

THREE VERSIONS OF *THE MONTFORTS*

THE PUBLISHING HISTORY of Martin Boyd's work in the United States has its surprises for the bibliographer, and its puzzles. The oddest and the most interesting discovery is *Dearest Idol* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1929), published under the pseudonym 'Walter Beckett' and not identified as Boyd's work until 1977.¹ So far the only official location of this early work by a major Australian novelist is the Library of Congress. There has been no mystery about the existence of *The Madeleine Heritage* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1928), for which Boyd used the pseudonym 'Martin Mills'. But it is a very rare book, held by only one Australian library. The consequent difficulty of comparing texts would matter less if *The Madeleine Heritage* were what it has been assumed to be: identical with *The Montforts* (London, Constable, 1928) except for its title, and of interest to the collector rather than to the student of Boyd's fiction.

It can, however, be established that *The Madeleine Heritage* was published earlier, though only by a few weeks, than *The Montforts*, and that the two texts differ substantially.² There is a third version of this novel: *The Montforts* (Adelaide, Rigby, 1963), revised by Martin Boyd and published under his own name. This has been wrongly assumed by me, and presumably by others, to be a revision from the Constable text.³ Its title page indicates that its publishers thought it to be so, since it states: 'First published by Constable, 1928. Revised edition 1963.' It makes no mention of *The Madeleine Heritage*, which I now believe to be the text Boyd used to make his revisions — a conclusion I hope to demonstrate by some brief comparisons between the three versions of the novel now generally known as *The Montforts*.

In his 1965 autobiography, *Day of My Delight*, Martin Boyd commented on his revision of *The Montforts* for Rigby; he complained that 'when I read it through to trim it before reprinting, I felt as if I were trying to eat a dry blanket.'⁴ Since he spoke of the novel under revision as *The Montforts* and referred to Constable as its publishers, there seemed no reason to believe that the Rigby text did not result from Boyd's re-working of the Constable *Montforts*. But it was immediately obvious from the Rigby text that Boyd's talk of 'trimming' was only in part appropriate. A good deal of the Constable text had indeed been cut, but there were some quite substantial passages which had not appeared in the earlier version. These apparent additions could roughly be summed up in their effect as giving firmer and fuller characterisation (at the cost of some diffuseness of style) and displaying a more sharply satirical attitude towards the development of Melbourne society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such alterations would not have been unexpected from the Martin Boyd of 1963. His often-expressed dissatisfaction with *The Montforts* might well have led him to fill out its characterisation; and his brief, disappointing return to Australia in 1948 might have sharpened the novel's social satire for the revised version.

In thus summing up the differences between the Constable and the Rigby *Montforts*, I was left with one perplexing question which caused me to wonder whether Boyd might not have had his original manuscript to hand at the time of revision, as well as the Constable text. This question was raised by the confusing appearance and disappearance of a very minor character named Harry Trevor. The

Rigby version introduces Harry Trevor as the illegitimate son of Sir Henry Montfort; the boy's existence is made known to his half-brother, Harry Montfort, after their father's death, and he then disappears from the novel. This episode seems intended to make more complex the character of the exemplary head of the Montfort family, and no more is heard of the boy himself. But the name 'Trevor' appears, oddly, in the Constable version as well, being given there to a character so minor as scarcely to warrant his having a name at all.

The first reference to Trevor in the Constable text comes late in the novel, in a letter from Arthur Montfort to his young cousin, Raoul Blair, during the 1914–1918 war. Arthur writes that 'there is a terrible fellow, a Labour Member of Parliament, called Trevor, who is agitating against conscription. Cousin Amy says he should be shot.' (p.285) Trevor is mentioned again at the end of the novel when Arthur resignedly notes that 'another labour man had got the seat left vacant by the death of Trevor, that socialist brute.' (p.349) If Harry Trevor, the illegitimate half-brother of Arthur and Amy Montfort, had appeared in the first half of the Constable text, as he does in the Rigby text, his career as Labour politician would have had some meaning in the context of Montfort family history. Boyd's preoccupation with hereditary characteristics is central to all versions of the novel. Harry Trevor, socialist and anti-conscriptionist, would fit neatly into the category of the rebel Montforts, the troublers of the family peace. That Arthur and Amy, ignorant of the family secret, should see Harry as a 'socialist brute' who ought to be shot would be a predictable irony. Martin Boyd might have seen the possibilities of this situation and written in, for the Rigby edition, the early scene in which Harry Trevor and his mother confront Harry Montfort.

Inexplicably, it seemed, Boyd first gave the 'socialist brute' of the Constable text an identity as an illegitimate Montfort, and then removed all traces, in the last part of the Rigby text, of Trevor as Labour Member of Parliament. Thus, the grown-up Trevor exists only in the Constable text, and he is not a Montfort. In the Rigby text, he makes only one appearance, as the fourteen-year-old unacknowledged son of Sir Henry Montfort. He is not mentioned again; and the two passages from the Constable text about Trevor the socialist are cut in the revised version to one reference to a nameless Labour politician.

The enigmatic Harry, a character who makes sense only if the Constable and the Rigby texts are read as one, cast some doubt on the idea that Boyd had simply trimmed the 1928 text and added some new material. It seemed possible, however, to find some kind of an explanation. Boyd, having devised the episode of the illegitimate son during his revisions and decided to identify him with the Labour politician, might have changed his mind and, rather than delete the scene between the two half-brothers, have chosen to strike out the name 'Trevor' from the last part of the novel. (He could, of course, as easily have supplied a new name for either the illegitimate son or the politician.) Another possibility was that Boyd was revising from a manuscript in which Trevor as illegitimate son and Trevor as socialist politician were one and the same; that he decided to restore the first part of Trevor's story and delete the second. Such a decision might have been made for more than one reason. In a novel much concerned with the interaction of heredity and environment the Harry Trevor theme might have seemed to Boyd, both in 1928 and in 1963, too contrived an element in an already schematic novel. He might also have had in mind that his novel would be read in Australia, in part at least, as a *roman à clef*, and that to invent a politician

active in the conscription period and add him to a chronicle based on Boyd's Beckett family history would be to invite even more of the guessing games in which fiction was to be confused with fact in the reading of *The Montforts*.

The idea that Boyd was revising from a manuscript seemed to me, on the whole, even less likely than the 'change of mind' theory. If he had been in the habit of keeping his manuscripts, some of them would have come to light at the time of his death in 1972; and the most reliable information was that he did not keep them. He had moved house many times between 1928 and 1963; he had lived in various parts of England and returned briefly to Australia before settling in Italy in 1955. As *The Montforts* was a novel he disliked, its manuscript was not one he might be expected to take care to retain. But one could not be sure.

With these questions unresolved, I committed myself in 1974 to the view that *The Montforts* was revised from the Constable text, with new material added. With no space within the *Australian Writers and Their Work* format to discuss Harry Trevor, even if I had formed a convincing explanation for him, I put that problem aside. Even though the Trevor episode might have been a restoration, and the manuscript theory not ruled out, it seemed that the other supposedly new passages in the Rigby text were more typical of late than early Boyd. Then, in 1976, when the task of compiling a Boyd bibliography (*Australian Bibliographies* series, 1977) led me to a detailed study of all available Boyd texts, I found that *The Madeleine Heritage* proved me wrong, and provided a cautionary tale for anyone who attempts, as I did, to build a theory on incomplete knowledge of all relevant texts. The authorities (H.M. Green, Morris Miller and Macartney *et al.*) who described *The Madeleine Heritage* as the U.S. edition of *The Montforts* should not have been taken as sufficient evidence. The author's own comments, and the Rigby title page — both misleading — also contributed to my acceptance of the Constable *Montforts* as the primary text.

When, finally, I was able to bring the three texts together, it was soon apparent that there was almost nothing in the Constable or the Rigby *Montforts* which had not already been published in *The Madeleine Heritage*. My supposition that, while 'trimming' the novel for Rigby, Boyd had written substantial new passages was quickly disposed of. What he had done, I now believe, was to trim *The Madeleine Heritage*. Neither the English nor the Australian edition contains any substantial passage which cannot be traced back to *The Madeleine Heritage*.

Looking for the elusive Harry I found him united in a single character in *The Madeleine Heritage*: illegitimate son and Labour politician. Raoul Blair, unaware of his cousin's identity, speaks of him disapprovingly as 'the awful Labor fellow, Harry Trevor, who had spoken against the visit [to Australia] of the Prince of Wales'. (p.336) This comment occurs only in *The Madeleine Heritage*, but the scene between Harry Trevor, his mother, and Harry Montfort is common to the American and Australian texts. The references to Harry Trevor as 'socialist brute' and Labour politician are common to the American and English texts.

I have used the three versions of Harry Trevor as an example of the way in which the three texts are related. The example holds good for other material of various kinds. If we were to call *The Madeleine Heritage* the ABC of Boyd's novel, the English *Montforts* would be AB, and the Australia AC.

Many of the differences between the two 1928 texts are of a kind to suggest that more editorial pruning was done in London than in Indianapolis. It is possible, too, that Boyd himself had second thoughts about the style and content of the novel;

that he was able to revise the Constable text but was either indifferent to the Bobbs-Merrill one or too late to make in Indianapolis the changes made in London. That U.S. publication preceded the novel's appearance in England, though only by a few weeks, might lend some support to this conjecture.

Among the many variations between the two 1928 texts, it is possible to distinguish minor verbal changes from those reflecting the author's attitude to his characters and towards Australian society. The English text is, on the whole, more economical; some wordy sentences have been cut, to advantage. For example:

'There was Mary. . . reminding him of a picture he had once seen, called *The Lonely Splendour of a Royal Discontent*' (U.S. ed. p.287)

'There was Mary. . . with a faint expression of discontent.' (English ed. p.250)

The Australian edition omits this passage.

The Madeleine Heritage includes five sonnets attributed to Raoul Blair, all of them previously published by Martin Boyd. The English text reduces the number to three, and the Australian *Montforts* gets rid of them altogether. The reduction from five to three may have been the result of Boyd's decision (or his English editors') that five poems within eight pages was too much. Their disappearance from the Australian text probably reflects Boyd's low opinion, in old age, of his early verse.

Some of the material in *The Madeleine Heritage* belongs to a different category from the examples quoted above. There are more attacks, and more vehement ones, on Australian society, which is characterised as mediocre and materialistic. 'The only reverence in Melbourne is for wealth', Mabel Allman asserts. 'In this blighted land all the old sex taboos and religious taboos are stronger than in England. The hates of the war still frantically survive here — there is no independence of thought. Nearly every Australian has an inferiority-complex which makes him afraid to think, or a superiority complex which makes him think damnably.' This passage from the U.S. text (pp.352–3) is missing from the English text but restored in the Australian one (p.221), which may mean that content rather than style was the reason for its deletion from the English text. There are other passages in *The Madeleine Heritage* and the Rigby *Montforts* which reflect attitudes similar to those of Boyd's 1961 article 'Why I am an Expatriate',⁵ in which he recalls his distaste for the 'strong bourgeois ethic' of Melbourne after the Second World War. On the whole, the authorial attitude towards Australian life and the characters of the novel is less astringent in the English text than in the other two. This may be because Boyd knew that the English one would be read at home by his family and friends in 1928; he did not need to consider his American readers in the same way. The restoration of some — not all — of the more abrasive remarks in the 1963 revision suggests that, from a first version of the novel, written perhaps without much thought of its Australian reception, Boyd modified his satirical attack for home consumption, and that the second revision is a compromise between the outspoken and the cautious moods of Boyd in 1928. He may have given Bobbs-Merrill and Constable the same manuscript, and had one publisher accept it and the other ask for some pruning which gave a chance for second thoughts, or he may have despatched two manuscripts.

That *The Madeleine Heritage*, rather than a manuscript pre-dating both the Bobbs-Merrill and the Constable texts, was the source for the Rigby revised text can, I think, be established by a study of a number of misprints and American usages common

to the first and third versions of the novel.

For example:

<i>U.S. ed.</i>	<i>English ed.</i>	<i>Australian ed.</i>
Eureka blockade (p.50)	Eureka stockade (p.53)	Eureka blockade (p.33)
showbread (p.291)	shewbread (p.254)	showbread (p.184)
article refusing Shaw (p.296)	article refuting Shaw (p.259)	article refusing Shaw (p.187)
Bernard Patridge's cartoons (p.303)	Bernard Partridge's cartoons (p.265)	Bernard Patridge's cartoons (p.192)

Of these, the best clue is 'Eureka blockade'. That should have put the observant Australian reader on the track of an American influence, and perhaps led back to *The Madeleine Heritage*. If it had done so, this article could have been written before, not after, my Boyd bibliography, and it would have saved a great deal of the trouble with Harry.

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1. See Terence O'Neill, 'Martin Boyd's missing novels: a partial solution', *Australian Literary Studies* 8(1978), 366-8.
2. *The Madeleine Heritage* was published on 9 March 1928, and *The Montforts* on 19 April 1928.
3. My comments in *Martin Boyd* (Australian Writers and Their Work, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 10-11, and in an introduction to the Lansdowne Press edition of *The Montforts* (Melbourne, 1975) were based on this assumption. (The Lansdowne edition was reprinted from the Rigby text and need not be considered here.)
4. *Day of My Delight* (Melbourne, Lansdowne, 1965), p.151.
5. *Bulletin* (Sydney), 10 May 1961, p.12.

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