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Booklover--White Garden

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Delectable summer vegetables hang from stems and vines in the local community and backyard gardens. Thoughts of tomato sandwiches, fresh salsa, cool gazpacho, vegetable lasagnas, tomato pies, and fresh fruit compotes make the mouth water and the stomach growl. Memories of farmer's markets, roadside stands, and u-pick 'em farms are part of my summer nostalgia. With the revival of the local farmer's markets, interest in locally grown produce and community gardens, these fresh summer vegetables experiences are coming full circle.

Ducking into the main branch of the **Charleston County Library** on a hot summer afternoon takes me back to another summer activity, completing a reading list. How many of those books could I tackle in the summer? But on this summer afternoon, I'm only after one book, one authored by a **Nobel Laureate** and one I can add to my "Read" list. Perusing the stacks I come across **Patrick White's** books and the title *The Hanging Garden* leaps out at me. I pick this one. On the back cover — "Praise for **Patrick White**" includes a comment from **Peter Cameron**, author of *Coral Glynn*. "**Patrick White** re-creates the world by depicting the life we think we know in an entirely original and luminous way. Everything about *The Hanging Garden*, his final novel, is thrilling, consummate, and revelatory.... A rare and wonderful gift to **White** devotees and a perfect introduction for new readers." Seems like a good pairing with a vine-ripened tomato sandwich.

I am soon aware of how *The Hanging Garden* is a real unique choice. From the short synopsis on the front book flap, I learn that this "novel" was published posthumously. It was among some of his last written works. It was revised. It was only a third complete. It was never supposed to be published according to **White's** instructions to his executors. It has a simple plot. It is set in Australia during World War II. It is about a boy, Gilbert, and a girl, Eirene, who are become "reffos" — Aussie slang for unwelcomed war refugees. It is written from a shifting point of view. It has no chapters, only spaces to indicate a pause. It is full of magical prose telling a tough story. It is a delicious verbal garden for a hot summer read.

Patrick White won the **1973 Nobel Prize in Literature** "for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature," amazingly accurate description for this unfinished, unpublished manuscript. Born in Knightsbridge, London in the year 1912, **White** was only six months old when his Australian parents returned to that continent. **White** developed asthma at an early age, which limited normal childhood activities but allowed his creative spark to grow. He spent most of his academic time in England. However, prior to his time at **Cambridge** he returned

to Australia. His family being people of the land, he needed to find out if this was something he could embrace. He continued to work on his word craft during this time. Ultimately he returned to London studying French and German literature at **King's College Cambridge**. A love of the theater, a few early publications, world travel, time in military service during the war, discovering his sexual orientation and life partner — all created the situation for **White** to return to Australia. Initially, his works were considered "unreadable," later **Nobel Prize** worthy.

Now a little taste of Eirene's introduction into her new world:

"The house has become stationary now. Will the boy appear round a corner or through a wall to challenge my ownership? Because it is already mine. It smells of mushrooms and dust, it is alive with the thoughts I am putting into it. Doorknobs are plasticine to my hand. I could climb into this cupboard and mingle with a dead man's clothes if they didn't smell so nasty-dead.

The house is large enough to run through. Everything shakes, like the earthquake that year on the island, only the drawers do not slither out, lolling like wooden tongues. But a sudden stillness. I am standing in this great room protruding as far as the edge of a cliff. It has been waiting for me: not so still, it is tremulous. I paddle in pools of pale light in the gritty carpet. Are they traps? Is the room a trap? And outside, the suckers of each tree reaching out from the Royal Gardens which Great Aunt Cleone Tipaldou still refers to as the *National Park*.....

Soon there will be the garden alone. If only you could take the form of this red thread of a centipede or beetle that might have crawled out of the dregs of an inkwell to claw and scratch and burrow and hide amongst what is not just rottenness but change to change. To become part of this thick infested garden so swallowed up where Mamma suffers. You could no longer want either house or garden for your own. Only to burrow. Only this other enemy would come, and crush the beetle out of you. Crush you as a girl too, if you did not resist.

As you get up on your uncomfortable heels, the garden which is yours, in your nostrils and under your nails, glooms and shimmers with whatever is to happen. The gate squeals — it is Gilbert Horsfall, socks around his ankles, the battered case with very little joggling round inside it, returning to dispute your ownership?

Ready yourself to kick him in the shins when the pins and needles have died like so many insects in what are still your legs." 🌿



From the Reference Desk from page 55

an alphabetically organized entry containing information such as alternate names, population figures, flag or flags, geography, history, culture, and languages..."

MacMillan Reference is publishing a new series of handbooks:

- **Religion: Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks** (Dec., 2016, 9780028663494, \$1700; eBook, 9780028663562, pricing available to registered website users) "is com-

posed of ten volumes (available individually) that serve undergraduate college students who have had little or no exposure to the study of religion, as well as the curious lay reader. Beginning with a primer volume, which introduces both the discipline and the topics of the remaining nine volumes, each handbook will usher the reader into a subfield of the study of religion, and explore fifteen to thirty topics in that subfield..."

Gale has published an update of a popular title:

- **The Gale Encyclopedia of Children's Health: Infancy Through**

Adolescence, (March, 2016, 9781410332752, \$950; eBook, 9781410332745, pricing available to registered website users) is now in its 3rd Edition. This latest version "is a completely updated edition that contains over 65 new entries with a total of 840 entries. The four-volume set provides in-depth coverage of pediatric diseases and disorders, along with issues related to physical and cognitive/behavioral development. It is an appropriate resource for parents, teachers, and allied health students..." 🌿