the feeling at the school was harmonious throughout. When we were making our preparations some well-disposed folk recommended that we prepare separate programmes for whites and Aborigines. We did not do this (though we had special strands prepared) and our experience indicates that this is not necessary.

Several members of the 1978 workshop on Writing for Young Australians also attended, as did Peter Bartlett, the officer-in-charge of literary production at Yuenduma School, via Alice Springs and several others from that area. Another group came from Yirrkala, via Darwin and Roper River. Frank Davidson, of Sydney, and a member of the 1978 group, worked up a play into a finished product for touring to young audiences (10-14 years), had it performed, and also completed another long play which he discussed with the three tutors. Several of the Aboriginal participants produced short stories in English which will be published; and the others learned skills which will be invaluable to them, e.g. the two young men from Yirrkala (via Darwin) learned a good deal about transcribing Aboriginal legends and stories into interesting written English.

Scrupulous care was expressed with the type of material handled and distaste was voiced at various printed retellings of Aboriginal material. There was left no doubt in the Aboriginal students' minds of the deep sympathy of the consultants for all aspects of the indigenous culture.

Thus it must be held that the workshop which was designed to keep talk to a minimum and to allow the group of writers to make substantial progress on their work under guidance, was a creative occasion which had succeeded very well. The differing needs of the Aboriginal writers were largely catered for by Bill Scott, particularly in learning to understand (and practise) the white traditions of story-telling. The applicants had been selected largely on the basis of work completed or in hand, and each had brought with them a 'substantial project'.

As was suggested in advance by Mary Duroux, there would need to be follow-up activities after the course, it being 'vital to do everything possible to keep in touch with people who come here, encouraging and helping them as much as can be done.' No doubt this will occur, as was the case after the 1978 School.

Conclusions about the School

This survey of one strand of Australian fantasy writing began in a sense with the School held in Armidale and then with further reflection upon the related issues raised, it grew in both bulk and diversity. For a variety of reasons the School was for 'Australian writers already working on a project based on Aboriginal folklore', although it was equally happy to accept writers interested in fantasy using various approaches, or using other ways of presenting Aboriginal Australia in writing, by collecting or adapting stories, or producing biography.[102] Its core was, of course, the creative use of the imaginative concepts, which were and are unique to this continent, by persons with a genuine commitment to writing for children. As Patricia Wrightson had written on 19 June 1979:

> The Australian writer of fantasy has a national responsibility that can't be shared by others. But there are other Australian writers who know it.

All who have used this mode realize alike the need to be peculiarly Australian and to foster the reader's journeying beyond the finite limits imposed by the laws of everyday since, again in Patricia Wrightson's words:

> Fantasy is the medium for thinking, exploring, testing ideas and concrete concepts. (Letter, 19 June 1979)

Since the Aboriginal, unlike the Maori, had no universal national mythology, and since parts of the legendary lore of every tribe were, and should still be, sacrosanct, there are the most valid reasons why the modern handler of this material should tread warily. Again as our foremost fantasy writer phrases the necessary caution of a writer of integrity wanting authenticity -

> how close to the fire we are playing. It's why I've dropped the word, 'mythology' and substituted 'folklore'...mythology more generally suggests the sort of sacred myth we must bow to and avoid. (*ibid.*)

In pondering the urgent need for the fantasy writer for fairies and monsters,[103] she has seriously considered publishing an index of the non-sacred materials she has collected from such older scholars as Fison, Howitt, Brough Smyth and Threlkald,[104] and such imaginative more modern collectors and recorders as A. Massola, P.J. Trezise,[105] Ethel Hassell and W. (Bill) Harney. Certainly further variations on any revitalised sprite - such as the *njimbin* handled by Jenny Wagner and Les Murray - must extend the present widely recognized range which tends to peter out somewhere soon after *wagga* (crow), koala and *bunyip*.[106]

Patricia Wrightson has begun to extend that range, as mention of a *nargun* or a *mimi* now seem to set up an image or range of associations for the reader. As she said in the spring of 1980, after referring to avoidance of sacred creative myth -

> Neither do I think that the older 'black' folklore can have anything but a good and revitalising effect on the newer 'white' one. If that were not needed, how is it that Australian literature has been so notoriously poor in fantasy? And that at a time when fantasy was so important a field in the rest of the world. (Letter, 8 September 1980)

Bill Scott, too, has been concerned to apply folk ideas, as in his 'three general books on the local application folklore developed here from the Western tradition', both writers being deeply concerned to take original concepts of the imagination away from the mundane and restore to them some of their pristine strength. As Maurice Saxby observed shrewdly of Mrs K.L. Parker's *Australian Aboriginal Tales* (1896), the compilation of

> genuine Aboriginal stories...provided Australian children with the opportunity to read for themselves fantasy that was truly indigenous. (*A History of Australian Children's Literature*, Vol. I, p. 59)

These newer quality fantasies are *sui generis* - as the English critic, John Rowe Townsend, put it, when referring to the type inaugurated with *An Older Kind of Magic* -

> The use of Aboriginal folklore does not of course alter the fact that the novel is a sophisticated product of the Western culture in which Mrs Wrightson herself grew up: she has not actually created or re-created a native Australian form. But she has certainly tapped new sources and given an impressive new stimulus. (*A Sounding of Storytellers* (1979), p. 201)

and he goes on to stress, of *The Ice is Coming* (1977) that

> it may well be that this is the only way to make an Australian epic fantasy viable. (*op.cit.*, p. 204)

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Tomorrow's Fantasy

> ...to the fantasy writers of tomorrow, to those men and women not yet born, whom I shall never know, whose books I shall not live to read, but whose visions would not be strange or alien to me. [Part of Lin Carter's 'Dedication' to his *Imaginary Worlds*: The Art of Fantasy, (New York, Ballantine Books, 1973)]

While some of the fantasies already written - like Patricia Wrightson's *The Dark Bright Water* (1978) or Bill Scott's *Boori* (1978) make considerable demands in both reading maturity and depth of response, this is both necessary at this time in the evolution of Australian fantasy and fitting to the noble desire to express symbolically the wisdom of our society. Long ago in his *The Water Babies*, Charles Kingsley set out to show

> that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature.[107]

His and their works have, rightly, kept to their own terms, rather than apply any external standards of what the mode should be. Yet all would agree with C.N. Manlove,[108] following Everett Bleiler, that fantasy is

> A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms.

The books, events and authorial statements of the last few years have alike quickened the imagination of both writers and readers, and it may not be too much to hope that 1980 will later be regarded as the watershed, and that, as Patricia Scott hoped:

> The workshop could be the catalyst for some attending and even for some of the ones who will not be there but may start looking at the myths for future (fantasy) writing. (Letter, 15 June 1980)

It is peculiarly satisfying that the folk tale and the wonder story are at last combining fruitfully in this country to cultivate the child's imagination, deepen his

sense of humour, broaden his mental horizon and serve as a preparation for the appreciation of other forms of literature in his later life.

Conclusion

Because of the refusal of most critics to accept the new fantasies on their own terms; the late discovery[109] of the fresh beauty of the symbols lying to hand; and generally belated awareness by anthropologists that the 'lesser' Australian Aboriginal folk tales handled moral and social values - albeit in a disguised form - and expressed the most deeply felt aspirations of the society that produced them; - the legends of the Aborigines had largely lacked the opportunity, either to integrate the modern Australian child into his landscape, or to be rehandled by those of today whose imaginations have been nourished by this material.[110]

* * * * * * * *

The Armidale Schools have proved that the Australian children's novelists are keeping alive some vision of their own community and of their task as writers to revive 'a set of drained-out moral concepts'.[111] As the Director of both Schools wrote on 17 July 1980, of the fantasy school-to-be:

> If the Armidale experience is invaluable for six or seven gifted people, if it proves to be an important factor in their development, it will have achieved a good deal...Think of turning out even three more Australian writers with a firmer and more aware approach to Australian fantasy.

Let us hope that he, and they, will be prompted, as was Father William in the poem,

to do it again and again.

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POSTSCRIPT

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FOOTNOTES - PART III

86. Included in H.M. Saxby's *A History of Australian Children's Literature 1941-1970*. (1971), pp. 43-51.

87. In *Through Folklore to Literature*, Maurice Saxby (ed.), (IBBY Australia Publications, 1979).

88. *Dibs in Search of Self*: Personality in Play Therapy, (Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 51-52.

89. These she feels should 'sometimes include threatening terms without any sense of guilt' (p. 107). See her *Look Back With Love*: a Manchester Childhood, (London, Heinemann, 1974).

90. For example, some of the Australian ones told by Bill Wannan in his many folktale collections.

91. Norman Holland, *5 Readers Reading*, (Yale University Press, 1975), p. 128.

92. See H.M. Saxby, *A History of Australian Children's Literature 1941-1970*, (Sydney, 1971), pp. 43-51.

93. As in: *Lillipilly Hill* (1960); *The Switherby Pilgrims*, (1967) and its sequel, *Jamberoo Road*, (1969).

94. A follow-up to certain concerns stated in her 1978 Conference paper (see above).

95. The workshop and other poetic items and stories from it are discussed in J.S. Ryan, 'Some Aboriginal Voices Now', *Armidale and District Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, No. 17, (1974), pp. 28-33.

96. Published by Ure-Smith, Sydney, a division of Paul Hamlyn, Pty Ltd.

97. Note the system of order and provinces of responsibility familiar from all heroic systems, ancient or modern.

98. His threats and general ability to lose his temper remind one irresistibly of the Goblin-Queen in George Macdonald's adaptation of Germanic lore and fairy-tale, *The Princess and the Goblin*, (1872). His language in sulky defeat (p. 94) recall the guilty petulance of Tolkien's Gollum.

99. That is, Wilf Reeves, whose father was a headman of the Butchulla on Fraser Island. The book was published in 1964 by Jacaranda Press.

100. For example, his interest in Lim Sian-Tek's *More Folk Tales from China*, and in various central European folklores.

101. The two schools held in the autumn of 1973 were for Aboriginal writers only.

102. Compare Janet Mathews, *The Two Worlds of Jimmie Barker*. Or imaginative adults, but certainly less limited age reading groups than those aimed at in 1978.

103. See: *Reading Time*, No. 70, January, 1979, p. 7, and elsewhere in her longer papers. Also, Letter of 31 March, 1980, in which she discusses her index of 'water-sprites, man-eaters, air-travellers and little people'. Presumably such a list would be a simplified parallel to Katharine Briggs' *A Dictionary of Fairies*: Hobgoblins, Bogies and Other Supernatural Creatures, (Allen Lane, 1976; Penguin Books, 1977).

104. For example, such books as Lorimer Fison, 'Aborigines of Victoria' essay, (1890); Lorimer Fison and A.W. Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, (1890); R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, etc., (1890); Rev. L.E. Threlkeld, *An Australian Grammar of the Language Spoken by the Aborigines of Hunter's River*, (1834).

105. P.J. Trezise, *Quinkan Country*: Adventures in Search of Aboriginal Cave Paintings in Cape York, (Sydney, Reed, 1969).

106. Cp. her remark - 'in *The Ice is Coming* it became a labour of love to try to restore the bunyip to its old strength'. 'When Cultures Meet...', (*loc.cit.*, p. 194).

107. See F.E. Kingsley (ed.), *Charles Kingsley*, His Letters and Memories of His Life, 2 volumes (1976), II, p. 137.

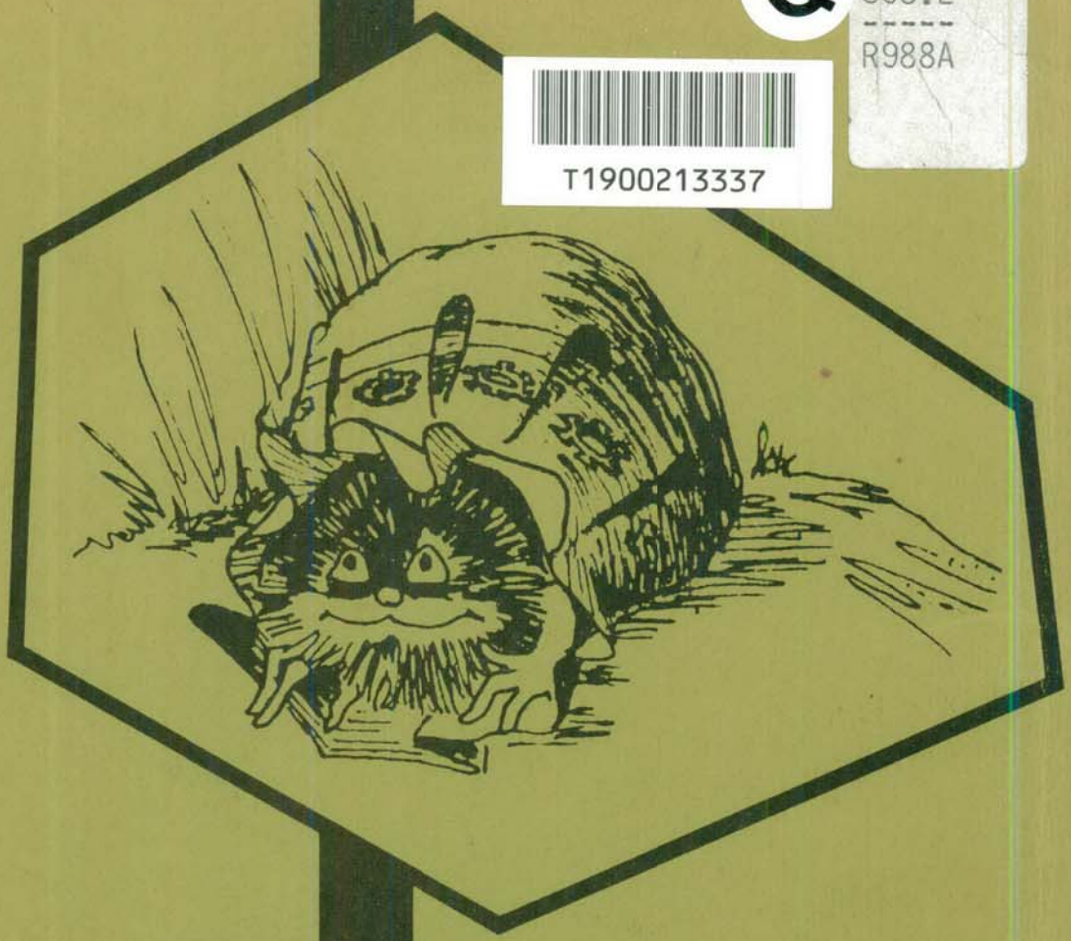
108. In his *Modern Fantasy*, Five Studies, (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 1. Cp. E.F. Bleiler, *A Checklist of Modern Fantastic Literature*, (Shasta Publishers, 1948).

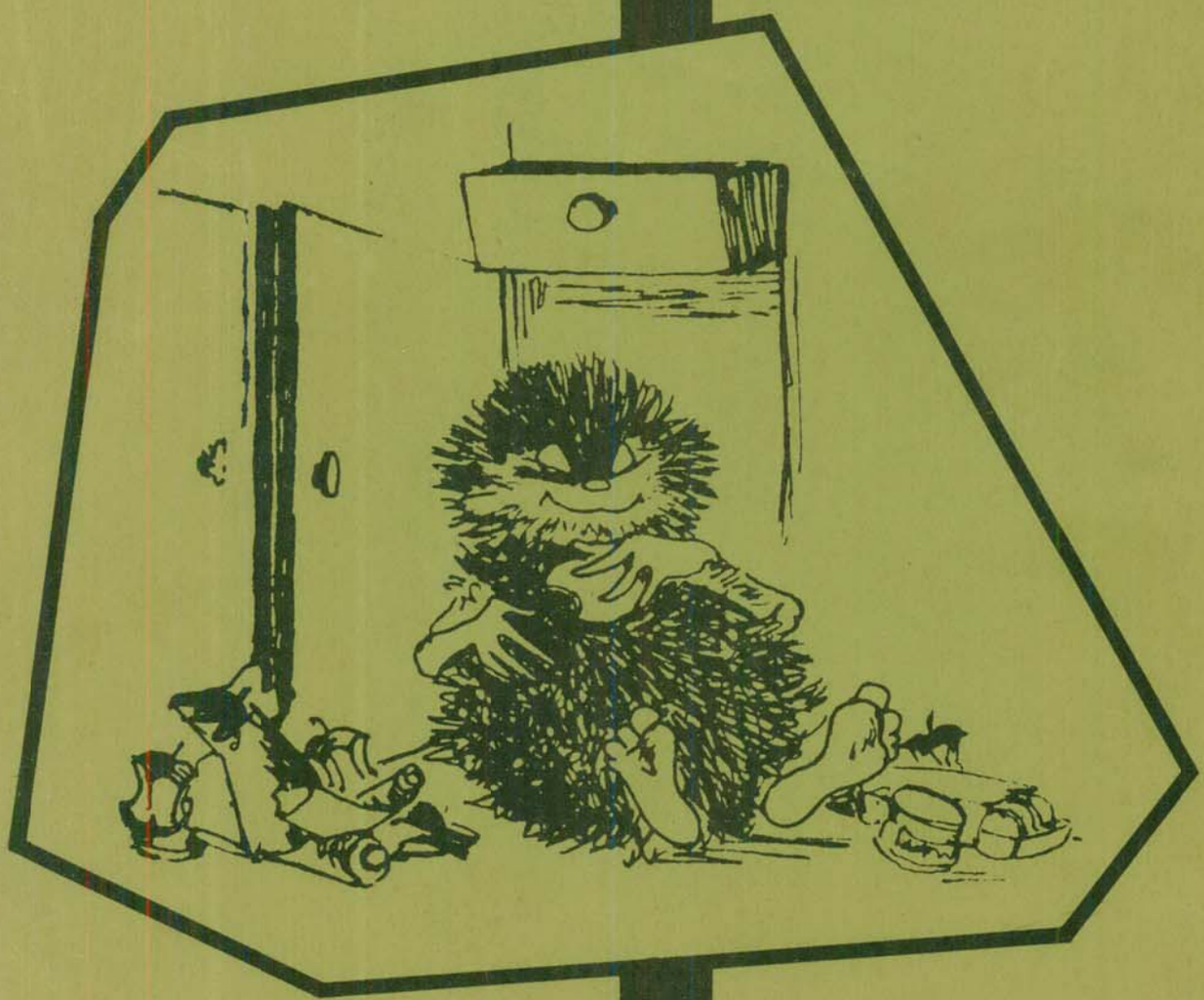
109. Barbara Buich in 1967, writing on 'An Indigenous Children's Literature', (*School Library Journal*, 14, November, pp. 35-37) referred to fantasy as a field 'still untouched'.

110. For a handling of a similar problem in England in the 1920s and 1930s, see J.S. Ryan, 'Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story', pp. 19-40, in *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*, edited by Neil Isaacs and Rose Zimbardo, (Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1981).

111. Fred Inglis, *Ideology and the Imagination*, (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 161.

I N D E X





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