"Man, that great and true Amphibium":
A Thematic Study of Patrick White's Novels

Grace Millman

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"...For first wee are a rude masse, and in the ranke of creatures which only are, and have a dull kinde of being not yet priviledged with life, or preferred to sense or reason; next we live the life of plants, the life of animals, the life of men, and at last the life of spirits, running on in one mysterious nature those five kinds of existences, which comprehend the creatures not of the world onely, but of the Universe; thus is man that great and true Amphibium, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds."

Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici.

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ABSTRACT

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Patrick White is a contemporary Australian novelist of major stature. I propose to undertake a thematic study of his nine novels.

I intend to analyze the quest for transcendence in White's fiction, the dilemma and vision of the outsider, the frequently recurring vivisection motif, the distinctive settings of social satire, and the patterns of imagery that are related to the Australian landscape. In White's work, man's fear of the unknown is often imaged by the Australian bush. One of White's dominant satiric targets is the social outback--the predatory menace of civilization. White's protagonists, or outsiders, overcome the knives of suffering through their deeply personal and religious visions. All of his novels are thematically unified through the protagonists' struggle towards and ultimate achievement of faith. This privately sought faith ennobles and allows for transcendence.

Although my study of Patrick White's fictional technique and vision is a thematic one, a chronological introduction of his nine novels serves to orient the reader who may not be

familiar with White's entire canon. Following the introduction are five chapters that deal with what I believe to be White's major concerns. I placed "Treatment of the Australian Landscape" first, as it serves as the setting for eight of White's novels and also as a background to his related themes. "The Journey Through Vivisection" and "The Social Zoo" deal with White's fascination with the condition of human suffering, his distaste for man's inhumanity to man, and his contempt for conventional social attitudes. These two chapters are peripherally concerned with the tormented existence of the outsider. The fourth chapter, "Dilemma and Vision of the Outsider," deals directly with White's protagonists, outcasts or scapegoats. It discusses their discomfort within the realm of convention and their mystical visions. White's protagonists are all embarked upon spiritual quests. My fifth and final chapter, "The Quest for Transcendence," analyzes these quests in terms of the labourious struggle and ultimate triumph of the outsider.

White is a myth-maker and a symbolist. The universalism implicit in Northrop Frye's methodology is a valuable aid in dealing with White's frequently recurring image patterns and archetypal symbols. White's characters are psychologically intricate, and the combination of a psychological approach with Frye's universalism has helped me begin to explore the scope of White's technique and vision.

CONTENTS

Editions and abbreviations of Patrick White's fiction cited in the thesis:

Happy Valley. New York: Viking Press, 1940.	HV
The Living And The Dead. New York: Viking Press, 1941.	LD
The Aunt's Story. Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1963.	AS
The Tree Of Man. New York: Viking Press, 1955.	TM
Voss. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957.	V
Riders In The Chariot. New York: Viking Press, 1961.	RC
The Solid Mandala. New York: Viking Press, 1966.	SM
The Vivisector. New York: Viking Press, 1970.	TV
The Eye Of The Storm. New York: Viking Press, 1973.	ES

INTRODUCTION

Central to each of White's nine novels is the thematic quest for transcendence. Landscape mirrors the soul, and serves as the setting for the physical element of the quest. Both the terror and the awe of the unknown is frequently imaged by the Australian bush. Landscape is the reflection of the spiritual mystery that the protagonists have yet to explore and comprehend. The quests are collectively divided into various levels of spiritual progress and perception. Prior to the apocalyptic achievement of transcendence, the protagonists journey through the vivisection of experience.[1] The vivisection motif parallels the suffering the protagonists are exposed to before they can be rewarded. In all of White's novels there is at least one faith-seeker who yearns to overcome the vivisection of spiritual torment, and discover a purpose of being beyond the one of mere survival.

White's protagonists grapple with their initially baffling visions of faith, and struggle against the spiritually misguided and often vivisecting influence of the insider and his society. The seekers are visionaries who are explicitly outsiders to conventional society. Their spiritual polarities are the frequently antagonistic insiders who are imprisoned in a social zoo. White satirizes the insider and his ineffectual society; the satire, however, has a cutting

edge. White's outsiders are depicted as scapegoats who are humiliated in the arena of convention. Their pride suffers, but they emerge with their personal visions strengthened. I suggest that the dilemma, vision and quest of the outsider is the dominant theme in White's fiction. It is a theme that he pursues from his earliest to his most recent novel.

White's first novel, Happy Valley (1939), introduces his concern with the suffering and isolation of the individual. White explores the dilemma of a failed man, the doctor, who does not realize his vocation as healer until he allows compassion to re-energize his numbed spirit. The demonic community spirit in Happy Valley is portrayed as a vivisecting one. Most of the adult characters in the novel destroy themselves and one another through their carnal greed. Oliver Halliday is rescued from inertia by a cathartic love, and is eventually able to sublimate romantic love through a genuine concern for mankind.

In The Living And The Dead (1941), the listless brother and sister are almost buried in isolation and futility. Eden Standish is redeemed through personal love and political conviction, but her brother, Elyot, rejects this route to salvation. At the novel's closing he boards a bus in pusuit of an unknown metaphysical theme. The Living And The Dead is something of an experiment in that it is White's first and last politically-oriented novel. The concept of

political salvation is a theme to which White returns only obliquely, and with irony.

There is a marked transition in technical and thematic subtlety from these first two novels and White's third, The Aunt's Story (1948). Its admirable protagonist, Theodora Goodman, searches for her promised land and totality of self. Her quest for transcendence is in itself spectacular and full of comic adventures. In her final acceptance of the paradoxical and indivisible states of reality and illusion, she reconciles mind and soul, the secular and the sacred, and achieves a religious calm through a healing acceptance of her own nature.

In The Tree Of Man (1955), an epic novel, landscape plays a dominant role as the background to spiritual survival. In a short article entitled "The Prodigal Son," which serves as an autobiographical confession, White comments upon his return to Australia after the holocaust of the Second World War, and speaks of his resolution to incorporate the Australian landscape and the "Great Australian Emptiness" into the scheme of his writing.[2] The protagonist of this fourth novel is White's most fully developed ordinary or common protagonist, yet Stan Parker's quest is as needful and labouriously sought as the spiritual searches of White's far more extraordinary characters.

In Voss (1957), White presents the most startling and

paradoxical protagonist of all. The German explorer organizes an unlikely expedition into the vast expanse of the unexplored Australian interior, and is greeted with the vast desert of his own soul. Through his exaggerated suffering, Voss is exorcised of his pompous pride and the evil in his soul. His spiritual mentor is also his pyschic lover. Laura inspires Voss to ascend to godliness through the discovery of humility. The men of the expedition have been divided by spiritual vision into those of water and those of oil.

Ralph Angus is an upright, wealthy landowner with acute spiritual myopia. The loathsome Turner is a suspicious, selfish creature, bent on mutiny because of his resentment of Voss. Judd is the man-animal who eventually leads the tiny band of mutineers, but is the only survivor. His survival is needful to the novel's verisimilitude, as he later serves as raconteur of the expedition's almost surrealistic adventures, and his confused narration further contributes to the ambiguities and paradoxes of the man-god, Voss. These are the men of water who are oblivious to the spiritual or otherworldly aspect of the journey. The men of oil are the haughty visionary, Voss; the suicidal poet, Frank Le Mesurier; the simple-minded youth, Harry; and the pacifistic ornithologist, Palfreyman, who emerges as a Christ-figure. Although the men of oil are ruthlessly exposed to

the vivisection of experience, they are blessed (except for Le Mesurier) with a healing vision of God at the time of their deaths. The failed poet takes his own life as the final expression of his inability to transcend nihilism and achieve faith.

Riders In The Chariot (1961) is White's most explicitly religious novel. The four protagonists are the riders in Ezekiel's Chariot of Redemption. The Jew, Himmelfarb, is converted into a messiah-figure, and the three other riders serve as his attendants and disciples. Mary Hare is the lucid madwoman of Xanadu. She is the virgin who shares a mystic communion with nature. Alf Dubbo is a tortured artist, a half-caste who is society's outcast. Ruth Godbold epitomizes Christian charity. Her extreme simplicity parallels her extreme goodness. She is the universal good Samaritan. In this novel, White pursues the ritualistic hunt of the archetypal scapegoat; the scapegoat triumphs over persecution and despair when he ascends in the flaming chariot.

The Solid Mandala (1966) introduces Arthur and Waldo Brown. The twin brothers are the apocalyptic and demonic polarities of one man, yet they never achieve a spiritual fusion. On the literal level the twins are separate entities. Waldo is the man of sterile reason; Arthur is the spiritually androgynous creature of feeling. On the allegoric level the

twins are the irreconcilable halves of one man. They live out their estranged lives together, Arthur relentlessly offering his vision of love, and Waldo repeatedly rejecting his brother's longing with an enraged intellectual rectitude. This impasse explodes when Arthur murders Waldo in bewildered self-defence, and discovers that he can continue living without the shadow of his twin.

The protagonist in The Vivisector (1970) is the artist Hurtle Duffield. Sold from rags into riches, the child prodigy grows up as an eccentric and egocentric painter, who is alternatingly obsessed with solitude, asceticism and the experience of debauchery. Hurtle's talent is blessed only when he overthrows his pseudo-atheism and embraces the artistic vision of God the Merciful.

In The Eye Of The Storm (1973), ninety-year old Elizabeth Hunter is waging the battle for her soul in her opulent death-chamber. The bulk of the narration is composed of a series of flashbacks depicting her insecure childhood, unsatisfactory marriage, inconsequential and tepid love affairs, and indifferent motherhood. Elizabeth is a dowager empress, whose devoted nurses are her physical and spiritual attendants. Her aging children come to play homage to her legend and to extract their inheritances. Their shallow, mercenary schemes are demonically contrasted to her ennobling quest. In the end, Elizabeth struggles neither to continue living, nor to

withdraw her will and die, but to release her imprisoned soul and be filled with the love she has never been able to express.

White's novels all end on a triumphant note. His artistic vision depicts the striving protagonists as victors over the condition of human suffering and the dragon of convention. They emerge from their ontological dilemmas far wiser and with a permanent vision of faith.

Notes to Introduction

1. See Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 139: "We have, then, three organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature. First, there is undisplayed myth, generally concerned with gods or demons, and which takes the form of two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable. . . . These two forms of metaphorical organization we call the apocalyptic and the demonic respectively." Throughout the thesis I allude to apocalyptic and demonic symbols and imagery. Frye's critical methodology introduced me to this terminology. I use apocalyptic to describe imagery which is depicted as desirable, and demonic to describe that which is obviously undesirable.

2. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," Australian Letters, 1, 3 (April, 1958), 38.

CHAPTER 1

Treatment Of The Australian Landscape

White's imaginative landscape includes the demonic and the apocalyptic. Landscape is never incidental in that it reflects the themes which are enacted upon it. In much of his fiction, landscape is the mirrored reflection of the characters' terror of the unknown, both from within and without. Yet the characters who either have an inbred affinity with the landscape, or who painfully learn to come to terms with it, do not fear its uncompromising judgements.

In "The Literary Heritage," the Australian critic Harry Heseltine is predominantly concerned with the Australian imagination. He traces the horror of being that has always preoccupied Australian writers. He states that the concern of the "Australian literary imagination . . . is to acknowlege the terror at the basis of being, to explore its uses, and to build defences against its dangers."[1] The terror of being is imaged in White's literary landscape, and so is the awe.

In Happy Valley, the cruel geographic and climatic conditions of New South Wales encourage the estrangement of the weary characters, and wear them down spiritually. In The Tree Of Man, landscape is the congruous background to the everyday struggle of the common man. In Riders In The

Chariot, Mary Hare burrows in the foliage like an inquisitive marsupial. She is indigenous to the landscape, and is frightened only by what is human. A cyclone explodes into the very core of Elizabeth Hunter in The Eye Of The Storm. It is within the wreckage and desolation of the landscape that she is torn apart and enlightened. The deeper the German explorer in Voss penetrates into the soul of the desert, the further he journeys into the mystery of his own soul. The mythical lure of Meroe shapes the quest of Theodora Goodman in The Aunt's Story. Landscape plays an undeniably significant role in all these novels. Woven into the imagery of the landscape is the frequently recurring dream motif. This motif often serves to unite thought and experience into the image of a 'dreamscape.' White's treatment of landscape is an important consideration in the treatment of the themes of his novels.

In Happy Valley, Doctor Oliver Halliday is chilled by the threat of his failure and uselessness. He views his geographical placement as an imprisonment of spiritual solitary confinement: "Up here at Kambala or down at Happy Valley was a choice of evils. Only here the isolation was physical" (HV 17). The wasteland of the township reflects the wasteland of his deadened spirit. He plans a sentimental escape to the golden apocalypse of California with his mistress, but circumstances abort this mock solution.

His wife is being tortured by the uncompromising climate of Happy Valley, and eventually he accepts his calling as protector and healer. He overcomes bitterness, and removes his family from the pain in Happy Valley. His lover Alys is trapped in this unpromising setting but is determined to endure: "I wanted to escape . . . this, after all, is California, its true significance. Understanding, you felt no pain in your body, that ice did not touch, in your mind that was a fortress against pain, and Happy Valley, and because of this you lived" (HV 312).

As later demonstrated in The Aunt's Story, escape to the promised land is an inscape into one's own imagination. Alys has become immunized to the desolation of Happy Valley, and she will survive. Happy Valley has lost its demonic suggestion of loneliness and pain because Alys has experienced a love that has healed her own loneliness and pain. She can now accept what she has previously found unbearable. The quest for acceptance does not require physical movement. Oliver's difficult decision to move is necessary for the actual survival of his family. Movement is desirable when it is crucial and not merely an indulgence. Oliver has experienced his rebirth within the wilderness of Happy Valley. The stark landscape in Happy Valley is an obstacle the protagonist must overcome. It ceases to be a symbol of hopelessness when he allows his frozen sensibilities to

awake. He has then triumphed over the external emptiness and the emptiness of his soul.

Unlike the majority of White's fiction, The Tree of Man is predominantly centered upon the dilemma of the common man. White himself explains his concern in this novel. "It was the exaltation of the 'average' that made me panic most," he writes, speaking of his return to Australia in 1948:

> and in this frame of mind, in spite of myself, I began to conceive another novel. Because the void I had to fill was so immense, I wanted to suggest in this book every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time I wanted to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people, and incidentally my own life since my return.[2]

In a novel that concentrates upon the "extraordinary behind the ordinary," the outback is an appropriate backdrop. Stan Parker himself is like the solid stringybark, "rising above the involved scrub with the simplicity of true grandeur" (TM 3). The protagonist is forced to endure the flood, fire, drought, and spiritual death that occur respectively in the springtime, summer, autumn, and winter of his life.

The relentless rain enters the very dreams of the inhabitants of Durilgai: "It washed through the dreams of sleepers, lifted their fears and resentments, and set them floating on the grey waters of sleep" (TM 67). What could rationally be viewed as a depressing nuisance, an inescapable trial to be

stoically endured, is converted into an enigmatic catharsis. The preoccupation with the rain has purged the inhabitants of their everyday occupations and emotions, and has swept them to the nebulous shoreline of slumber. They emerge from their watered trance to rescue the flood victims: "The whole world was involved in the floods at Wullunya, either watching the water, or lending a hand, or led from the boats that rowed them from one dream to another" (TM 82). Even when involved in their resourceful activity they resemble somnambulists in a dream sequence. Such miraculous disasters cannot be easily understood or interpreted; hence, they assume the shrouded shape of a dream.

The continuity and expansion of Durilgai demands an intense "non-relationship" amongst the settlers. Only when a natural disaster strikes do they constructively mobilize, and draw upon their collective strength for the survival of the total community. The subtle community spirit in The Tree Of Man is a variation of Stan's epiphany: "It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums" (TM 497). When the "One," or community, is threatened, the separate sums, or individual clans, are also under attack. The relationship between the one and its parts is not usually a conscious one. Just as the members of Durilgai call upon the oneness of the community in times of necessity, so does the common man call upon God in moments of crippling

crisis.

The otherworldly mystique of the flood has magically produced an abandoned waif. Amy impulsively decides to make this child her own. This universal orphan epitomizes man's longing for what he is unable to possess. Stan does not pursue the vanished child, for he untuitively grasps that he is unable to own the dream-child of the flood. He attempts to share his knowledge with the lamenting Amy: "We couldn't have kept him. . . . He didn't belong to us" (TM 97). Stan's embryonic vision allows him to accept that some mysteries defy unravelling.

As the rescue party drifts dreamily onwards, "in one place Stan Parker saw, stuck in the fork of a tree, the body of an old, bearded man. . . . And soon the old man, whose expression had not expected much, dying upside down in a tree was obliterated by motion and rain" (TM 72). This scene may be recalled by the reader of The Eye Of The Storm, where Elizabeth Hunter glimpses an impaled noddy during the calm interlude between the episodes of the cyclone. She interprets the vision of the crucified gull as an omen that the storm has not yet subsided. She scurries for shelter and is saved. The old, upside-down man has been outrageously degraded and his expression is as defenceless as that of the simple noddy.

The next superhuman challenge that the inhabitants of

Durilgai are forced to confront is the fire. The fire is something of a wrathful avenger, in that it reminds them how sacred the land is: "They had discovered in the earth an austere beauty that they now loved with a sad love, that comes when it is already too late" (TM 166). The wind and flames are involved in a demonic conspiracy against the helpless wildlife. A messenger relates that "he had seen a snake bite on itself before it died, to hold someone responsible" (TM 167). This demonic imagery is closely linked with the ouroborous eating its tail.[3] The episode is a perverse one, in that it is calling for nature to turn upon itself as the only defence against the universal outrage.

The first fire exhausts itself, but there is a veiled aura of anticipation while the men wait for the next siege: "So they waited for the fire, and had been waiting many years of their lives. And nights" (TM 170). The imminence of destruction has infiltrated the private dreams, the very souls of the dwellers. Its appearance is not shocking, but is the fulfillment of a lifetime of dreaded expectation. The fire is an animate, enraged god who hypnotizes the fire-fighters with its colossal strength and passion. Beside it the men are mere spiders: "The fact was, the fighters had become not only exhausted but fascinated by the fire. There were very few who did not succumb to the spell of the fire" (TM 176). The men are spellbound by the flames, much as

they are lulled and drugged by the seemingly interminable rain. This is man's escape, or refuge from the forces of nature over which he has no control or comprehension.

Stan's rescue of, and confrontation with, the vaporous Madeleine suggests the clouded reality of a dream. They are both drugged by the smokey air, and by the intimacy of this variation on the classic 'rescue of the fair damsel in distress' motif. Stan charges into the burning mansion as the heroic man of action and becomes overwhelmed by the suggestive heat and chaos that the flames inspire. Their attraction transcends one of flesh: "It was not their flesh that touched but their final bones" (TM 183). This union of bone is a recurring motif in White's novels. It suggests a spiritual fusion. In this particular episode an ephemeral symbiosis has transpired. The intoxicating flames are the catalysts, and the implication is that dramatic situations prove needful for the awakening of the dormant mystic within the common, or uncommon man.[4] The two finally emerge from the seductive inferno: "They were blackened, but how burned it was not yet possible to tell" (TM 183). They have obviously been affected by their shared experience, but it is not yet possible to discern whether they have in any way been changed.

The autumn drought reflects Amy's sensual thirst, and Stan's bone-weary spiritual exhaustion. Amy attempts to

quench her thirst, and alleviate the suffering of her drying out, or aging, in a union of flesh with an inconsequential peddlar. Her need is imaged by the chaos of the blowing dust:" Dust blew down the road from Durilgai, in hungry tongues or in eddies, playful until they acquired the force of madness" (TM 305). Her arid flesh cannot be healed through the liaison that is more mad than it is playful. The drought has sealed Stan into the box of sleep, silence and solitude: "Stan Parker, who had fallen asleep tired, in a drought, dreamed that he could not lift the lid of the box to show her what he had inside" (TM 316). He has learned of her infidelity, but is locked inside his silence. She is the sensualist, and he is the seeker. He can forgive her for her thirst, but he must seek to quench his own drought from within.

Amy's terror of being is imaged by the desolate landscape of the bush: "They were possessed by the land, and the land was theirs. Now all the country round about appeared quite desolate. . . . All trees in this part seemed to have taken desperate shapes. Some definitely writhed. . . . She had never come close to death, and wondered whether she could deal with it" (TM 139). The ominous foliage of the bush evokes the image of death itself. Amy's private fear of death is reflected in the wasteland of the outback.

The novel closes with Stan's natural grandchild

wandering amid the bush and attempting to express his awe before the mystery of being. It is suggested that he will use the gift of poetry to arrive at his own vision of God. The final line, "so that, in the end there was no end," infers that Stan's quest and spiritual life may be continuing, and that the quest of mankind is an ongoing process (TM 499). It is passed on from one generation to another. There will be lapses. Stan's children remain spiritually clueless, but the grandson is destined to be one of the seekers. The novel has spanned four generations and, within that, four seasons. It has produced two faith seekers, grandfather and grandson; therein lies the continuity of being and of faith.

Cecil Hadgraft's sophisticated comment on The Tree Of Man seems to lack a basic understanding of the novel:

> It is a sort of allegory, man's life in rather Wordsworthian guise but harsher, with misfortunes that he meets, with aspects of life that he does not understand. The style, in parts at least, is stripped down to correspond with the theme. But the elemental can become monotonous over five hundred pages, so sections contain what may be called the allusive mystical. This is to provide depth and significance.[5]

White is a symbolist, and he does not employ the "allusive mystical" to decorate the elemental. The universal enigma is the foundation upon which the stark setting and White's unique style are constructed. The thematic stress is on the

mysterious continuity of man's being. The mystery is rendered even more awesome when man attempts to grapple with the problematic integration of life, death and faith. The allusive mystery is no prop; it is the novel's backbone. It is not utilized to enhance the mundane, but to expose the mundane as one of life's mysteries. The use of landscape in the novel is as simple, but as important, as Stan Parker's quest. The flood, fire and drought are representative of the stages of Stan's life. The dream imagery associated with each of these elements suggest the inner experiences and evolution of the man. These three crises are the dramatic interludes between the vast mediocrity of existence. They are the "extraordinary behind the ordinary" against which both the common man and his common landscape must struggle to survive.

The unexplored expanse of the Australian continent serves as White's canvas in the creation of Voss. Voss is a German who is lured by the romantic vision of himself as nineteenth-century explorer. He decides to penetrate the mystery of the Australian interior. The further he progresses into the unknown soul of the continent, the deeper he explores the centre of his own consciousness. A progressive study of the treatment of landscape mirrors Voss's own attitude to his hidden nature that is revealed to him only in stages. The landscape, then, is a mirror of his

soul.

Voss is a man of bone who is starving for the spiritual nourishment and permanent vision which he hopes the journey will provide. He is anxiously suspended and hoping soon to enter his own world, a world "of desert and dreams" (V 29). Laura, the intimate stranger who has barely had contact with him, perceives that the 'desertscape' is Voss's own by right of vision. He is relentlessly pursuing his vision; and this vision initially tempts him with the false promise of becoming a divine conqueror.

The journey into the landscape, and the inscape into self, are divided into various stages. A gentle wind accompanies the departure of the expedition, and the men have eagerly embarked upon "the first and gentle lap of their immense journey" (V 100). This can be interpreted as an omen that the purpose of the voyage is a desirable one, and that the party will be blessed with favourable conditions. The departure, or initiation ceremony, resplendent with fanfare on shore, is deceptively smooth. The separation from civilization is a gradual one. Voss is familiar with the first part of the bushland he sets foot upon: "It was a gentle, healing landscape, in those parts," and Voss is not conqueror, but merely follower in the path that the earlier explorers in this territory have already defined (V 133). He is comforted by the knowledge that this first stretch

of land has been experienced by man. It gives him the opportunity to gather his courage for the challenge he expects to greet.

The party sojourns in paradise at the Sanderson estate. The valley is enchanting with organic jewels: "As bronze retreated, veins of silver loomed in the gullies, knobs of amethyst and sapphire glowed on the hills. . . . This was for the moment pure gold" (V 137). The romantic setting is complete with a castle of golden rocks, and Rhine Towers exists within a realm of legendary beauty and innocence. However, as the tormented Frank Le Mesurier observes, "the serpent has slid even into this paradise" (V 138). The 'dreamscape' has been corrupted by the men who feast on its beauty. Voss in particular rejects the innocent splendour of his surroundings by refusing to be embraced by his host's generous hospitality. He cannot afford to be trapped in the valley of "sensuous delights" as he is already dedicated to the suffering he knows he will experience (V 138).

Sylvia Gzell fails to comment upon the suggestive splendour the landscape offers at intervals, and only observes the dusty grey: "It is closely linked with the unromantic, uncompromising Australian bush, which is described, together with the aborigines, predominantly in terms of gray."[6] White's presentation of landscape is kaleidoscopic, and the focus shifts from apocalyptic to

demonic imagery. The majesty of Rhine Towers could hardly be described as "unromantic." The desert ceases to be either magnificent or malevolent when it is perceived by the men as merely "uncompromising" (V 384). Gzell has commented upon this severe 'attitude' of the landscape, but has ignored the frequent references to the landscape as alternatingly welcome and hateful.

The chaotic inferno of Jildra, the expedition's next stepping-stone, is a startling contrast to the beauty and decorum of Rhine Towers. As the party progresses, the men are greeted by a bloodied sky and whorls of smoke. In this ramshackle temple the festering Brendan Boyle worships the god of self-destruction. The expedition has ventured from the realm of perfection and innocence to the outhouse of experience. These radically different regions represent the polarities the men are yet to experience beyond the borderline of civilization.

Around Christmas time the party is spellbound by the lure of the foliage: "Deadly garlands were quite festive in immediate effect, as they glimmered against the bodies of their hosts. . . . And there were the birds . . . filling the air with cries and feathers . . . although there were also other more somber birds that would fly silently into the thoughts of men like dreadful arrows" (V 209). The scenery presents the paradox of both celebration and death.

The Christmas festivities are deadened by Voss's refusal to participate in what he judges to be a pagan fetish, and yet the men do experience a somber celebration from which Voss is excluded. The "dreadful arrows" piercing the thoughts of the men are their embryonic doubts and fear of what they have perhaps unknowingly begun. There is no turning back.

The men leave the comparatively pleasant valley behind them and enter a dead country. Voss's horse is startled by a live snake, which is surprising in an apparently dead landscape. The appearance of the snake occurs strategically in Voss as a presentiment of mishap or disaster. When Frank first glimpses the imaginery serpent in the Eden of Rhine Towers, it is implicit that the expedition has voluntarily fallen from grace, having deliberately chosen banishment for the sake of discovery. The second snake appears just before the onslaught of difficulties and complications to which the men are to be subjected. As they ride over the "humped and hateful earth" they encounter the cheerful party of aborigines who are voyaging eastward to eat of the fruit of the mystic bunya (V 224). The expedition of whites is headed in the opposite direction; if they are seeking spiritual nourishment, they are clearly headed in the wrong direction. The party is lured by the cooling promise of water, but only just escapes being trapped in the clotted slime. The journey is converted into something of a

nightmare when the "glassy eyes of the most rational of all animals were seeing far too clearly as they advanced into chaos" (V 225). Man, the rational animal, has been reduced to a glassy-eyed brute. What is a mission for the self-appointed and annointed visionary, Voss, is becoming a chaotic hell for his only partially suspecting entourage.

Voss is interpreting the tribulations of the landscape in terms of his personal vision, whereas the men are not yet fully aware of his dedication to suffering. James McAuley comments upon White's treatment of landscape with respect to Voss's vision and the novel's theme: "Clearly, much depends on White's ability to render the external scene in such a way as to convert it into a visionary landscape with figures. . . . The memorable scenes of the exterior-interior landscape correspond[s] . . . to the theme that is at the heart of the book."[7] As Morley suggests, "the Australian desert to which Voss is drawn, however, is to prove needful to his destiny."[8] The landscape reflects Voss's own spiritual turmoil, and it is useful in that it externalizes his internal struggle.

Blinded by the timelessness of their leader's quest, which has not been revealed to them, the men ride on like somnambulistic centaurs. The scorched men are relieved of the overwhelming heat, only to be cursed by a rain so relentless it sends them running for shelter. The verminous

Turner, and upright Angus, who are temporarily converted into underground troglodytes, exchange confessions in their cave. Angus has been noticeably degraded through his association with Turner, and the two share a bond more of 'bruteship' than mateship. The troglodyte imagery converts landscape into a dreamscape, as Frank Le Mesurier is viewing them through a fever-delirium that is part hallucination, part reality.

The men crawl out of their hibernation and congratulate themselves on their endurance. Their pride is wounded by the sight of a frail bird, a fellow survivor. Survival is viewed as a miracle rather than the result of a bush instinct. Perhaps the men are wondering whether they have been saved for further torture. The arrival of spring is ushered in with trumpeting fanfare. However, the spectacle of rebirth and possible redemption is subdued by the presence of the vile Turner: "Tinged with gold after weeks in the musty cave, the fellow forgot the grey louse he had always been" (V 354). The expedition's triumph is false. Warmed and soothed by the sun, the men who ride onwards "only remotely suggested flesh" (V 355). The celebration is as macabre as the festivities of skeletons. The men are being stripped to the bone, and the nourishment of dreams is starving their bodies. In this sense they are all victimized visionaries, trapped in the hallucinative mystique of the

potent landscape.

Jackie, the displaced native, undergoes the most loathsome suffering of all: "The boy, whose isolation in the colourless landscape was not made less terrible by his black skin," has betrayed and assassinated Voss (V 446). His natural camouflage cannot protect him from the knives of guilt. Landscape is not the enemy, but it reflects his inner terror. Jackie is the mumbling mystic who has been robbed of his protective colouration through contact with the white men. Their experience of the landscape has become his experience. Even in death he cannot be fully absorbed into the land that was his by right of birth: "He lay down, and was pursuaded to melt at last into the accomodating earth, all but his smile, which his tight, white, excellent teeth showed every sign of perpetuating" (V 455). This grotesque death mask is the indestructible proof of his betrayal. Just as Judas betrayed with a kiss, so Jackie's perfect teeth are degraded and eternalized.

On the worldly level Voss has triumphed in that he has "left his mark on the country" (V 472). While it is understood that Voss's primary journey has been into the country of his own soul, his motivations for choosing the medium of physical exploration deserve consideration. R.F. Brissenden examines the desire of actual explorers who chose the desolate Australian landscape in which to carve their fame. Do people,

he asks, become explorers through curiosity? "But when the country to be explored is so lonely, arid and inhospitable as much of Australia is, one is prompted to seek for a less obvious answer. . . . It is possible to detect a more fundamental urge--the obsessive longing to place themselves in situations which they know beforehand will test them to the utmost."[9] This theory reflects Voss's longing to possess the country he feels is his own by right of vision. From the very start he is dedicated to the cause of suffering. His experience is metamorphosed from the sufferings of a wronged god to the sufferings of a humbled man. Just as the landscape imagery in The Tree Of Man was comparatively simple, in accordance with its theme, so the landscape in Voss contains, in James McAuley's apt phrase, a "gothic splendour." In White's novels the description of landscape is used to image the themes.

Although the bulk of the narrative in The Eye Of The Storm is centered around Elizabeth Hunter's death-chamber, the protagonist is exposed to a dramatic experience of the Australian landscape. As the landscape in this novel is the raging background of Elizabeth's illumination, George Steiner's comment abouth the treatment of landscape in White's novels is disturbingly inaccurate: "The play of European densities against the gross vacancy of the Australian setting are the constant motifs of White's fiction."[10] Landscape serves to

reflect the protagonists' inner being, and none of White's characters can be viewed as grossly vacant.

The seventy-year-old Elizabeth and her menopausal princess of a daughter are invited to Brumby Island, an outback where civilization has only tip-toed lightly. They enjoy the informal hospitality of their generous hosts, and become acquainted with that flat fish, botanist Edvard Pehl. The ensuing events are interpreted first by Dorothy, whose vacation is aborted because of an acute case of the sulks, and later by Elizabeth, who is abandoned to a wrathful cyclone, and to the storm of her memories.

Elizabeth voraciously hungers for new experiences, and characteristically expresses a keen interest in the wildlife. Dorothy, the "stick," but without the strength and courage of conviction of White's other stick-women,[11] concentrates upon a crab moving painfully through the scrub (ES 375). She herself is a self-effacing crab who is thoroughly skilled at clawing to death the spontaneity that life's experiences have to offer. The influence of the outback's mystique deeply affects the worldly women: "Now it hushed the strangers it was initiating" (ES 374). They are momentarily in awe of the exotic foliage as they are being initiated into a realm of the unknown.

The house appears tenuously suspended, and it has miraculously "resisted the throbbing, the threats, the

apocalyptic splendours of an ocean perpetually rolling out of an indeterminate east" (ES 375). This unquiet portrait of the vulnerable house is the presentiment of the cyclone that will soon demolish it in one blow. It also foreshadows the "apocalyptic splendours" that Elizabeth will experience in the eye of the storm.

Dorothy becomes obsessed with the malevolently blood-red moon as it invades her bedroom and memory: "Sewn into the silver to reddish sheets the worse than red the angry ejaculating moon shoots to kill" (ES 383). She is overwhelmingly preoccupied with her aristocratic husband's accusation of her frigidity, and even the pale, cool moon, traditionally represented as female, becomes a flaming, stabbing phallus. Dorothy's castration complex has taken control of her centre of consciousness; for this reason her coolly sexual mother has become a hurtful threat.

The pedantic professor Pehl is one of White's cuttingly ironic creations. The professor, who is burnt as red as a lobster, is a marine ecologist, concerned specifically with selected burrowing invertebrates. The spineless princess accompanies him on one of his scientific jaunts, during which time she attempts to arouse his interest with her characteristically insipid remarks. As a startling contrast to the bland botanist and the crab-woman, who are both conspicuously lacking backbone, the wild brumbies appear

in a cloud of dust: "On reaching them the horses propped for an instant; a couple of them reared; others wheeled and spun into the spiralling shadows; there was the sound of hooves striking on hide, bone, stone; a flash of sparks, and of teeth tearing at the dusk" (ES 395). The brumbies are like earthbound comets who represent an almost other-worldly freedom. To the comparatively lifeless couple on the beach, the untamed brumbies are a demonic threat.

Dorothy plays the role of little girl voyeuse as she watches the diluted courting ritual of her mother and the professor. As eavesdropper she cannot help but notice the absurdity of Pehl, the turbot. It is her mother who engages her reluctant fascination. Elizabeth languidly confesses her recurring skiapod dream, in which she is suffused in an underwater glow radiating from herself. This dream is soon to be translated into a waking vision when she weathers the bejewelled eye of the cyclone. Even the usually humourless Dorothy is able to chuckle inwardly over Pehl's Freudian-cum-marine-ecological interpretation of the dream: " Some fish use this light to attract their prey. . . . ' Were you, in the dreams, a fish, Mrs. Hunter?" (ES 403) It is true that Elizabeth Hunter, frequently more goddess than woman, can be likened to a siren. Pehl himself is drawn to her by the illusory magic of her mediocre piano-playing.

Elizabeth's almost crippling illumination occurs shortly

after she has been abandoned. She is hypnotized by the bush, and begins her solitary walk, while reflecting inwardly: "It occurred to her she had read of elderly women lured into the scrub by an instinct for self-destruction" (ES 416). It is only after Elizabeth has been reduced to a mere wreckage that she achieves her shimmering illumination. Her self-destructive instinct is the catalyst for her fragmentation, or unbecoming, and subsequent integration of her sense of self with the cosmos. She experiences a brief but satisfying encounter with the two axemen, one of whom resembles a stringybark. She eats of the perfume of the sap and experiences communion through the "transmuted wafer" (ES 418).

There is a tense calm before the storm: "The wind had dropped. There was a breathlessness before sunset" (ES 420). Elizabeth is atuned to the raging mood of the landscape: "She went outside, and there were the flying brumbies approaching down the beach . . . The sun too, was curously veiled and pallid above the single stretched black hair of the horizon. At least the brumbies were outrunners of life" (ES 421). Elizabeth does not react to the wild brumbies with fear because she herself us an arch-survivor.

She is converted into an insect of degrading helplessness when the cyclone blows her inside-out. She is a spider who crawls into the wine bunker while the insubstantial house

burns like cardboard. Her internal storm parallels the external cyclone: "The lightning was soon as free to enter as her thoughts to sky rocket" (ES 422). She is accompanied by her fragmented memories and the swollen dead fish who have risen to the surface of the slime. Her funnel images her own rotting womb. She examines the debris of her past, remembering her dead-fish men. Her guilt is inescapable, as the pounding ocean accuses her. She is overwhelmed by the pus of her existence. George Steiner observes that the soul is trapped within the vile flesh and that "White is obsessed by the implication of the soul, of transcendent vision in bone and bowel. . . ."[12] In The Vivisector, White concerns himself with the artist's vision of Dreck, and in The Eye Of The Storm the stress is on the decomposition of flesh and the rot of existence. Both Hurtle Duffield and Elizabeth Hunter suffer the humiliation of aging, the brutality of a stroke, and both are fully familiar with the stench and decay of their own bodies. Only following this excessive physical degradation do they experience illumination. Elizabeth's spiritual light radiates from her own flawed but struggling soul.

In her state of fragmentation she is at her most lucid: "This night . . . it is the earth coming to a head: practically all of us will drown in the pus which has gathered in it" (ES 423). Elizabeth does not drown in the pus; she

rises. She emerges from her makeshift womb with little thought as to her own wreckage:

> She was no longer a body, least of all a woman; the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. She was instead a being, or more likely a flaw at the centre of this jewel of light; the jewel itself blinding and tremulous at the same time, existed, flaw and all only by grace; for the storm was still visibly spinning and boiling at a distance. (ES 424)

The goddess has become the decapitated skiapod.[13] Her skiapod dream has realized its self-fulfilling prophecy, and she herself is the flaw centered in the jewel of light. She is blinding in her expanding vision, and tremulous from the jolt to which she has just been forced to submit. This is essentially the legend of the dazzling Elizabeth Hunter who, even when blinded and cursed with immobility, can be the flawed centre of a household around whose chrysalis all actions revolve. She is the phoenix who refuses to be buried, "an old woman and foolish, who in spite of her age had not experienced enough of the living" (ES 425). She rages to live. This is precisely the splendour of the woman. Perhaps she is foolish, but she will not be sacrificed against her will.

Peter Wolfe's comment upon the use of landscape in the novel ignores the crucial, specific details of landscape: "The Australia White shows us is not the spacious, open air-

prairie. He draws the vastness of Australia tightly around him. . . ."[14] The holocaust at Brumby Island refutes this assertion. Through the technique of flashback White often abandons the clotted sickroom. His exploration of the possibilities of the Australian landscape is as vast as his exploration of the human psyche. Just as the desert does not instigate Voss' revelation, but sets a dramatic stage for it, so the siege at the island provides a perfect milieu for Elizabeth's illumination.

The storm is at the centre of the episode at Brumby, and Elizabeth is at the centre of the storm. The woven imagery of forms of life such as invertebrates, fish and insects suggests the lowliness of being on one level. Opposed to this are the invincible brumbies or "outrunners of life," who represent noble and self-governing forms of life. Although Elizabeth has been drastically reduced, she has rallied. She has proven herself to be an outrunner of life in that she has weathered the eye of the storm.

The Aunt's Story opens with death and release. Theodora Goodman's dragon-empress mother is finally buried and her daughter escapes. Yet before White tosses Theodora into the intimate chaos of the European Jardin Exotique, he has her return to the setting of her childhood. The dark outlines of the woman begin to take shape in the mysterious Meroe. In The Aunt's Story, the treatment of landscape possesses a

distinctively mythical quality. Theodora has become absorbed into the legend of Meroë, a variation of Homer's Ithaca: "to tell the story of Meroë was to listen also to her own blood" (AS 20). The Meroë her father has become obsessed with is "a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia" (AS 25). The exotic flavour of Meroë has "eaten into the gnarled and aboriginal landscape and become a part of it" (AS 21).

Theodora, the "stick," is very much her father's daughter. Father is the silent and gnarled tree: "Father was not unlike a tree. . . . Your thoughts drifted through the branches" (AS 24). His mute approval of Theodora gives her the incentive to pursue her personal quest. Although she ultimately defers to convention in much the same manner that he defers to his scratching wife, there is a salient distinction. George Goodman has been broken, whereas Theodora has learned to bend. Her father has spoken to her of the dark and distant Meroë, and of the crocodile in the Nile whose larynx was being fanned by bird. He spends hours almost entombed with his beloved Homer and Herodotus, but his journey never progresses beyond the borderline of his books. Theodora can be viewed as a trapped bird who fans the vanity and whims of her garnet-glittering mother, but who manages to escape.

As the mystic Holstius later informs Theodora, her dilemma lies with the ultimate paradoxes of illusion and

reality. Similarly, she has great difficulty reconciling the two Meroës. These do eventually melt into one burning image that is to be permanently tatooed into her soul. Initially, the dead trees in her Meroë evoke no gloom because the child can only relate the skeleton-trees to the dead place of Ethiopia. Eventually, however, Theodora becomes terrorized by the deadly influence the mythical Meroë has upon her vision of the familiar landscape: "from what she saw and sensed, the legendary landscape became a fact, and she could not break loose from the expanding terror" (AS 25). Her terror of all that is unknown, of her own ambiguous position in the scheme of being, and of her own quest, is imaged by the haunting Ethiopian mystery. When she is able to accept this mystery she is freed from the terror: "It was Our Place. Possession was a peaceful mystery" (AS 25). The legendary Meroë loses its ghostly fearfulness when Theodora no longer struggles against its hold upon her. She has accepted it into her blood.

After a brief leave of absence at boarding school, Theodora returns to the "country of bones," but it is no longer the same (AS 112). "The hills round Meroë heaved out their black volcanic rock, and closed, and the rock remained, dead, suggestive, but dead" (AS 67). There is no longer anything there for Theodora, only the stark suggestion of what has been. It is implicit that her quest will have

to lead her elsewhere. The rocks have seemingly vomited up all their mystery, and sullenly closed. There are no more secrets to be discovered. When George Goodman dies, the legend of Meroe crumbles and turns to ash.

Just prior to her escape from the intoxicating Meroe legend, Theodora encounters the Greek 'cellist Moraitis. They are compatriots "from the country of bones," and the Greek comments upon the advantage of being born amid stark desolation: "It is easier to see" (AS 112). Even though his native home, Peleponese, was a lush and sensual country, there is the underlying structure of bones. Vision has been stripped to the bone, and all that is non-essential has been carved away. Moraitis and Theodora are secret-sharers both by birthright and vision. Moraitis confesses that Greeks are "happiest dying," and this is one example of White's attitude to Greece as the pharmakos, or scapegoat (AS 113). His Greeks are bruised and victimized. Thelma Herring notes: "It is relevant to recall that The Aunt's Story was written shortly after Patrick White had spent a year in Greece."[15] This could partially account for the concatenation of the Ethiopian and Greek myths, and the equation of these two ancient countries with the stripped-bone imagery.

The Aunt's Story concerns itself with the romantic myth, or displacement of the Odyssey.[16] Theodora's quest cannot carry her backwards, as that would imply regression. She

must progress beyond the realm of Meroë into her own centre of consciousness. Landscape has mirrored the mythical quest by weaving together the threads of the ancient Ethiopian, Egyptian and Greek mysteries into Theodora's vision of her primal home. Her quest removes her from the boundary of this original landscape, and relocates her in the country of her own mind.

The bulk of the movement in Riders In The Chariot occurs in the social outback of an obscure Australian suburb. Mary Hare is one of the four protagonists; and she is profoundly involved in mystic communion with nature. She is a native Australian, and landscape is the womb from which she barely emerges. She exists in a state of [redacted]ascence, or perennial innocence. She is the undesired [redacted]n who has spent all of her adult years alone in her ram[redacted]e abode. As she wanders amid her intimate foliage and communes with nature, she is integrated into her pantheistic vision. An early morning fog is described as "lamb's wool," but the innocence of the setting is threatened when Mary, the only-partially-suspecting sacrifice, hires a malevolent housekeeper (RC 3). Mary's glimpse of an improbable wombat is a hint that she is a secret-sharer with nature, and can see what most humans are not capable of seeing. Mary's innocence allows her a lucid vision of the laws of nature, a vision that more worldly and experienced beings are denied.

The earth is lush, the season is early spring, and there is an aura of harmony and fecundity. Mary is a privileged aristocrat of nature: "In all that dreamy landscape it seemed that each particle, not the least Miss Hare herself, contributed towards some perfection" (RC 4). Mary wanders through a paradisaical dreamscape in which she is allotted a modest but necessary role. She can be viewed as a mediator between the bush and humanity; yet clearly, if sides were to be chosen, Mary Hare would opt for the familiarity of the undergrowth. She belongs to it, and it to her. Despite her stunted, botched body she is at one with nature, and subsequently with self. Her odd appearance even suggests a distinctive beauty. Being so absorbed into nature she resembles a "sunflower" or an "old basket coming to pieces" (RC 5). As a sunflower she is the bright, bold source of life stretching towards illumination. As the tattered basket she is subtly interwoven within the untidy scheme of nature, a scheme that is comprised of unlikely odds and ends, but nonetheless manages to exist as a unity. The land is her own:

> All that land, stick and stone, belonged to her, over and above actual rights. Nobody else had ever penetrated it quite to the same extent. She went on through her peculiar territory. . . . The rather scrubby, indigenous trees not so much of interest to the eye as an accompaniment to states of mind, were at the moment behaving with docility, a certain, languid melancholy. (RC 8)

Her right to the land is as indisputable as Voss's own by their common right of vision. Xanadu, in all its peculiar tumbledown glory, is Mary's by much more than birthright. She has penetrated it with almost a sexual thrill and sense of possession. She has been lured into it, and become a part of it. She is as "scrubby" and "indigenous" as the very trees. The relationship between Mary and her landscape is symbiotic. Mary reflects the landscape, and the landscape reflects Mary. The trees, no more and no less visually gratifying than the woman, image Mary's own mournfully wistful mood. The delicate balance is about to be upset by the intruding housekeeper, the destructive order-maker and balance-breaker.

Mary is not pampered or indulged in the undergrowth of life she has chosen. She struggles through her territory rather painfully: "Scratched a little, but that was to be expected once the feet were set upon the paths of existence. . . . Whipped by the little sarsaparilla vine, of which she could have drunk the purple up. Stroked by ferns, and ferns" (RC 9). The scratching is soothing when compared to the tortures she has endured in the hands of her suicidal father. In her earth-coloured stockings Mary is camouflaged, and the purple vines serve as her communion. She is blessed. Her landscape whips and slaps her, but it strokes as well.

Mary is imaged as an unborn visionary. Her father has raged against her raw flesh: "Ugly as a foetus. Ripped out

too soon" (RC 55). However, in his less brutal moments he suggests: "Only the unborn soul is pure. Tell me, Mary, do you consider yourself one of the unborn?" (RC 34). The fact that she has suffered and been scratched is proof enough of her birth. Yet her startling innocence suggests that she inhabits a spiritual interrealm.

As she approaches her home "Miss Hare herself had almost crumbled to watch her vision form" (RC 13). Her fragmentation, or "crumbling," is the prerequisite to the formation of her vision. She dissolves as an entity only to be absorbed into her surroundings. She cannot experience herself apart from Xanadu. Mary has nursed a nestling dove to recovery. She is a faith-healer who has been taught the secret of restoration through her communion with nature.

The dreamy, harmonious mood changes radically when the foreign element, Mrs. Jolley, is introduced into the setting. When the housekeeper arrives, "the silence was shocking in the undergrowth" (RC 39). Nature is personified, and cleverly attempts to reject the intruder: "In the circumstances the nascent green of oaks and elms, massed to overwhelm the scrub, issued too shrill, the grace-notes of crab and plum blossom, sprinkled at intervals on black nets of twigs, too sickeningly poignant" (RC 39). Whereas previously everything was harmonious, nature is now conspiring to give an excessive, undesirable impression. The embellishments

are too shrill, and the effect is nauseatingly sweet. The foliage is parodying the shrill and sickening Mrs. Jolley.

Nature has aggressively infiltrated the household: "The black branches of the elm sawed. The early leaves pierced the more passive colours of human refinement like a knife" (RC 41). Norbert Hare, the obsessed aesthete who brutally rejects his daughter because of her unsightly appearance, is being vicariously insulted and injured. Nature is stabbing his beloved architecture, and thereby avenging Mary Hare. She seems oblivious to the internal wreckage. Nature is her ally, and she has transmuted the landscape into an integral aspect of her vision. She can endure without the illusion of appearances and physical protection. Upon her disappearance she is re-absorbed into the landscape. This points to the perfection of her existence; her end was as her beginning, and she has never abandoned her womb.

Landscape plays a necessary role in the shaping of the protagonists' visions in all of these novels. The landscape serves as the 'magic mirror' that reflects the struggle of these vision-seekers. The dream imagery is suggestive of the visionary landscape within the souls of the faith explorers. In Happy Valley, the geographical setting has impeded the emotional contact of the settlers. They have interpreted their bitter milieu as a personal outrage, and

have become as destructive as the elements. The cruel landscape reflects the brutality of the inhabitants. They hurt one another as viciously as do the indifferent winds and storms. As the protagonist has so painfully learned, the solution to the dilemma of desolation lies not in physical escape, but in the search for one's lost soul. Happy Valley ceases to be hateful for Oliver Halliday when he overcomes the hatred within himself.

In The Tree Of Man, Stan Parker learns the lessons that the landscape teaches him. He triumphs over each external and emotional crisis, and every catasrophe draws him closer to his lasting vision of faith. The influence of landscape is evident in The Eye Of The Storm. Years after her actual experience on the island, Elizabeth Hunter spiritually ventures back to Brumby to make peace with the eye of the storm. Only after she has once again felt the sand beneath her feet, and offered her soul to the wild swans, can her life and death be blessed.

Landscape is as thematically crucial to Voss as it is to Joseph Conrad's Heart Of Darkness. Voss is distanced from civilization and plunged into darkness and horror. It is only in this abysmal setting that he is able to confront the darkness of his soul, and conquer it. Both Theodora Goodman and Mary Hare have been profoundly affected by their native landscapes. Theodora's blood throbs with the memory of Meroe as she searches for her promised land, and Mary's

body is absorbed into the soil of Xanadu.

All of these protagonists ultimately make peace with the landscape as they finally make peace with self and faith. Whether initially portrayed as apocalyptic or demonic, landscape becomes absorbed into the soul of each explorer, and each explorer becomes absorbed into the landscape of the quest.

Notes to Chapter I

1. Harry Heseltine, "The Literary Heritage," in On Native Grounds, ed. C.B. Christesen (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), p. 15.

2. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," Australian Letters, 1, 3 (April, 1958), 39.

3. See Northrop Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 150, for a discussion of apocalyptic and demonic imagery in the vegetable and animal worlds.

4. Cf. Patricia A. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity: Theme And Technique In The Novels Of Patrick White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 119: "The Australian desert to which Voss is drawn, however, is to prove needful to his destiny. Similarly, the dramatic effects of the flood and fire in The Tree Of Man prove needful to the expanding vision of the common man.

5. Cecil Hadgraft, Australian Literature: A Critical Account To 1955 (London: Butler and Tanner, 1960), p. 243.

6. Sylvia Gzell, "Themes and Imagery in 'Voss' and 'Riders In The Chariot,'" Australian Literary Studies, 1, (June, 1964), p. 186. Gzell's stress is on the demonic and

apocalyptic use of the colour grey rather than on the various aspects of the landscape itself. It is therefore understandable that she deals with the grey element of the landscape without feeling obligated to discuss its more colourful dimensions.

7. James McAuley, "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's 'Voss,'" Southerly, 25, 1 (1965), 36.

8. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 119.

9. R.F. Brissenden, "Patrick White," Meanjin, 18, 4 (1959), 422-423.

10. George Steiner, "Carnal Knowledge," The New Yorker, (March 4, 1974), p. 111.

11. Both Theodora Goodman and Laura Trevelyn are compared to sticks, but they are portrayed as strong, admirable women. When White uses "stick" to describe Dorothy, however, he employs it pejoratively.

12. Steiner, "Carnal Knowledge," p. 109.

13. In Elizabeth's dream she herself was the skiapod, or fish with a female head. The myth of her womanhood is exploded in the eye of the storm. The woman contained within the skiapod exists only facially. The decapitated skiapod

explains Elizabeth's fall from her womanly pride as she endures the process of fragmentation.

14. Peter Wolfe, "Patrick Who? From Where?" New Republic, (January 5 & 12, 1974), p. 18.

15. Thelma Herring, "Odyssey of a Spinster: A Study Of 'The Aunt's Story,'" Southerly, 25, 1 (1965), 15.

16. Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism, pp. 139-140.

CHAPTER II

The Journey Through Vivisection

White's protagonists are invariably exposed to the knives of suffering. The experience of suffering is what leads the tormented outsider to a vision of permanent faith. The vivisection motif is a recurring device in White's fiction. The brute creature existing within man is subjected to physical torture, and the visionary trapped inside man pursues a wrenching quest. Only when the outsider has been spiritually stripped to the bone, and drastically humbled, is he prepared to embrace a sustaining experience of faith.

In this chapter I intend to concentrate upon the vivisection experiences of protagonists Hurtle Duffield in The Vivisector, and of Voss. Both men blessedly fall from a false state of pride, and are bound to the torture rack of suffering. Their newfound humility is the prerequisite for redemption. They have to be exorcised of their unconscious addiction to the Divine Destroyer before they can be redeemed. Both Hurtle and Voss have arrogantly sought the throne of divinity, only to be vivisected by the excruciating illumination that they are merely mortal. Neither the obsession with art, nor the insatiable hunger to explore and conquer, can spare them from the final knowledge of a force that—

limits their free-will. Both men have attempted to deify themselves through their potentially ennobling gifts of visionary insight. Such self-exaltation is pretentious, even ludicrous, and destined to be subject to a cruel stroke of illumination.

Vivisection imagery is also woven into the themes of Happy Valley and The Solid Mandala. In White's first novel, society is portrayed as the demonic operating table that cuts into the souls of the victimized inhabitants. The novel's protagonist is a doctor who, at the opening of the novel, is about as responsive and sensitized to pain as a vivisectionist. In The Solid Mandala, the simple-minded Arthur writes his compassionate "Viviseckshunist" poem, which poignantly expresses the pain of existence.

Hurtle Duffield has been able to transcend the mediocrity of his existence through the double-edged gift of art, a gift that eventually turns upon its master. Voss's independence and overwhelming self-faith allow him to venture into the desert of Australia, and into the sand of his own soul. The demons that are exorcised from these men are the demons that demand other living sacrifices. Voss, blinded by his own brilliance, attempts to lead an entire expedition to its doom, and Hurtle clinically vivisects his relationships in the name of art. In both novels, the knife image, and the vivisection motif, are the crucial factors that lead

these deluded men to a final, undistorted image of God.

Hurtle's first creation is "what Mumma called 'the Mad Eye--it looks right through you.' Aiming its arrows, the bow-shaped eye was at the same time the target, or bull's eye" (TV 64). This mystic eye is the third eye of the artist with the continually expanding vision. Although it is poised to strike, it is also the receiver of knives. The Mad Eye is the painted realization of the artist as both vivisector and vivisectee.

Hurtle is the child sold into sumptuous slavery who remains continually threatened by his surrogate mother's glittering presence: "Her teeth looked as though they were against him" (TV 77). This maternal vamp would smother Hurtle in something far more intimate than the musky satins of her closet if given encouragement, and yet it is she who rages against his treatment of her: "You, Hurtle were born with a knife in your hand. No, . . . in your eye" (TV 129). The knife of stabbing vision travels from the eye to the hand of the artist, where it is converted into a paintbrush. Mrs. Courtney has originally introduced Hurtle to the theme of vivisection. He transforms it into a personal, artistic vision, and it becomes his lifelong obsession. Hurtle's bush nightmare depicts Alfreda Courtney as the sheep who has been skinned alive for some unknown sacrifice: ". . . nasty little boy with eyes like knives. . . . I am your blood-

mother I am only helping it to die to save it from the vivisector. . . . I know Hurturrl you would split my head open to see what there is inside. . ." (TV 93). She is both the bleeding sacrificial lamb, and the self-proclaimed saint, who is saving the sheep from yet further torture. As Hurtle's vivisection vision progresses and expands, human victims replace the animal sacrifices, and God is both the divine vivisector and the divine artist. Thus he sees God in his own image, and only much later recognizes the divine paradox of God, who is both destroyer and healer.

Hurtle's terror (which recalls Heseltine's phrase, the "terror at the basis of being") compels hims to recreate the Shewcroft suicide in the colours of his own comprehension: ". . . the blood running out of his cut throat, through his veins, and from his heart, which was like a little fountain squirting from his chest" (TV 87). He paints his tormented tutor's blood black, rather than the anticipated red, because the failed man's existence has been blackened by the demon of despair. Shewcroft, like the highly articulate and even literary Le Mesurier in Voss, has succumbed to the seductive knife of suicide when faith eludes him once too often. God's role in these similar tragedies appears to be that of God, The Divine Ignorer.

The men in Voss's expedition have been equally divided into those of oil and those of water. The men of oil are the

outsiders, and it is they who suffer from the vivisection of experience. The just Sanderson has informed Voss that there are both good and bad men among the emancipists and voluntary settlers; similarly, there is both good and evil among the men of water and oil. The division is not one of morality, but of vision. The men of oil are the vision seekers, and the men of water are spiritually shallow. Alfreda Courtney's ouija board has spelled out Hurtle's destiny as "an oil painter" (TV 103). Hurtle shares the fate of the uncommon man, the man of oil, with the expedition's unholy trinity of soul explorer, idiot, and failed poet. Even the simpleton Harry is portrayed as a mystic for the very simplicity of his vision. The equation of extreme simplicity with goodness forms a pattern in White's novels. His blessed idiots are able to intuitively grasp what eludes the worldly men of reason.

Many of White's protagonists suffer from the dilemma of the outsider, but both Hurtle and Voss share an aristocratic self-image that is violently trampled to death in the gradual stages of their spiritual progression. What further complicates the "paradox of man in Christ, and Christ in man" is that within the psyche of the uncommon man, or man of oil, there are traces of both Christ and Satan (V 364). Voss can be viewed as a demonic figure when he allows the timid ornithologist, Palfreyman, to offer himself

as a sacrifice to the uncompromising judgement of the suspicious aborigines. Voss is completely aware that Palfreyman will be crucified, yet he is more intrigued than repulsed by the inevitable conclusion to the fated peace-offering. Curiously enough, near the end of the novel, Judd, the arch-survivor and man of clear water, confuses Voss and Palfreyman, and mistakes the sacrifice of the Christ-figure for Voss's own. This strange misplacement of identities lends itself to the theory that there is also 'the paradox of Satan in Christ, and Christ in Satan.' Laura retrospectively observes that Voss may very well have been Satan were it not for his resemblance to a poor, unfortunate man. Contained within the one being of Voss are the polar conditions of good and evil, the messianic and the satanic.

Hurtle Duffield's first mistress is one of White's choicest comic creations. Nance is a prostitute with a penchant for temper tantrums and dramatic spectacles. Hurtle first thrusts the knife into Nance's fleshy side when he cuttingly asks: "'Are you in love with me?' He gave it a metallic edge" (TV 174). Although their burlesque of an affair is essentially comic, it does have its moments of tragedy, climaxed by Nance's violent death. When Hurtle places his paintbrush vivisectionally into the vegetable quintessence of her form on canvas, he is aware that "like all human vegetables, she was offering herself to the knife

she only half suspected" (TV 180). It is the artist who manipulates the knife-edge of the relationship, and who destroys the astoundingly innocent prostitute. One of the few gifts that Hurtle presents to his volatile lover is "a little ring, of two gilt serpents intertwined" (TV 190). Hurtle and Nance are clearly the two serpents intertwined in the demonic parody of love. Only at one point do they approach the spiritual level of love that is experienced by Voss and Laura: "That afternoon they made the geometry of love, its sparest bones" (TV 216). One of Voss's most shocking visions of Laura portrays her without any facial flesh. She has been stripped to the bone, and is prepared to share Voss's tragic fate. Love carves through the flesh and penetrates the marrow.

One of the essential differences between the artist-aristocrat and the explorer by divine right is the former's promiscuity, and the latter's fidelity. Voss is humbled and saved through Laura's prayers, whereas Hurtle's women have been tied to the operating table of his canvas. None of them have interceded for the salvation of his soul, and he suffers the stroke of illumination unprepared and unaccompanied. Although he professes to love his "psychopomp," the inspired pianist Kathy, it is because he sees her in his own image. She is one of the artist-aristocrats, and Hurtle's arrogance is displayed when he fancies himself her maternal creator,

or bloodmother. The spirituality of their artistic affinity is undermined by the struggling of their mismatched bodies towards a sexual union. Voss's knowledge of Laura has begun at the bone, and they taste the sensual and fleshy lily in a psychic-cum-physical consummation of their love. his surrealistic sexual fusion transpires only after their pure faith in one another has been established.

The knife in Hurtle's third eye becomes almost lethal when it urges him to paint his second mistress, Hero, characteristically stabbing herself. The dagger he sees and paints with sharpens itself upon the frailty of the human condition. Because Hero is no novice at hurtling daggers she rewards Hurtle's ruthless exposure by almost fulfilling his artistic prophecy in a histrionic but ineffective suicide attempt. Hero's lust is described as sick and excessive. Hurtle had initially lusted for a goddess to worship, and not a partner in depravity. He denounces her as deranged, yet captures her vision of Dreck, and uses it as a thematic motif and progression for his art.

Jane Lane comments upon how the Greek element in White's work affects his distinctive style: "The Greek characters tear up themselves and their nation with an ambiguous sado-masochism which seems to reflect the author's own feeling of his creations. There is something edgy in Mr. White's style. . . . The instrument is almost all edge and a cutting

edge at that."[1] This point is well taken as it strongly suggests that Patrick White is the "vivisector" of selected creations who are flung onto the torture rack of their specialized suffering. Hero displays this fiercely sado-masochistic compulsion, but her motivations are not ambiguous at all. Aching for redemption, she is converted into a nicotine-stained, livery neurotic who viciously mocks what she has voyaged so far to experience. Her pilgrimage to a sacred Greek island is a demonic parody of the spiritual quest; she relentlessly pursues redemption with a violent compulsion. The Greeks are portrayed as Beautiful Losers, and Hero epitomizes the once heroic and classic Greek culture, now jaded and battered by defeat and humiliation. Hero's knotted nerves, consuming guilt, and starving lust are all malignant forces that culminate in a cancer which destroys her. Hurtle has attempted to embrace all of human suffering and depravity by attempting to embrace this woman. The actual embrace eludes him because he is not yet ready for the totality of the human experience.

The vivisection motif in Voss entails many of the characters being offered to the slaughterhouse of suffering, or struggling against their fate as scapegoat. Rose, the emancipist servant, sluggishly confesses: "I have been laid right open in my time" (V 82). Her debased condition of being is pitiable; she is the deformed sacrifice who dies

bearing Mercy, the creation of the union of faith achieved by Voss and Laura. Rose is the defenceless brute who is victimized by life's arbitrary circumstances. The ex-convict Judd polarizes the will of Voss during the expedition. Judd is as sinned against as Rose, but unlike Rose he is a survivor. He is at one with the burdened beasts: "For in their company he sensed the threat of the knife, never far distant from the animal throat" (V 367). He readily understands the physical dimension of suffering as he himself is the noble beast who is never safe from the threat of the knife pressed by society upon the convict, and by the sophisticated man upon the simple man.

Lulled into a submissive trance, the expedition's men of water have no understanding of their pilgrimage into an unknown realm: "So they advanced into that country which now possessed them, looking back in amazement at their actual lives, in which they had . . . thought to offer their souls to God, or driven the knife into His image, some other man" (V 208). God is imaged in his creations, the creations who have stolen his divine power in order to throw knives at the unsuspecting flock. This is a warped variation of the spiritual relationship shared by man and his God: his divine creator, judge and vivisector. Man is turning against God by torturing an image of him. This is the demonic parody of "God into man, . . . And man returning into God"

(V 411). Man has emulated God's capacity for destruction, and not salvation.

Frank Le Mesurier's tortured realization that he is not God, but man, or "God with a spear in his side," is a variation upon the 'God contained within man' theme (V 316). This aspect of God is vulnerable to spears, and is directly linked to Palfreyman's death by spear. This apparently ineffectual man becomes a Christ-figure. He humbly offers the natives his defenceless palms, and is immediately crucified. The proof of his real strength is contained within the line: "nor was there a single survivor who did not feel that part of him had died" (V 266). Laura's spirit concurs with Frank's mutilated vision of the speared God-man: "Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding" (V 387). The decapitated God contained within man cannot save man from his destiny. Man is bound by blood to life and death. The God without a head is the vivisected God, who is no more omniscient than any of his creations. He is the God whom faithless mankind has attempted to destroy.

Frank has been bound to his demonic snake-God who has taken the form of Voss. It is the same dark demon whom the Aborigines fearfully worship. They have associated Voss with the magical comet, and when the comet flies from sight Frank's embryonic faith, and the natives' awe of Voss, vanishes. Suicide serves as Frank's last attempt at poetry.

This self-vivisection is the admission that the man cannot summon any resources of faith, and is compelled to succumb to failure. When he pleads for Voss to give him hope the abdicated king of divine right proposes that Le Mesurier wring it out for himself. Frank's life-pulse is so feeble that he can barely summon his outraged veins to pour blood, let alone faith.

While the beasts are being slaughtered by the blood-lusting natives, Voss is truly humbled in his vicarious experience of the animals' torment. He feels the cruel spear in his own side, and screams for all suffering everywhere. Just before his own decapitation Voss feeds Laura with the lily of his love and is greeted by the final vision: ". . . a species of soul, elliptical in shape, of a substance similar to human flesh, which fresh knives were continually growing in place of those that were wrenched out" (V 418). This wrenching illumination supplies the clue to the mystery of spiritual suffering. The knives that cripple are not pressed into the soul's flesh from without; they grow there. We supply ourselves with our own knives, and with our own specialized suffering. New knives are unfailingly replacing old ones. No pain is final, and suffering is essential for spiritual progress.

When Laura is questioned by the determined Colonel Hebden as to the true nature of the complex Voss, she cries

in protest: "You would cut my head off, if letting my blood run would do any good" (V 439). Her latent agony binds her to the decapitation ceremony in which Voss was hoisted upon the sacrificial altar. Laura is a visionary and is not blinded by her love for Voss. She concedes that he did possess a sinister, devil-like aura, but that this demonic quality was undermined by his almost pitiable condition of being human. Voss has been embarked upon a voyage towards his coronation and instead he is decapitated. Because of his human frailty, this poor unfortunate is spared the exclusive possession of either evil or goodness. The novel depicts mankind as beast, man, Christ, Satan and God. Voss embodies all of these paradoxical characteristics. Despite his essential human nature he aspires to be crowned as the god of the desert wasteland, the kingdom he assumes to be his by right of vision. Ultimately he shares the physical fate of his tortured horses and goats, and dies as both vivisected beast and decapitated God. The procession of God into man and man becoming God allows for Voss's spiritual transcendence. His ontological vivisection has served as the first stage of his transcendence.

Jackie is not so much the Judas to Voss's anti-Christ figure, as much as he is the Brutus to Voss's Antony. Of all the members in the expedition Voss loved Jackie best for what he interpreted to be the boy's primal innocence.

The boy is to remain tortured by his heinous deed and is suffering from the merciless blade of guilt as cruelly as though it was he himself who had been cut open: "Terrible knives of thought sharpened upon the knives of the sun, were cutting into him" (V 446). Neither the vivisectee nor the vivisector is to be spared the searing edge of the knife, as the knife grows from the seed in the soul. Although Jackie deliberately loses the knife which Voss presented him as a token of good faith, and with which he sawed off Voss's gaunt head, he cannot lose the knife-edge that carves away at his spirit. His only viable escape from torment leads him into an equally undesirable realm of madness. Jackie can be viewed as society's victim, torn between the white man's subtle world and the beating pulse of his aboriginal heritage. He has been used as a demonic instrument, a compass by the white man, and a knife by his own people, and has been ripped apart by the conflicting wills of these social polarities.

James McAuley's association with the romantic conception of transcendence in Voss can be extended to include The Vivisector as well. McAuley states: "The ambition to transcend humanity, to transfigure it and attain the level of dignity--either through action or artistic inspiration--recurs under many masks in Romantic literature. . . ."[2] Voss attempts to transcend his humanity through the action,

of exploration, and Hurtle, through the inspiration of art.

Art is Hurtle's prime defender and arch prosecutor. The painting process is both draining and revitalizing, and Hurtle uses it to defend himself against loneliness and self-doubt. Only after his stroke does his faith in the divinity of art begin to crumble. Hurtle realizes that there is something beyond the creative conspiracy of artist and artwork. The series of women in his life convict him of perverse nastiness because of his penetrating and distorting vision. What they refuse to understand is that it is his naturally unnatural affliction, as involuntary as his step-sister Rhoda's ugly hump. The Vivisector deals specifically and almost exclusively with characters who have been branded with conventionally unacceptable differences. Hurtle is molded from a different if not superior substance than the one of common clay. As Hurtle is hurtled through life and art there are forces beyond his control of comprehension that set him apart from the common man. White is not directly concerned with the dilemma of the common man. He uses him as a contrast to the unusual man, pointing out the remarkable differences yet basic similarities.

Sex, for Hurtle, is merely a form of pleasurable vivisection: "Was it possible his love for Madame Pavloussi would culminate on the operating table on a prearranged afternoon?" (TV 294). Hurtle views Hero's sturdy body as a half-open jackknife and is threatened by her sexually

violent demands. The demon-god of Hurtle's art has been as jealous and possessive as Jehovah himself. For this reason Hurtle has been unable to achieve anything more fulfilling than the knife-edge of lust. He has denied himself the desirable union between man and woman because he is faithfully wedded to his art. He is, however, sensitive enough to perceive that the substitute of lust for love is little more than the clinical operation performed by two consenting sacrifices.

Years later Hurtle stumbles over Rhoda, the grizzled cat-woman, and attempts to trap her much as he would trap his wandering conscience. But she has been sharpened by the knives of experience, and is wary of his vivisecting vision: "I might be vivisected afresh, in the name of truth--or art. . . . I was born vivisected. I couldn't bear to be strapped to the table again" (TV 406, 407). Rhoda has been born botched and has suffered isolation because of her deformity. Expecting nothing from life, she has nothing to lose, except when pierced by Hurtle's devouring eye. She has made peace with her ugliness, and can be tormented only by Hurtle's converting her very ugliness into a form of strange, and therefore unacceptable, beauty. Having glimpsed her in the nude, he becomes obsessed with the rosey flame of her aura and is "soothed by the beauty of the forms disguised in Rhoda's deformed body" (TV 116). Had Hurtle

represented the versimilitude of her deformity upon his canvas, Rhoda's experience of her likeness would be no more excruciating than a confrontation with the looking-glass. He has, however, wrung the quintessence of her beauty from her stunted and humped form; for this she cannot forgive him.

Hurtle's first self-portrait is intended as an apology to Nance. She has accused him of perverting his relationships in the name of art. He attempts to vindicate himself by demonstrating that he can be the target as well as the knife-thrower: "So he gouged out his turgid features, reassembled his failed colours, wiped off the smears: it was a long way from razor-play" (TV 214). In this context, "razor-play" has a double-edged connotation. The male vanity being indulged in the face-shaving ritual is an adult variation of child's play. There is nothing vain or narcissistic about Hurtle's hurtfully labourious attempt at self-representation. The razor-blade is a common symbol of suicide, and although Hurtle derives no pleasure from this particular artistic endeavor, he is in no way trying to destroy himself. This is an experiment of self humiliation and not self-destruction. Nance views the finished product as a demonic caricature: "She made it look devilish; furtive, ingrown, all that he had persuaded himself it wasn't, and worse than anything else--bad, not morally, but

aesthetically" (TV 225). Hurtle takes aesthetic failure as the ultimate insult. Overwhelmed by his failures both as man and artist, Hurtle smears the portrait with his own excrement, and begins his agonizing descent into the cesspool of the human condition of Dreck.

There are the times when his art almost becomes a pure rather than false religion:

> But there were the days when he himself was operated on, half drunk sometimes, shifting himself with agony, when out of the tortures of knife and mind he was suddenly carried, without choice, on the wings of his exhaustion, to the point of intellectual and--dare he begin to say it?--spiritual justification. (TV 430)

This description presents the paradoxical condition of the artist wallowing in his own filth, but almost reaching transcendence through the dedication to art. This is the reason why the artist lays himself upon the operating table of his addiction, and endures the tortures of his obsessed vision and existence. Art is both his destroyer and healer. He is made and unmade by the creative process. Art ennobles and degrades. Hurtle is continually being vivisected by his art, but he interprets this as an almost complete justification of his preoccupation.

Hurtle only begins to wonder about a God beyond that of art when he morosely contemplates the possibility of paralysis. His fear of a debilitating illness instigates

his quest for the faith in God: "So he lay wondering whether he believed in God the Merciful as well as God the Vivisector" (TV 448). Ironically enough, the Divine Vivisector has been kind to Hurtle by allowing him to express himself so skillfully through the medium of art. Hurtle now wonders whether God the Merciful will grant him as much mercy should he be robbed of his beloved, art. After the omen of his first stroke, Hurtle is granted mercy, but it is implicit that the razor-edge of his 'painstrokes' will never be quite as subtle as it once was.

The morning after the "Grand Inquisition" of Hurtle's retrospective, Hurtle accepts that the divine mercy and artistry of God surpasses the limitations of human art. The relentlessly flogged creative spirit may eventually give up the struggle and lay itself down in meek surrender. This is the moment when God the Merciful will intercede and give the ravaged spirit its overdue rest. The artist, victim of his double-edged gift of art, has sacrificed his life to art. Having tasted his own blood, he is cursed with an endless craving for it. His art feeds him, and feeds off of him. The relationship can hardly be classified as symbiotic because the art will survive long after the artist is dead. Blessed with a mystical third eye, the artist's vision is as cruelly penetrating as the vivisectionist's knife. The same knife that has stabbed Nance and Hero will turn inward upon

the Divine Destroyer operating within the artist figure. The art is almost vampiric in nature. Ultimately the divinely stroked and vivisected artist comes to understand the finitude of art, and the infinity of God.

Hurtle's last masterpiece is a portrait of the Indigod. This is the somber celebration of God's mystery contained within the pure moment between sunset and twilight, when lightness and darkness melt into the magical hue of indigo. The nobility, rather than divinity, of the artist is suggested in Hurtle's last inspired vision. God is both the divine vivisector and the divine healer. The artist must account to a deity beyond that of art. Ultimately Hurtle has been sufficiently stroked to join the involuntarily moving mainstream of humanity. The seemingly self-governing outsider, or artist, is not actually so distanced from the common man. Both are equally unprotected in that they share the common fate of mortality. Hurtle is adequately redeemed through the blight of his suffering to recognize that human art is merely an instrument, not the end.

Paralleling the vivisection motif and knife imagery in Voss are the frequent allusions to his inflated, and eventually humbled, self-image. Voss has prepared himself for all possible experiences of knives by stripping himself down to the bone, but his expectations exceed his capabilities! "Knowing so much, I shall know everything" (V 30). He

expects to conquer all that is unknown: the mystery of the bush and the desert of his soul. His exploration of a nebulous vision parallels the relentless pursuit of the impossible dream. Despite his pomposity, Voss is a hopeless dreamer and one of the last of the incurable romantics. He possesses the innocence of the fanatic. White admits that the characterization of Voss was "influenced by the arch-megalomaniac of the day," Hitler.[3] Thus, the character study of the zealous explorer is subject to a demonic twist. All that is satanic in Voss must be exorcised before he approaches the desirable state of godliness.

Voss is attracted to Laura's cool strength, and she in turn is fascinated by the rocky shoreline of his soul: "You are so vast and ugly. . . . I can imagine some desert, with rocks, rocks of prejudice, and yes, even hatred. You are isolated. That is why you are fascinated by the prospect of desert places, in which you will find your own situation . . . exalted" (V 94). Laura accepts all that is hateful in the man as a personal challenge. Not unlike the traditional woman in love she hopes to make him a better man.

The essential paradox underlying the nature of the expedition is that Voss, although he is an island of isolation, does not seek his kingdom unaccompanied. He has offered the men no realistic route; he does not even have a map to guide them. And yet they follow him like bleating lambs, trusting

his personal vision, a vision that at least half of them cannot even begin to understand. It is Judd who frees himself of the yoke and finds his way back to safety. Patricia Morley finds the "apparent denunciation of Judd in the last quarter of the novel, as the usurper and mutineer" to be potentially baffling to the reader.[4] However, I agree with Sylvia Gzell's interpretation of the same situation, and fail to see in what way Judd is being denounced: "Judd sees that he, like the others, is intended as a sacrificial offering to Voss as Anti-god and he rebels."[5] Judd is not annointed with oil as is the visionary Voss, but nor is he damned. Judd is neither usurper nor sacrificial victim. It is the Satan in Voss who would demand any other living sacrifices than himself.

Voss achieves the height of his dignity when he decides to camp down near an embracing river, far from the burden of his perplexed flock: "The dome of silence was devoid of all furniture, even a throne" (V 205). Enfolded in the pure sound of silence, Voss momentarily loses all pretensions. Solitude is his natural element and, when he is integrated into the stark landscape, the man of bone does not require the illusion of divinity to experience the unity of being. He is the sole observer of the art of nature wherein everything is aesthetically harmonious.[6] Voss can view himself as a part of all that is ennobling and eternal without the

props of sceptre, crown, or throne. Voss, however, is perfectly capable of making a fool of himself. When he informs Judd's purposeful wife of his identity he clicks his heels like a Prussian commandant. This cloying foolishness is the result of Voss's false pride, and in humility he attains the desirable dignity of being. Both Voss and Hurtle have miraculously fallen from a demonic state of pride into the state of grace. They have been vivisected by the experience of suffering, but have been redeemed by the divine mercy of God. The vivisection motifs dominant in both novels stress man's helplessness in the face of suffering. Even the man who imagines himself to be an island unto himself is at the mercy of the Divine Vivisector.

In Happy Valley, the malevolent community spirit vivisects the privacy and soul of the individual. It is the doctor who makes this bitter analogy: "A city is different again, almost a natural phenomenon. The individual may get hurt by the general trend of mass passion, but he won't be put on the table and deliberately slit open without an anaesthetic" (HV 187). Oliver knows that his liason with Alys is ennobling, but feels himself to be at the mercy of society's judgement. This vivsection image can apply to the dilemma of all the novel's spiritually bruised characters. Ironically, they are all their own worst enemies. Although they inflict pain upon each other they achieve little more

than self-destruction.

In The Solid Mandala, the simple-minded mystic Arthur is the protagonist, and his spiritually sterile twin, Waldo, is the antagonist. The demonic imagery which surrounds Waldo's death inverts the vivisection motif. The senile dogs, whom he deplored and abused, mutilate his hateful corpse. One dog "pulled, pulled at the old soft perished rubber" (SM 295). Waldo, the spiritual eunuch, is being literally castrated after death as the sign of his emotional and spiritual impotence.

Waldo imagines himself to be a literary man, a poet. He becomes morally outraged to the point of violence when he discovers Arthur's one attempt at poetry:

> my heart is bleeding for the Viviseckshunist
> Cordelia is bleeding for her father's life
> all Marys in the end bleed
> but do not complane because they know
> they cannot have it any other way (SM 202).

As a startling contrast to Waldo's spiritual impotence Arthur is spiritually androgynous. He identifies the human condition of suffering with the female experience of pain. Arthur himself is portrayed as a Christ-figure who is compassionate enough to bleed for the vivisectionist. He certainly bleeds for his unfeeling twin. Waldo has brutally vivisected the possibility of the spiritual fusion of the two. Ultimately Waldo is destroyed by his own hatred, and

Arthur still longs for his twin in the sun.[7]

The recurring vivisection motif reinforces White's concern with suffering as a condition of being. John Cowburn suggests that Voss can be interpreted as supporting Schopenhaur's view of life. Cowburn is dissatisfied with the apparent denial of life in the novel: "The idea that we should make suffering our aim in life is almost perverted. If Voss reflects this outlook, then this is perhaps why, while admiring the imaginative power that went into its making, one does not, in the end, accept it."[8] I do not think that White intends to reflect this pessimistic outlook in Voss or in any of his other novels. The epigraph of Happy Valley is a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering, which is the one indispensible condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone . . . the purer the suffering, the greater is the progress." White's view of suffering is reflected in this quotation. He does not suggest that we make suffering our aim in life, but shows that we cannot escape the indispensable condition of suffering.

White suggests that spiritual pain is necessary for transcendence. In his novels, transcendence is the most sublime of apocalyptic experiences, and suffering is a necessary instrument. White's transcendent characters do not think that happiness is negative. Cowburn suggests that

"the only peace is that of apathy, obtained by denial of the will to live; and that all people who believe in their own selfhoods are malicious towards each other at heart."[9] On the contrary, White's characters come to believe in their own selfhoods only after they achieve an image of faith.

White uses vivisection imagery to suggest the demonic aspects of suffering. There is nothing desirable in Voss's own decapitation ceremony, but the man's ascent to godliness through humility is depicted as desirable. Artist Hurtle Duffield must embrace God the Merciful before he is redeemed. Suffering does precipitate progress. White's treatment of suffering as desirable in some sense does not imply denial of the will to live, but serves to confirm the omniscience of God's mercy.

Notes to Chapter II

1. Jane Lane, "A State Of Mind," New Statesman, 68 (October 9, 1964), p. 547.

2. James McAuley, "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's 'Voss,'" Sputherly, 25, 1 (1965), 39-40.

3. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," Australian Letters, 1, 3 (April, 1958), 39.

4. Patricia A. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity: Theme And Technique In The Novels Of Patrick White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 137.

5. Sylvia Gzell, "Themes and Imagery in "Voss" and 'Riders In The Chariot,'" Australian Literary Studies, 1, (June, 1964), p. 183.

6. See White, Voss, p. 211, on the aesthetic harmony, "the prospect of sculptural red rocks and tapestries of musical green which the valley contained."

7. The third epigraph of The Solid Mandala is a quotation taken from Patrick Anderson: ". . . yet still I long for my twin in the sun. . ." Arthur's quest for his "twin in the sun" will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V below.

8. John Cowburn S.J., "The Metaphysics Of 'Voss,'" Australian Twentieth Century, 18, (Winter, 1964), p. 360.

9. ibid.

CHAPTER III

The Social Zoo

White satirizes the conventions of mateship, sexual attraction, social intercourse, and cultural and intellectual pretentiousness. Throughout his novels one finds the recurring social gathering that features the gregarious human beast. Animal imagery is dominant in the description of these herded gatherings, and social conversation is savagely burlesqued. Although the tone is cuttingly ironic, the scenes of trapped togetherness almost invariably culminate on a downbeat. Amid the clutter of outrageously bejewelled ladies and plumaged gentlemen, there is usually the suspecting victim, the social sacrifice. This sacrifice flees from the stifling enclosure, and finds release in solitude and physical degradation.

In "The Prodigal Son," White speaks of his return to Australia, and of his attempt to carve his stark vision. He admits that "even the ugliness, the bags and iron of Australian life acquired a meaning. As for the cat's cradle of human intercourse, this was necessarily simplified, often bungled, sometimes touching."[1] White's irony is playful when he deals with the web of human intercourse. His outsiders, however, all transcend the trap of social stupidity. I intend to examine the formal gatherings that occur in The

Living And The Dead, Riders In The Chariot, The Vivisector, and The Eye Of The Storm, and reveal how the scathing social satire in these similar episodes serves to portray the dilemma of the outsider.

The Living And The Dead is the first of White's novels to feature the absurdity of people pecking at one another as they are all exposed to the knife-edge of hypocritical parlance, and defiled by the "rape of the ear" (LD 227). The flighty Kitty Goose has attained a dubious degree of respectability and security through matrimony, and is converted into the refined Catherine Standish. Despite her newfound title of "Mrs," Kitty remains very much the silly goose throughout her ineffectual lifetime. Trapped in an intimately social ménage à quatre; Kitty dines with her beloved spouse, an old flame of his, and one of this lady's current admirers. She is quite willing to attempt the ambiguous role of the gracious lady out for a good time, and engages in the appropriate "brittle monotone" (LD 39). Understanding that her clutch upon the elegant rags of conversation is brittle and tenuous indeed, she stoically assumes the tone of the casual, the "coldly, amusingly flippant" (LD 218). Yet underneath the façade of bonhomie Kitty cannot escape from the "terror at the basis of being."

> She stood hesitatingly on the edge. The face that had been so intimately a part of hers, in thought,

> and darkness, existed by itself, apart. There was no denying this. It was the old malaise recurring. (LD 40)

The malaise of uncertainty and isolation cannot be obliterated by the pretence of friendship and belonging. Kitty knows that she herself is friendless and governed by the fear of isolation.

Kitty scrutinizes her friendly adversary who is as gaudily plumaged as a golden vulture. Maudie is the monstrous, crippled bird who pecks at the tidbits of gossip and civilized slander with her crimson beak and lethal talons: "Like a great silky bird. And you recoiled from the touch of birds. That time the swallow fell exhausted on the carpet, and you shuddered to lay it on the windowsill. . ." (LD 41). Maudie, the "great silky bird," is repulsive because she is a caricature of a bird, as lifeless as the stunned swallow. She is a malevolent carnivore. Kitty escapes from the nauseating crumbs of conversation, and seeks shelter and anonymity in the public lavatory. She is ill because of the fear and the baby growing inside of her: "She felt like some large freakish intruding bird that panted in a nightmare of pointed lights" (LD 41). She is the swollen bird who is trapped in the cage of social intercourse. In The Living And The Dead, bird and fish imagery suggests the attempt of the charcters to integrate themselves into the web of

social survival. Birds may suggest both the possibility of flight and a predatory savageness.

Kitty's metamorphosis to Catherine occurs when she discovers she is with child: "Kitty looked at her, or this Mrs. Standish, with her freshly acquired importance, looked at all the Maudie Westmacotts, and decided in one swoop that she disliked her sex" (LD 43). She dismisses the entire female species in one feathery sweep because she is puffed up with her own self-importance. Later, a matured and magnanimous Catherine contradicts this self-righteous confession, and hints that females are capable of something akin to the masonry of mateship: "Mrs. Standish enjoyed this mental flirtation with her own sex. . . . It clothed the sharper moments, took away some of their sting, just this sense of freemasonry" (LD 235-236). Catherine has become one of the conquerors, and can therefore afford to be condescendingly gracious to her assortment of female guests. An implicit price-tag is attached to friendship. Her enjoyment with the members of her own sex is "flirtatious," subtly sexual. She is courting and wooing her teatime entourage. This friendship is sham, false but pleasant. Mrs. Standish has mastered the fine art of hypocrisy and can indulge her social whims.

The globe-trotting Adelaide Blenkinsop is the grand lady who collects rather shabby people much as she would

collect semi-precious game. She triumphs by wooing, with tasteful condescension, her semi-precious friends: "Adelaide liked to think she was democratic. The absurd, shabby people she sometimes patronized" (LD 218). With her political spouse, she marks out conversational danger zones such as Jews, Spaniards, and Catholics. This enviable couple lives by the code of ethics that "seriousness of purpose, anyway, was in itself a sign of bad taste" (LD 218). Adelaide is understandably attracted to Eden Standish, Kate's volatile and restless daughter. Eden is independent, and does not hunger for social acceptance. She would be an exotic decoration for any successful party. Adelaide and her husband are the insiders who polarize White's unprotected outsiders. Gerald is embedded in the capitalist conspiracy. The couple is useless, self-indulgent, and buried in affluence. Adelaide has nothing more meaningful to contend with than the "first brittle fragments of conversation made by nervous guests" (LD 219).

Catherine's introverted son Elyot finds himself one of the fish-guests in the stagnant pool of Adelaide's party: "Standing on the edge of so many deliberate, hostile smiles, it was difficult to choose one, they swam, the smiles and the voices the brilliant aquatic form of Adelaide in satin" (LD 220). Everyone is treading water in the shallows of conversation, and Elyot reluctantly decides to "plunge,

head forward into the aquarium" (LD 221). It is in this aquarium of exotic fish that Elyot meets Muriel, the "macaw," who is as womanly as a female impersonator: "She sat and began to arrange her face, holding a small mirror in which to preen a great macaw, smoothing the mauve lids, grooming the plumage with a scarlet claw" (LD 277). This grotesque parrot, with an embroidered red nipple over her left breast, is a parody of womanhood. Their premeditated substitute for passion culminates in a bed which is imaged as a tomb. Muriel's real face "had drained right to the bone," and "ash had fallen between her breasts" (LD 286). They are corpses who have assumed "the shapes of passion," but their exercise has all the sensuality of a funeral (LD 286). In this episode, the macabre bone imagery suggest a demonic parody of the celebration of love. In Voss, White's treatment of bone shifts from the demonic to the apocalyptic. The psychic lovers, Laura and Voss, have been stripped to the bone. Their spiritual fusion transcends the union of flesh. They have become one through a vision of the ultimate.

In the meantime, the disintegrating Mrs. Standish makes one last, desperate attempt at self-enrichment by taking on a vulgar saxophonist as her lover. Wally nicknames her 'Kate'. Her third metamorphosis is her unsuccessful attempt at rejuvenescence. Wally can be understood to represent the animal, as opposed to the spiritual, element of music. He

has a genuine affection for the "old girl," and their relationship is one of White's most comic creations. She is ashamed of his mauve shirts and sincere stupidity, and he is shamed by her time-ravaged, if mature and sympathetic face. After neglecting her, he makes amends by inviting her to the uncouth party at Maida Vale. Kate reflects: "A party is an orgy of anticipation. And this will be the archetype of parties" (HD 338). It is. Although the guests at this party are showy illiterates rather than White's usual pseudo-intellectuals, this episode is the precursor of White's subsequent party settings. It demonstrates the party paradox by being both hilarious and alarming.

Kate dolls herself up in a reddish dress, the costume of a diluted vamp, but comically unsuited to her role as Mrs. Standish. She applies her cosmetics as though grinding cigarettes into an ashtray. She dispassionately observes the jangle of her face, and is quite prepared to sacrifice herself to the degradation of the ordeal. She is adrift in the island of gin and golden tassels, clinging to the rock of her chair-arm while tensely anticipating her inevitable humiliation. Kate is intrigued by a set of hideous elephants decorating the mantlepiece, and her gin-fogged attention keeps returning to these solid twins. They suggest the split fragments of her memory, and are the links to her sense of self. In The Aunt's Story, a fragmented Theordora Goodman

is similarly entranced by an ugly, orange clock. The clock is an object of permanence, and is Theodora's connection to time. Time and memory are indeed ugly, but they are solid when compared to the chaos of the present. Unfortunately, the elephants begin to play nasty tricks, one pointing its trunk in accusation. It is then that Kate is maimed by a vision of herself as the "old droop-eared sow that rooted after cabbage stalks" (LD 347). When the elephant's trunk begins to move Kate is released from her hellish silence and announces: "It's happening inside. It all happens from the inside out. Now listen, you see I've thought about this. Whether it's an apple or a spinning top. It goes rrrrr. Bbpp! Take it from me" (LD 349).

Kate is rendered inarticulate because of the gin, and because of her awareness of the confusion and uselessness of her existence. She insists, however, that she has never been more lucid. Her intellectual pretences are gone. She has been humbled. In one last, magnificent burst of life she is the red-gold meteorite crashing towards the carpet and into her own vomit: "She was the frayed end of a cigarette, the greenish-yellow olive stone, these were the remains of Catherine Standish, if only they would cremate these, she felt" (LD 348). She has deliberately vivisected herself in front of the collection of borderline defectives as an initiation into death. By confessing to the frivolous absurdity

of her life, she has, in a sense, recited her own epitaph.

In describing the first phase of satire, Northrop Frye speaks of deserts of futility opening up on all sides: "We have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic."[2] This is precisely the mood governing the party episodes in White's fiction. The social gatherings in The Living And The Dead mirror an idle, decadent society that is sleeping through a political crisis. There are the merry-makers who are blind to the disastrous condition of the world. The suggestion is that the dead are out partying, and the living are out dying. The drunken chaos at Maida Vale sets the mood which White's later parties are to follow. Underneath the façade of celebration lies the confusion and isolation at the basis of being.

The four riders in Riders In The Chariot are all subjected to one festive social situation in which they characteristically assume the role of the outsider. In each of these instances, the Rider is the sacrificial social victim who suffers, and is publically shamed.

Mary Hare's ineffectual mother throws a "coming out" party for her daughter who is more of a marsupial than a debutante. The botched girl is humiliated when everyone ignores her. The undesired virgin, with her hodgepodge of wilting flowers, is miraculously saved from despair. The ugly forgotten girl should have felt miserable, but was

preserved finally from unhappiness by the wonder of the night (RC 26). She is the antithesis of the popular Helen Antill, who is reflected in the narcissistic mirrors embroidered upon her gown. Helen is the preening bird flying about in the party cage.

Mary's painfully shy cousin Eustace is sweetly bullied into dancing with the dazzling Miss Antill. He finds the experience to be so excruciating that he is forced into a premature exit. The frightened bird has fled, and the insulted girl soothes her vanity by speculating: "Could the bird have died before the kill?" (RC 28) Miss Antill is both predator and bird, and surmises that the wounded prey was impotent even before she could castrate him. Mary, who misses very little, has experienced her cousin's acute shame. She can ease his pain only by offering him her dog-like devotion. This scene is significant because it outlines the course of thought and action Mary is to take for the rest of her life. Despite her isolation she never becomes embittered, and is forever in awe of the miracle of being. She is not capable of dazzling, but she is capable of offering her inarticulate but intense devotion to those who have need of it.

An inexperienced Mordecai Himmelfarb becomes the victim of a "most scandalous game" (RC 112). The Jewish youth is a guest at the home of his German friend. The chosen game

demands that all present confess who they like best, and why. The youths react with giggles "and the braying of the adolescent jackass" (RC 112). These adolescents are depicted as the apprentices of the social stupidity that their parents have mastered. Young Mausi Stauffer chooses Himmelfarb because she supposes him to be interesting. Baited to elaborate, "she screeched in a voice they were dragging out of her, 'he is like'--she still hesitated--' a kind of black buck!'" (RC 112). Mordecai escapes to the washroom, the only refuge where he can hide his shame. He is the desirable untamed buck when compared to the giggling jackasses. He has been singled out and shamed. This is his first experience as outsider, Jew, and scapegoat [redacted] the Gentiles. This scene serves as the subtle presentiment of Himmelfarb's later concentration camp experience.

A perfectly harmless and amusing "monkey-luncheon" ends rather humourlessly when the monkey-hostess faints from shock. Ruth Joyner, the reliable parlourmaid, is a mute witness at Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson's teatime gathering: "In the drawing-room, the talk would be all of fur and people. Ladies sat stroking their dreamy wisps while the smoke reached out and fingered, like the hands of monkeys" (RC 263). These gregarious she-apes appear identical. They all mimic one another as they chat behind the bars of their own choosing. When the aimless whorls of conversation are

interrupted by the news of an acquaintance with cancer, "it seemed ill-timed. Several of the ladies withdrew inside their sad fur . . . until the conversation could resume its trajectory of smoke, violet scented, where for a moment there had been the stench of sick drooping monkeys" (RC 264). The perfumed monkeys cannot help recoiling from the stench of disease; the mere mention is as offensive as a bad odour. Cancer is in bad taste.

Patricia Morley observes that "Frye uses the monkey image to describe the undesirable society, just as White does, in Riders In The Chariot, in the luncheon party scene with Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson and her society friends. . . . In ironic comedy the characters who are opposed to or excluded from the monkey-society have the reader's sympathy."[3] Ruth is excluded from the farcical setting by virtue of her inferior social status. She enlists the further sympathy of the reader through her genuine compassion for her dramatically swooning mistress.

The highlight of the furry get-together occurs when a "big swan is spun sugar was fetched in" (RC 264). The swan, a creature of grace and legendary beauty has been chosen as the centrepiece, or main theme, of the sweet table. The susceptible guests, smothered in the fur of their artifice, see beauty in the sugar-drenched parody of a swan. White seems to be suggesting that conventional aesthetic taste

is indeed perverse. Amid the Mandril-faced ladies there is one whose face is bare of cosmetics: "The other ladies glanced at her skin, which was white and almost unprotected, whereas they themselves had shaded their faces with orange, with mauve, even with green, not so much to impress one another, as to give them courage to face themselves" (RC 265). Their identical camouflage is reminiscent of the garish Muriel, in The Living And The Dead. Curiously, White's social ladies are emulating the gaudy plumage of the male bird. The monkey imagery is particularly effective because monkeys are known to be almost as interested in the art of grooming as humans. They sociably pick each other's lice, as do White's characters through gossip and slander.

At Mrs. Chalmers-Robertson's luncheon, the cigar-puffing Magda remarks: "Who's for stinking out the rabbits? . . . Or should we say monkey. . . . Did you ever see . . . a bottomful of monkeys? That is to say a cageful of blooming monkey bottoms? . . . In fur pants?" (RC 265). Sadly, the monkey-ladies do not recognize themselves. Magda is exposing the exhibitionistic lifestyle of her simian sisters, yet White shows his disapproval of her by converting her into a toad: "Her skin was livery as toads" (RC 266). The implication is that the masculine Magda is more contemptible than her preening peers because she is vicious as well as ridiculous.

Amid the conversational clutter, Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson is informed of her husaband's bankruptcy. She receives support "on the white pillar of her parlormaid" (RC 268). Ruth has been silently observing the ritualistic monkey chatter, and the white pillar of her silent strength is in striking contrast to the ludicrous gibbering. The hostess has swooned and leaned upon Ruth's reliable shoulders. This is to be Ruth's calling, one that she does not resent but stoically accepts. Although Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson's downfall is by no means tragic, it does dampen the frivolous spirit of the luncheon. In her own petty way she is experiencing a crisis, albeit only a financial one. She is the social phoenix who will rise time and time again from the fall of public disgrace. It is almost as though her guests have tasted her humiliation for dessert.

The most bizarre of White's "zoo-party" scenes takes place in the establishment of the prostitute, Hannah, Alf Dubbo's business-oriented landlady. In the flaming spectacle of preening "queens," the plump male nurse, Norman Fussel, steals the show in a pair of painted, formal nipples and a rhinestone G-string. Although Norm is as exotic as some demented rooster, he is certainly no more grotesque than meteorite Kate, Muriel Macaw, or the furry monkey-women. The female impersonator is no more perverse than is the female stripper, who almost invariably churns out a bird

impersonation. White seems to be probing the association between eroticism and bird foliage. The conventionally acceptable stripper bumps and grinds in a parody of a bird show, complete with flying feathers. The female impersonator merely mimics the female bird impersonator. The irony is that the male bird is resplendent in his colourful plumage, and the female bird is a rather dowdy contrast. Norm, the neophyte peacock, "began to perform what was intended as a ritual dance" (RC 383). He ruffs up his splendid feathers while rasping like a homely hen: "Indeed if it ever got around that a bird of paradise could have been in conjunction with a brush turkey, Norm Fussel could have provided evidence" (RC 382). There is the clutter of "fowl" or false sexuality in Norm's burlesque act. He is compared to clucking hens, the exotic bird of paradise and the strutting brush turkey. The procession of bird-imagery is essentially non-sexual. Norm is hardly more perverse than the mauve-lidded Muriel with the false nipple stitched upon her gown. They both are merely bird impersonators who offer a variation on the bird imagery that White employs when dealing with artificial, grotesque social gatherings.

The mood of the gaudy floorshow becomes bitterly ironic when the artist, Alf Dubbo, flies into this nest of strange birds. He neither sings, dances, nor performs bird calls. It is suggested, however, that his oil paintings are as

freakish as the artistry of the burlesque queens. Hurtle Duffield, the artist in The Vivisector, has been accused of being a "perv," and Dubbo is treated in much the same fashion when he is seduced into parading his artwork on exhibition. White is implying that society views the artist as a deviant by banishing him into the subterranean chaos of other untouchables. Vanity is portrayed as the feather-tickling temptress that lures Alf to betray his art and himself: "It was vanity that began to persuade him, stroking with the most insidious feathers" (RC 384). The mood induced by the strutting on stage has become contagious, and Alf is eager to participate in the collective exhibitionism. The salient distinction is that while the others have exposed little more than their bottoms, Dubbo has exposed his life-blood. Even among society's outcasts, he has served as the sacrificial victim.

The four riders, or outsiders, have suffered in the arena of the social zoo. They have either been ignored or degraded. Their participation, however, has not been voluntary, and the experience of social vivisection is one that they do not repeat. They are excluded from the undesirable society, and are preoccupied with their personal visions of redemption and faith. White's insiders are oblivious to the wastage of their existences and to the possibility of salvation. They are trapped in the cage of their spiritual

bestiality.

In "Unmerciful Dingoes? The Critical Reception of Patrick White," Alan Lawson scans the critical attitude to White's fiction. Lawson refers to one Patrick Cosgave who claimed that White, in The Vivisector, had for the first time "lapsed into the currently fashionable traits of refusing to deal fully with a social milieu. . . ."[4] This accusation is ill-founded, when we consider that the artist-protagonist in The Vivisector is portrayed as a man continually at odds with a hateful society that he repeatedly rejects. Hurtle Duffield's need for solitude is due to his obsession with art and his intense distaste for the predatory and vivisecting society.

Hurtle relectantly engages in three major social events. His childbood acquaintance, the continually surprising "Boo," arranges a party, ostensibly to introduce her artist friend to some valuable connections. Boo appears a trifle demonic, with her "mēche of natural silver . . . standing erect like a pair of horns above her frown" (TV 281). She is indeed the conspiring devil who intends to sacrifice the partially suspecting Hero to the demon-artist. This particular social situation is more of a witch's sabbath than a festive occasion. Hero's delicate movements strongly suggest the hesitation of the sacrificial victim: "Finally she offered her face" (TV 282). Hero's coppery charms are

subjected to the ruthless scrutiny of the Anglo-Saxon witches: "The lady of the amethyst pendant and Presbyterian ancestors found the little Greek far too 'burnt.' What would her skin be like in a few years' time? A rag, she suggested, moistening her sallow teeth at the prospect" (TV 283). The guests are lip-licking vultures preying upon the sacrifice who has already begun to be burned. Everyone is rounded up for the primitive feast: "What should have been a leisurely and graceful progress to the dining-room became a bit of a rout; the burr and bray of male laughter jostled with the thin reed of girlish giggles" (TV 284). The movement suggests that of a poorly regimented stampede. Amid the confusion of the clumsy donkeys, the hostess "started an awkward swimming movement against the swell made by her mismanaged guests" (TV 285). When the cretinous guests momentarily lose sight of their hostess, or traffic-director, they begin to "look uneasy and unshepherded" (TV 288). There is the suspended thread of tension; at any moment the controlled confusion could explode into the bedlam of anarchy.

The central theme of the party is symbolized in the gaudy, jewelled centrepiece: "The crystal bird in the centre of the table . . . perched on a crag of rose quartz, its wings outspread above the crackled basin of shallow water, in which glimmered slivers of amethyst and a cluster of moss

agates, the crystal bird could have been contemplating flight in the direction of Hero Pavloussi seated immediately opposite" (TV 288). This jewelled monstrosity is as aesthetically perverse as the sugary swan at the monkey-luncheon. The creature is suspended in a parody of flight, and is threateningly pointed towards the party's sacrificial victim. The assembled guests are as glittering and as paralyzed as the crystal bird obscenely perched upon the centre of the banquet table. Hero and Hurtle escape outdoors, the woman giving "the impression of being in flight" (TV 294). Hero is the crippled bird trapped in a society of which she has little understanding. One motif of the party is bad taste, a recurring theme in White's party scenes.

Hurtle's next party ordeal is not significantly different from his first: "Mrs. Mortimer's party was so much the same in different clothes he wondered at what date the archetypal party had been held" (TV 376). By now the reader is thoroughly familiar with the cooing ladies and the "flanks" of well-groomed gentlemen (TV 376). As usual, the guests throw verbal barbs: "Darling old Boo! Yes. Isn't she adorable? She's begun to feel the weather, but I'm expecting her to totter thisway" (TV 377). Even the dowdy, goitrous hostess is caught up in the ritualistic excitement, and begins to neigh like a flirtatious mare: "Mrs. Mortimer tossed her mane like a skittish filly" (TV 377). Boo is

portrayed as the aging goat-woman with an "extra white-kid chin" talking with a "Santa Gertrudis Bull" (TV 380). In this instance Hurtle is the sacrificial stud whom the procuress-hostess fails to tempt with some charming young mediocrities. There is the characteristic escape. White's protagonists are failures when it comes to seeing a party through to the end.

The Retrospective Exhibition is White's most amusing and vicious social satire. Confronting all the costumed imposters--intellectuals, aesthetes, politicians and assorted social climbers--Hurtle is reminded of his jackaroo outing with Harry Courtney and of all the sheep "automatically scattering their pellets" (TV 531). At the exhibition the mulling sheep are dropping conversational pellets. Hurtle does not see the difference between a verbal or an anal turd. Almost trampling the dwarfed Rhoda underfoot, the flock "bleated their distress, or in milder, woolier cases, sympathy, or self pity" (TV 531).

Morley comments upon the comic technique that governs the outrageous mood of the Retrospective Exhibition. She mentions the uproarious use of "truncated party gossip, snippets of conversation overheard in the State Gallery. . . Aesthetic criticism has never been funnier, and the autobiographical connection with White's own work adds to the fun."[5] In this episode the Australian critic is one of the primary

satiric targets. Hurtle's success overseas is attributed to America's gauche artistic taste--or lack of it. This theory is refuted as outdated when someone "in the know" informs less sophisticated critics: "Mrs. Macready says London and New York are off him. He was never what he's cracked up to be. But there's still a market for him in Australia" (TV 532). One cannot avoid noticing the humorous parallel between the fictional Australian critics' pejorative attitude to Hurtle's art and similar verdicts which have been passed upon White's art.[6]

Hurtle swims through the sea of critical commentary in a "kind of sidestroke," and defends himself "against the spray of words by straining his neck muscles and kicking out with his good leg" (TV 540). The fact that Hurtle has recently been the victim of a seizure enhances the impression of the desperate, underwater swimmer. His dubious ally Rhoda is his only contact with the safety of the shoreline. Australia's Prime Minister is intimately discussed: "I'd adore to sleep with Sammy-lamb. He looks so utterly tenderized" (TV 546). The foremost politician is stripped of his shepherd's robe, and becomes nothing more than a tenderized sheep. Hurtle escapes from the collective body of the sea-monster, his predatory public, and "was whirled home into that silence where he had spent half a lifetime begetting, and giving birth" (TV 549). He runs from the barren clutter

of commentary to the creative realm of silence. White frequently terminates his social gatherings with one outsider, whether the protagonist, the victim, or the two in one body, fleeing from social madness, and returning to the sanctuary of solitude.

Kate Standish vomits her shame with closed eyelids; Cousin Eustace escapes outdoors; a humiliated Mordecai runs to the washroom; Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson faints, and Hero is poised towards flight. Dubbo is left on the inside with the door shut in his face, suffering from the shame of having betrayed his art and himself. The black comedy of these situations is almost convulsive; it chokes on the invariable downbeat of the endings. White seems to be implying that the joke, if ever there was one, has been in bad taste, or perhaps at the expense of the reader, and is aborted by the aftermath of pain, shame, silence, suffering and isolation.

The nature of the satire in The Living And The Dead is essentially political; in Riders In The Chariot, and The Vivisector, it is social; and in The Eye Of The Storm, it is distinctively sexual. Because of her extraordinary beauty and occasional indiscretions Elizabeth Hunter has been prototyped by her associates as a predatory vamp; actually, she is more sensual than erotic, and more clinical than sensual. She is a wonderfully passionate woman, but sex is the least important of her passions. Her charming son,

Sir Basil, the mediocre Shakespearian actor, is continually trying to prove his virility, and continually failing to do so. Her unremarkable daughter, a French princess by virtue of a failed marriage, is suffering from frigidity. Her voluptuous day-nurse, Flora Manhood, is comically outraged by Col's suggestion of marriage; as an act of defiance, she sleeps with the boring Sir Basil, and spends an evening with her cousin, an albino lesbian. In The Eye Of The Storm, all aspects of sexuality are mocked. Elizabeth condescendingly meets her husband's feeble sexual demands, but her extramarital escapades prove to be no more inspirational. The worldly Sir Basil is a poor performer despite the stream of wives, mistresses and lovers. Homosexuality is presented as a tangle of limbs and unrequited passion.

The emphasis on demonic sexuality polarizes the thematic quest for spiritual transcendence. Elizabeth Hunter discovers her soul only when she is liberated from her decaying body. In The Eye Of The Storm, White presents the paradox of the carnal and spiritual levels of existence. George Steiner observes that "often the carnality is made monstrous, nearly surrealistic."[7] White deliberately burlesques carnality to contrast it with the ennobling struggle of the soul.

Elizabeth Hunter's vanity seduces her into accepting a dinner invitation in honour of the brutishly charming politician, Athol Shreve. She is to be the dazzling

centrepiece, the living decoration, and Mr. Shreve's prize for the evening. She has no particular affection for her persistant hostess: "Never liked Gladys Radford, but you remained friends over the years. One of the advantages of being a woman: you can do just that. After a clash men sometimes don't speak to each other again, but real women can endure the worst in one-another; must be because they're debarred from all that honest-to-God mateship, and the Masons" (ES 91). Elizabeth's reflection is obviously cynical. It is implicit that she does not believe in the masonry of mateship any more than in genuine womanly compassion. The most one can expect is civilized hypocrisy. Elizabeth has probably never experienced a symbiotic rapport with members of either sex because of her critical, perceptive intelligence. Very few people would be worthy of her friendship. The miracle does occur; it is nothing less than a spiritual affinity that she shares with her mysterious night-nurse, Sister de Santis.

While pretending to be fascinated by the tedious Shreve, Elizabeth's contempt for men is summed up in her inward reflection: "He was boring her on the whole, and probably she him, though thoroughly masculine men seldom seem to become bored provided a female audience will pay them token attention" (ES 94). Thoroughly masculine men are depicted as thoroughly insensitive fools. Shreve is the "tame social

bull" who has lost his strength in the arena of diplomacy (ES 95). Yet "Athol Shreve was what is real. This gross male. A fake: the real is so often fake" (ES 96). Elizabeth Hunter casually accepts that which Theodora Goodman spent almost an entire lifetime trying to unravel: "There is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality" (AS 289). Elizabeth has easily reconciled illusion and reality, and is prepared to take Shreve for what he is, and for what he is not.

Shreve escorts her home and she rather enjoys her trite role as the stereotyped "silly bitchy pretty woman after a party" (ES 98). They make a meal of each other's bodies; "again fully armoured, he came and sat on the edge of the bed, seeming inclined to return to picking at a meal he thought he had finished" (ES 99). For Elizabeth Hunter, casual sex is as exciting and fulfilling as a disappointing luncheon. She has been both attracted to and repulsed by Athol. More significant, however, is her disgust with her own lust. She is an arch-survivor and loves challenges; adultery has been entirely too easy a game to play.

Sir Basil gets delayed en route to his mother's death-bed when he encounters a troop of familiar actors. It is clear that his King Lear days are long over, and he has opted for the brave, new experimental theatre. Basil is a has-been. He attempts to assert his virility with a "mini-kirtled draft.

mare" but his performance is a flop (ES 134). His "nervous shanks" betray him, and he suffers physical degradation by vomiting into the foreign darkness (ES 142). His horsey ingénue derides him as a "sordid old brute" (ES 143). His impotence as an actor is depriving him of his sense of manhood. Basil is the pompous fool who has lived for the theatre. When the theatre betrays him he is rendered totally helpless and useless.

Dorothy de Lascabanes, née Hunter, decides to grace Cherry Cheeseman's refined social gathering with her angular but aristocratic presence. She is the guest of honour who "accidentally" stumbles in late, and who soon ceases to be a novelty, despite her impressive title. Her classic pumps and chic black dresses notwithstanding, Dorothy is a social bore. This particular party scene is well-endowed with animal imagery, not the least of which is the once ebullient Cherry "swollen into a festive turkey" (ES 290). Ironically, Cherry has chosen to serve roast turkey as the pièce de résistance of her dinner. Indeed, Cherry's generous, if gauche, hospitality is being devoured by her greedy guests. Dorothy plunges into the unpleasant realm of memory as she "nuzzled and whinnied her way back to fillyhood" (ES 290). It is suitable that the horse-faced princess remembers her awkward adolescence as "fillyhood." Another guest has all the glamourous charms of a "hairless kangaroo rat" (ES 291).

There are no peacock-people present. Cherry is too bourgeois to be blessed with splendidly plumaged guests. Her consolation prize is the horse-princess, who manages to escape with "her furs streaming, the tails of her sables galloping behind her on the stairs" (ES 298).

Dorothy's most excruciating moment at the party occurs when an insignificant Australian Writer (comically capitalized by White) lunges at her as though she were a football. The self-conscious schoolgirl has never grown up, and she finds physical contact painful. The highlight of this episode is the mutual confessions of Cherry and Dorothy. Cherry has thoughtfully tucked her mother away into Thorogood Village, and encourages Dorothy to demonstrate her filial devotion by doing the same for Elizabeth. Cherry's mother adored her sojourn at the delightful Thorogood; unfortunately, she passed away a few weeks after having been admitted. Dorothy is rather upset by the disappointing ending to an otherwise perfect story. A drunken Cherry later asks Dorothy why she hates her mother. It is then that Dorothy collects her streaming sables and flees.

Throughout the novel there are the strong suggestions that Dorothy envies her mother for her charm, her beauty, and her success with men. Basil resents his mother because she is a better actor than he is. Both middle-aged children are threatened by the actual presence, or the almost as

formidable recollection, of their seemingly invincible goddess of a mother. She puts them to shame because they are so hopelessly inferior in every respect.

The Shreve dinner illustrates the complexity of Elizabeth's psyche, and the paradox of her religious hunger and inquisitive flesh. The impromptu party with the hypocritical theatrical friends evokes Sir Basil's impotence as both actor and man. The Cherry Cheeseman party portrays Dorothy's terror of contact with the truth, and subsequently with physical contact. She runs away from Cherry's question in much the same fashion that she dodges the clumsy tackle of the Australian Writer. White is utilizing conventional party settings and casual sexual adventures to sift the carnal from the spiritual, to pursue the "extraordinary behind the ordinary." D. Keith Mano's main objection to the novel is what he judges to be the stylistically exasperating tedium. He complains that "the premise is so conventional it seems an imposition."[8] White does resort to the treatment of conventional situations, but with a distinctive twist. When he deals with convention he deals with it ironically. If a dying woman questing for her soul is a conventional premise, then certainly White's handling of this theme is unconventional and admirable.

When I suggest that the satire of The Eye Of The Storm is predominantly sexual, I mean that the sexuality of both

sexes is being vivisected by White. Sir Basil and Dorothy are both eunuchs. They are physically barren and spiritually sterile. White stresses their spiritual and sexual dilemma when he has them return to their childhood home; Kudjeri is the inverse of Theodora Goodman's Meroe. Kudjeri is not Dorothy and Basil's Ithaca, for they have never loved it. In this mock-nostalgic setting, brother and sister mate, thereby exchanging only futility. I disagree with Steiner who feels that the "incest of Dotty and Basil Hunter strikes one as merely histrionic, a stroke of terror and uncleanliness staged only for effect."[9] The incest is merely one instance of sexual satire, albeit a dramatic one. It is appropriate that the castrated and loveless brother and sister confess and share their spiritual impotence in an act that is anything but moral and desirable. The sexual imagery running throughout the novel borders on the demonic. Elizabeth Hunter survives the wrath of the cyclone only to view the myth of her womanhood crumbling. As I will briefly discuss in my next chapter, "Dilemma and Vision of the Outsider," White's visionaries are often spiritually androgynous. They transcend sexual classification through a spiritual sublimation.

These scenes of social victimization reveal society as something of a social zoo. White is particularly fond of using specific social gathering as satiric targets. The

guests are imaged as fish, birds of splendour and birds of prey, braying jackasses, and gregarious sheep. His outsiders are not embraced into the fold. White distributes shares of suffering impartially in his social cages. One need not necessarily be an outsider to experience humiliation in such settings. Even a dilettante, socialite or charming hostess is vulnerable to the talons of slander and effacement. Although all of the get-togethers are highly comic, there is an underlying suggestion of disaster. The outsider does not fall prey to these malevolent festivities. He chooses, instead, to pursue his personal vision.

Notes to Chapter III

1. Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son," Australian Letters, 1, 3 (April, 1958), 39.

2. Northrop Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 226.

3. Patricia A. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity: Theme And Technique In The Novels Of Patrick White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 21.

4. Alan Lawson, "Unmerciful Dingoes? The Critical Reception Of Patrick White," Meanjin Quarterly, 32, 4 (December, 1973), 389.

5. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 229.

6. For discussions on Patrick White and the critical responses to his novels see: R.F. Brissenden, "Patrick White," Meanjin, 18, 4 (1959), pp. 410-414; Alan Lawson, "Unmerciful Dingoes? The Critical Reception of Patrick White," Meanjin Quarterly, 32, 4 (December, 1973), pp. 379-391; and John Rorke, "Patrick White and the Critics," Southerly, 20, 1 (1969), pp. 66-74.

7. George Steiner, "Carnal Knowledge," The New Yorker, (March 4, 1974), p. 109.

8. D. Keith Mano, "Exasperating Brilliance," National Review, (February 15, 1974), p. 214.

9. Steiner, "Carnal Knowledge," p. 112.

CHAPTER IV

Dilemma And Vision Of The Outsider

White is obviously concerned with the dilemma and vision of the universal outcast, the uncommon man, or outsider; who struggles towards a vision of permanent faith. The instrument that the outsider employs to achieve this faith is a mystical understanding of totality and self. In The Aunt's Story, Riders In The Chariot, and The Solid Mandala, all of the unusual and "afflicted" protagonists begin their spiritual quest with an embryonic vision that continually reshapes itself until it is solid and complete. The dilemma of being an undesirable is converted into a blessing when each of the outsiders ultimately perceives transcendence.

The movements of The Aunt's Story draw the courageous protagonist into the labyrinth of experience. Theodora Goodman's final release is the "inscape" into madness.[1] In this state she is able to achieve the unity of experience, and is able to compensate for her tormenting inability to create. The stubborn stick of a woman struggles against her barren destiny. When she is ultimately blessed with the ability to incorporate all the people she has known, and all the events she has been subjected to, either vicariously or directly, into the permanent image of self, she accomplishes the continuity of being.

Theodora's mother and sister Fanny create shallow ripples of music. Theodora lacks graceful artifice, and can only be at one with music when she pounds with all the intensity of her angular passion. Arthur Brown, in The Solid Mandala, is confronted with a similar dilemma. His mother is determined that he is a 'closet genius,' and insists that, because of his mathematical skills, he is also musically gifted. Although Arthur is as profoundly moved by music as is Theodora, he cannot govern his untamed fingers to dance upon the keyboard. His mathematical talent does, however, help him unravel the mandala mystery, and dance its geometry.

Theodora is the antithesis of what society judges to be feminine, decorative and desirable. Because Theodora is poised towards the movement of flight, her mother's charmingly perfect but sterile rendition of Chopin does not move her recalcitrant daughter. Mother goes through all the motions without experiencing the essence. Theodora's unwavering independence and firm self-respect are what enable her to follow her own calling without being contemptuous or jealous of those who are neatly stitched into the tapestry of convention. The swarthy Syrian peddlar enchants Theodora, and she is compelled to follow him down the road. This is an early clue that she will travel along a winding path, and will be lured by life's dark detours.

Patricia Morley accurately observes the young Theodora's

comparatively healthy self-image: "But the girl herself knows 'it's good sometimes to be a stick'".[2] Although Theodora has accepted her unusual attributes, she is perfectly aware that more conventional ones would make life easier. Theodora comments upon the sensual servant-girl, Pearl: "She is fine as a big white rose, and I am a stick. If it is good to be a stick, said Theodora, it is better to be a big white rose" (AS 40). Thus Theodora is more resigned to than enthusiastic about her probable destiny. It is clear that she has every intention of making the best of a trying situation. She does not begrudge Fanny her flowery prettiness; nor is she envious of men. Despite her rather mannish appearance she realizes that the biological distinction between the sexes has little, if anything, to do with the shape of one's life: "Theo should have been a boy, they said. . . . But she herself had never considered what could not have been such a different state. Life was divided, rather, into the kinder moments and the cruel, which on the whole are not conditioned by sex" (AS 34). This concurs with White's own view as revealed in his fiction. In The Eye Of The Storm, the brilliant Elizabeth Hunter ironically comments upon the distinction of the sexes, and upon exclusively male mateship. Hurtle Duffield, in The Vivisector, longs to be the mother of his kindred artist. Arthur Brown is viewed by society as rounded and helpless, where Theodora is angular and independent. Several of White's

protagonists are spiritually androgynous. Had Theodora been born Theodor her destiny would not have been radically different. She is first of all an individual whose streak of independence has barred her from mateship, marriage and domestic confinement. Although she has not climbed aboard Noah's Ark she manages to journey through life's more subtle adventures. Despite her virginity she is not barren. Her niece, Lou, is Theodora's spiritual seed.

Upon reaching puberty Theodora receives two climactic jolts. She is almost struck with a lightning bolt, and she is introduced to the tattered mystic: The Man who was Given his Dinner. These two experiences are directly linked. The lightning has spared the girl, but has maimed the oak. Theodora's bent-tree father has been struck by his flinty wife. He has followed a lethal pattern of deferring to this stoney creature, and has denied the relationship of rare beauty that he had shared with his fellow prospector. He humiliates and shuns his old friend, and now must suffer the backlash of his own humiliation. Julia Goodman is a non-discriminating castrator. Her prey includes both male and female, husband and daughter. Certainly she attempts to castrate her daughter by mocking her sticklike behavior with men, and by being unable to reconcile herself to the fact that the solicitous solicitor is strangely fascinated by the uncompromising Theodora.

The vagabond-prophet informs Theodora: "You'll see a lot of funny things, Theodora Goodman. You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps you'll survive. No girl that was thrown down by lightning on her twelfth birthday, and then got up again, is going to be swallowed easy by rivers of fire" (AS 47). The forces of water and fire will not discover in Theodora a willing sacrifice. Indeed, this spontaneous prophecy proves to be a neat synopsis of Theodora's actions and reactions. Ultimately she is subjected to what could be interpreted as a nervous breakdown complete with hallucinations, and yet there is no indication that she is experiencing suffering within this realm. It is suggested through the final absence of pain and gloom that her particular kind of 'insanity' is far from undesirable.

White inverts the conventional pattern of sanity and madness. Although his outsiders are accused by society of being mad, they achieve a fixed state of lucid awareness. When Arthur Brown is led to an asylum his entire being radiates beatitude.[3] Although appearances suggest that Theodora has compromised herself somewhat by accepting without struggle the soothing confines of an institution, she has survived with her integrity. Even at the comparatively raw age of twelve Theodora is not threatened by but attracted to madness: "And now Theodora began to think that

perhaps the man was a little bit mad, but she loved him for his madness even, for it made her warm" (AS 47). Madness is equated with love, warmth and wisdom. It cannot destroy her because she is not afraid of it, and hatred and fear are the ultimate destroyers.

Theodora's sojourn at boarding school is unremarkable but for a few scattered events. She tentatively attempts a 'Best Friendship' with one Violet Adams, a bland but gentle girl who perpetrates maudlin poems. Questioned on the subject of poetry, Theodora explains: "I would write a poem about rocks, . . . And fire. A river of fire. And a burning house. Or a bush fire" (AS 56). She is overwhelmingly influenced by the Man who was Begrudged his Dinner, and is already obsessed with the river of fire that she must survive. Yet she will never write this burning poem, nor will she be an artist of any kind.

Thelma Herring summarizes Theodora's major dilemma: "Since she is denied the joys of a creative artist her intelligence and sensibility are a source of anguish to her except in 'moments of insight.'"[4] Theodora is blessed with acute sensitivity and perception, but is cursed by her inability to express herself through the medium of art. This renders her creatively inarticulate, but not sterile. All she can do is collect her treasured insights and experiences, and profit in terms of personal progress from all of life's

offerings, whether kind or cruel. The similarly endowed head-mistress intuitively recognizes that the avenues of motherhood and creativity will not be offered to Theodora.

This is an illustration of how the outsiders in White's novels recognize one another spiritually. Both the unwelcome guest at Meroe and Miss Spofforth more than guess at Theodora's unusual destiny, for they have travelled the same road. Alfred Alvarez observes this same type of spontaneous affinity shared by the four outsiders in Riders In The Chariot: "Though the characters are connected in theme and cursorily in action, they scarcely seem to touch. White speaks once of the 'extraordinary non-relationship' between the Jew and the Abo. It is true of them all."[5] An ironic variation of this intense non-relating occurs in the pseudo-spiritual and blatantly sexual relationship between the nymphet musician and the dissipated artist in The Vivisector. Throughout White's novels his transcendent characters truly discover the quintessence of one another. They do not require, or even particularly desire, the comfort of physical togetherness or the shawl of conversation to confirm their secret affinity. Theodora has experimented with friendship, and has not found it sufficiently inspiring to pursue.

Theodora returns to the "country of bones" that contains prospects of matrimony for the pleasing Fanny, and the promise of ashes for herself. Fanny, the delicate onlooker; Frank,

the preening cock; and Theodora, a red-eyed hawk, embark upon the hawking expedition. Theodora is determined that the doomed hawk shall be her own. The hawk's red eye is the eye of all dark, wild creatures who refuse to be enslaved. As Theodora takes perfect aim, she is destroying all possibilities of a caged union with the tamed prey, Frank Parrot. The tumbling hawk that falls like "an old broken umbrella" is vividly reminiscent of the crow corpse that Theodora notices just after she has observed the stained-glass victory of St. George, the legendary dragon slayer (AS 74). She is torn between identifying with the majestically wounded dragon, the yellow hero, and the humble, neglected crow "that had closed its wings and died, stiffer and blacker than old umbrellas" (AS 58). She is caught up in the chaotic process of guarding the garnet dragon who has spiritually slain her father, George, while simultaneously grappling with the dragon of convention. She is the shoddy black-bird umbrella who is folded in the coffin of non-movement. Because of her realized capacity to hate her mother, there are aspects of the malevolent dragon within Theodora herself.

At the dance Theodora is the crow that rises, the black umbrella that astonishingly opens itself to the agony of music. In her black and red striped dress she is the proud crow with the piercing red eye, viewed as a flaming spectacle: "The proud striped skirt of Theodora streamed with fire. Her

body bent to the music. Her face was thin with music, down to the bone. She was both released from her own body and imprisoned in the molten gold of Frank Parrot" (AS 79). She has previously perceived St. George as one who, although "mild and smooth as yellow soap," had nonetheless managed to crush the dragon (AS 58). Although she is momentarily trapped by Frank's hold upon her, she will not be crushed by the temptation of desire. She has already become disillusioned with her failed father, and does not believe in knights in shining armor. Morley summarizes Theodora's schizophrenic associations with self as both hero and monster: "Theodora realizes that she has within herself 'a core of evil' which she finds altogether hateful, and that 'the great monster Self' is the dragon to be slain."[6]

Theodora's fragmentation and inscape into her personal realm of lucidity or vivid imagination indicate that madness is not necessarily demonic; it can be a newfound state of serenity and a source of liberation for its permanent guest. Whether benign or malignant, madness is the counterphobic reaction of the individual to the human conditions of senseless brutality and interminable pain. Ronald Laing comments upon man's present exile from his creative possibilities:

> We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world--mad, even, from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt. We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but are in an alienated

> state, and this state is not simply a natural system. Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetuated by human beings on human beings.[7]

This is a vital theme that White pursues in all his novels. He stresses it by frequently using the outsider-figure as the central protagonist. From the dilemma of alienation the outsider moves inwards towards the vision that integrates faith and self. Theodora Goodman escapes from the undesirable external madness into a state of apocalyptic beatitude. As alienation is the implicit condition of the present-day man, the outsider is merely barred from mock-integration. The sage doctor comments in the final movement of The Aunt's Story: "Lucidity . . . isn't necessarily a perpetual ailment" (AS 297). Theodora dismisses her last opportunity for a conventionally approved lifestyle when she kindly but firmly rejects Huntly Clarkson. His interest in Theodora is expressed in this comment: "I like your view, Miss Goodman. . . . It is my view reversed. If I stand on my balcony I can see yours" (AS 103). He is obviously referring to a more subtle view than the one of landscape. The insider is intrigued by the expanding vision of the outsider. Huntly is locked inside his elegant box of existence, and Theodora will not give him the key to the outer limits of human possibilities.

At a farcical social gathering at Huntly's, Theodora

is enraptured by the performance of the Greek 'cellist Moraitis, a fellow expatriate from "the country of bones." It is during this remarkable performance that Theodora is able to transcend her dilemma of non-creativity. She is one of the chosen few who, through a spiritual sensibility, is allowed a thorough appreciation and experience of art. She is drawn into the whorls of music, and is embracing the experience of this awesome celebration. Although she ~~is~~ neither mother nor artist, she is continually bearing new experiences. She is moved by much more than the integration of the concert. Theodora is hypnotized by the moaning cello that is victimized by the violins. She is also experiencing the musician who has survived the torment of his labour, and who has passed through the movements of birth/afterbirth and the trance of exhaustion. Just as their birth place and heritage were one, the experience of the musician and his spiritual audience of one become as one.

Theodora's halfway house in life is the Hôtel du Midi. In this second movement of the novel the technique of stream of consciousness reflects Theodora's fragmentation. The obvious tone of the dizzy lifestyle at the Hôtel is one of bizarre madness, yet it is bursting with delightfully comic situations, and burlesque capers. The assemblage is not so much a ship of fools as it is a melting pot of human suffering, passion and occasional nobility. All the listless

transients are undeniably life's outsiders and are as exotic as the Jardin itself. The comedy of man's dilemma is uproariously portrayed through the endearing swine, Sokolnikov. This Russian charlatan possesses all the grandeur of a Chekhovian do-nothing. The Hôtel can be viewed as a surrogate orphanage that harbours civilization's floundering outcasts. The captain appears to be echoing Dostoevsky's underground man when he enumerates upon the fundamental ennui of existence: "Do we not work from boredom? . . . We sing from boredom. We fornicate from boredom. Out of the loneliness of boredom, we marry. Then as a sop to our bored vanities, we proceed to reproduce. . . ." (AS 207). The spiritually shipwrecked crew epitomizes twentieth-century mankind. The paramount dilemma is the condition of boredom and uselessness. The guests simply do not know what to do with the burden of time, so they merely mark it, and rage against all the futility and wastage.

Theodora's experience at the Hôtel marks her integration into society, albeit a disintegrating one. It also ennables her to integrate the past with the ongoing present: "There are moments, she admitted, when it is necessary to return to the boxes for which we were made" (AS 204). Man travels from womb to tomb, and is thwarted because the mystery of being is not contained within this inevitable progression, Morley states: "The box 'endeavoured' to contain a mystery;

the narrator implies that the endeavour fails, not because there is no mystery but because the mystery will not be contained in the box. . . ."[8] Yet the quest for the mystery must be directly linked to life, since life is the fundamental mystery. Although Theodora will not unravel the mystery of being by returning to the 'box of being,' at certain strategic moments she must take inventory of her experiences, and remember that the box is her birthright and her destiny. Symbolically, the Hôtel sets itself on fire, and only those sufficiently innocent emerge untouched from the flames.

Part Three of The Aunt's Story begins: "All through the middle of America there was a trumpeting of corn" (AS 265). The tone is one of proclamation, of joyous announcement. Theodora is aboard the train of redemption "with all its magnificence of purpose," but has chosen to disembark in favour of pursuing her personal quest (AS 270). She adopts a fastidious pseudonym, and is bewildered by the solid, ugly objects that she discovers in the Johnson shack. In this unlikely setting she finds a kindred spirit, the dark and inarticulate Zack, who is not as socially acceptable as his sandy siblings. Theodora and Zack share the secret of her strange black rose and the hateful orange clock, and both of them intuitively grasp the flimsiness of appearances.

Theodora then makes a pilgrimage to the only abode

that is not a box because it does contain a mystery. The Man who was Given his Dinner has not returned as promised, but Theodora is finally reunited with his image when the evanescent spirit, Holstius, enters into her newfound home. He informs her that although she is unable to resolve the duality of her existence, she must accept it. This acceptance presents itself in the disguise of a compromise when Theodora allows herself to be led to an asylum. Her passivity, however, is deceptive for she has previously learned that "people no longer come and go . . . people are brought and sent" (AS 206). Pre-destination is inevitable, and choice is an illusion. We are the insignificant ants who wait for the mercy that God will or will not offer.[9] If mankind is not truly capable of exercising self-will, how then can he force his will upon others? Theodora will submit to the soothing sterility that the hospital has to offer, but she "will not be taken in by any of this" (AS 295). She finally incorporates all the people who have in some way shaped the final image of Theodora Goodman. She has become all whom she has known, and all that she has experienced. Because choice is not possible, she is spared the final discovery of whether she is saint, sinner, lucid or mad. She is all of these and more. She is the proud crow, the opened umbrella, the healing ointment, the aunt, and the survivor. Yet amid this cross-section of identities Theodora remains

very much her own person. Thelma Herring writes: "Finally Theodora wears the hat with the black gauze rose, also artificial, 'more a sop to convention than an attempt at beauty,' but black like Theodora herself."[10] She has paid convention its nominal dues, but has given of herself no more than the minimum requirements. Ultimately this same "rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own" (AS 299). This last line in The Aunt's Story is the proof of Theodora's personal triumph over both fragmentation and convention.

Three of the four outsiders in Riders In The Chariot are much more dramatic than is Theodora Goodman, and they suffer from excruciating dilemmas. The exception is the charitable Ruth Godbold. The four mystics share a vision of the Chariot of Redemption, and are ultimately converted into its four transcending riders. Sylvia Gzell suggests that Ruth's vision of the chariot lacks versimilitude: "The appropriateness of the chariot image is more dubious in the case of Ruth Godbold. . . . Ruth's connections with the chariot is seen only through the eyes of the other characters . . . and therefore seems to be included rather to complete the unity of their joint vision than to affirm her own."[11] Ruth, however, is one of White's rare common protagonists and like Stan Parker in The Tree of Man is uncommon only in her goodness. The quintessence of her vision is necessarily and realistically undramatic. Her feet are solidly rooted

to the ground, and it is congruous that at the novel's closing she is the only remaining rider. Ruth's image of the chariot is not inappropriate or vicarious, as Gzell suggests, but is in accordance with her simplicity and impartial compassion: "She had her own vision of the Chariot. Even now, at the thought of it, her very centre was touched by the wings of love and charity" (RC 529). Ruth is a Christian more in practice than in theory. She embraces a faith that is non-denominational. She is the humble saint who tends the wounds of the three more intensely suffering riders. She nurses the mad mystic, Mary Hare, through her raging fever; she wipes the bloodied mouth of the Aboriginal outcast in a brothel; and she is the angel of mercy at the death-bed of the Jewish Messiah. The biblical Ruth converted to Judaism for love. Ruth Godbold's non-discriminating love does not require conversion to prove itself.

Mary Hare is the neglected waif who is tormented by a hateful father. Yet it is her father who unknowingly gives her a glimpse of the vision that is later to possess her: "Who are the riders in the Chariot, eh, Mary? Who is ever going to know?" (RC 20). This esoteric, rhetorical question is the catalyst for the daughter's expecting from life "some ultimate revelation" (RC 21). Although Mary's communion with nature is perfect, she fears the human within her, just as Theodora Goodman fears the dragon waiting to be slain

inside herself. Although she is stunted and botched, Mary Hare possesses the courage of White's other stick-women.[12] Mary's dilemma is not her estrangement from a society for which she has no use, but her obsession with the radically opposed conditions of good and evil, and her recognition of her own sin of pride. She rejects the Bible which her devoted servant offers her, protesting that she is different. This arrogance is her source of shame. She equates it with the evil of her insufferably arrogant father. Peg, the servant, sighs: "Different and the same," (RC 47) and this comment also applies to the ultimate oneness of the Judeo-Christian theologies, which, as Morley notes, are blended through the shared vision of the four riders: "Riders is based, structurally and thematically, upon the Scriptures and litanies of both Jew and Christian, and effects a fusion of the quintessence of these religions."[13]

For Mary, the early visions of the Chariot are oppressive and cruel. She is trampled by the wheels, and the vision has not yet taken shape. It remains "a confusion of light, at most an outline of vague and fiery pain" (RC 67). The foetus vision is at the crucial stage of being aborted during the crisis of Mary's fever. The fever breaks and the vision is born. The fiery pain is the torment of her ontological dilemma. Burdened with the skeleton of a vision imposed upon her by a demonic father, she must grapple with her own

arrogance, and struggle towards a faith that will allow her to make the distinction between good and evil. Mary redeems her 'tiny sin' when she charges into Himmelfarb's burning shack with her mandala-hat on fire. She is the avenging angel who is more than willing to sacrifice her life for her beloved Jew.

Alf Dubbo is the universal outcast, the half-caste who yearns to be annointed with the oils of his artistic vision. His first creation is the bleeding tree of undreamt dreams. In this painting he exhibits his propensity for dipping his paintbrush in the blood of suffering. His first visual confrontation with the chariot moves him to declare: "My horses . ... would have the fire flowing from their tails. And dropping sparks. Or stars. Moving" (RC 345). He is dissatisfied with the stiff riders in the tinny chariot, and longs to transmute his vision into a celebration on canvas.

A painting incorporating the chaotic details of his short life is both sacred and profane. Alf's exposure to the demonic aspects of sexuality and hypocritical religion precipitates this painting of despair and faith. Sex and religion are woven together in his depiction of the black comedy of his unhappy childhood. He portrays the sexual stabbing to which his mother willingly opens herself and the "white worm stirring and fainting" in the crotch of his homosexual foster father, the Reverend Tim (RC 350). For

the tormented boy, unknown love waits either to be buried or be born: "He would paint love as a skeleton from which they had picked the flesh" (RC 350). His experiences have precluded love, but upon this skeleton foundation Alf will chisel his vision of love and redemption until it takes shape through the execution of his Chariot painting.

Alf is accused of seducing his patron, the Reverend Tim, and the boy flees to the protective anonymity of the outback. He soon crawls to the city like the suspicious and wounded creature that he is. There he seeks shelter in the establishment of Hannah, the whore with the heart of (and hankering for) gold. At this point he is spiritually exhausted and physically diseased: "He had almost forgotten what they were treating him for; it was so much more important to find a way out of other dilemmas. Disease, like his body, was something he had ended by taking for granted" (RC 375). His dilemma surpasses the torment his venereal disease causes him. Although he has been reduced to a physical wreckage, he is suffering for his wounded soul.

It is in this paradoxical state of carnal decay, and yearning for a spiritual rebirth, that Alf wrings from the skeleton of his faith the embryonic shapes of the "Fiery Furnace" and his interpretation of Ezekiel's Chariot of Redemption. These two sketches or cartoons image the paradoxical dilemma of his condition of being. He longs for

redemption, yet is trapped in the inferno of a degrading lifestyle. That these embryonic creations are stolen may imply that Alf is not yet ready to complete what he has begun. He has been punished for exhibiting his art, his life-blood, in the contagious degradation of the burlesque show. His art has been burlesqued by being likened to cartoons. Alf's vision has yet to be reshaped and expanded. He has not yet discovered the faces of the mystical riders, or zaddikim.[14] He is destined to witness the pain of the Passion before he can depict the glorious possibility of redemption.

When the demonic practical jokers string up Himmelfarb in a mock crucifixion, Alf is bleeding in the background. Alf is bound by vision and blood to his portraits of salvation: "he ventured to retouch the wounds of the dead Christ with the love that he had never dared express in life, and at once the blood was gushing from his own mouth, the wounds in the canvas were shining and palpitating with his own conviction" (RC 488). Alf has gone in search of Himmelfarb, and has found him being nursed by Ruth and Mary, the saintly attendants. The faces of the riders have been illuminated, and Alf has been blessed to discover that he is one of them. His conception of the Chariot is tentatively offered, almost as though he is afraid of realizing the enormous glory of his vision and creation. Alf's artistic

device of understatement only enhances the splendour, "causing it to blaze across the sky, or into the soul of the beholder" (RC 494). The tortured hands of the riders are achingly susceptible. The offered palms expose the wounds as the Chariot ascends to the throne of the Divine Judge. Alf has intuited the shared pain of the outsiders, has sanctified their shared vision, and has relocated them as faith-sharers in the Chariot of Redemption. Alf has reproduced the actuality of their experience, and, as Morley notes, "Alf's paintings contain the meaning of the entire novel. . . ."[15]

The Jew is the phoenix who miraculously emerges from the flames of the twentieth-century European holocaust. Himmelfarb is converted from the pharmakos, or scapegoat-figure, into a visionary sacrifice. He has great difficulty reconciling the devoutness of his mother and the apostasy of his father. He opts for a compromise when he becomes a respectable professor who is compelled to seek out his own people, and weds a plain and simple Jewess. His wife, Reha, is a Yiddish version of Ruth Godbold. Despite his worldly success and domestic harmony, Himmelfarb is spiritually listless. His visit to a second-hand book store that specializes in texts relating to the Kabbala coincides with the demonic sweep of anti-semitism that reaches its ugly climax in the zeitgeist of twentieth-century Europe.[16] The

apocalyptic teaching of the Prophets forms a radical opposition to the superstitious bloodlust that infects mankind in the supposed age of reason.

Himmelfarb begins a vague sketch of the Chariot, but he rages against the sterility and futility of his cerebral approach to matters of the spirit. He is obsessed with the possibility of redemption, and yearns to discern the enigmatic expressions upon the faces of the riders. Instead of receiving a godly illumination, Himmelfarb is possessed by his own spirit, and he confronts his reflection in a looking-glass that distorts. During this spiritual seizure Himmelfarb has come face to face with one of the riders, namely himself. He has been smitten by the realization that the spiritual answer can only come from within. His moving reflection that appears to be trapped in water or fire is the presentiment that he and his soul, or inner reflection, are to be twice consumed, and twice saved, from fire.

When Himmelfarb emerges from the smoke of the concentration camp he is a man of ash. He is ravaged by guilt because he feels that he has betrayed his lost wife. He cannot find solace in Palestine because he is no longer the professor who has something to teach. Desiring only to learn humility, he chooses to relocate in Australia because of its desolation and isolation. To Himmelfarb, it appears to be a country of bones from which he can carve his vision

of faith. From his ashes he is born into a man of bone who chooses a flimsy shack for his home and a menial job as a labourer.

When Himmelfarb is hoisted onto the warped tree, a symbol of the cross, he epitomizes the universal scapegoat figure. He is the "black man of a lynching, the Jew of a pogrom, the old woman of a witch hunt. . . ."[17] The white "Aussies" have reviled Himmelfarb for being a foreigner, a Jew, a "Christ-killer." The frenzy of the mob is like the contagious hysteria of a witch-hunt. Himmelfarb is every suffering outsider. As the Jew bleeds, the miracle occurs. He becomes the visionary sacrifice who "was conscious of pure water, at the centre of which his God was reflected" (RC 444). He is being bathed and purged in the pool of his mandala-vision, at the centre of which he beholds his God. As the tormented Alf observes the crucifixion, he understands the blood and beauty of the Passion. Dubbo's Chariot masterpiece depicts the messianic Himmelfarb in all his agony and glory: "A second was conceived in wire, with a star inside the cage, and a crown of barbed wire" (RC 494). As suggested in The Solid Mandala, the Star of David is a mandala symbol of totality and self-realization. The cage and barbed wire symbolize the concentration camp, and are the demonic parodies of the perfect enclosure of the mandala. Alf's Himmelfarb, crowned by the barbed wire,

has been transformed through his suffering. He has been exalted through the acceptance of pain in the cause of love.

Himmelfarb's dying vision of self reveals his prophetic wisdom. He is enclosed by a non-denominational congregation. The sources of his knowledge are imprinted in the rocks and contained within the flesh of the plants. He is a Messiah-figure before whom thousands of souls stand to be instructed and blessed. Himmelfarb has already passed beyond this life, and he "glanced back at the last blaze of earthly fire" (RC 471). He has triumphed over the fires of earthly pain, and is immortalized as one of the permanently ascending riders.

Riders In The Chariot and The Solid Mandala are thematically unified through the link of the mandala, an anagogic symbol.[18] M. L. von Franz describes the mandala as follows:

> Among the mythological representations of the Self one finds much emphasis on the four corners of the world, and in many pictures the Great Man is represented in the centre of a circle divided into four. Jung used the Hindu word mandal (magic circle) to designate a structure of this order. . . . The contemplation of a mandala is meant to bring an inner peace, a feeling that life has again found its meaning and order.[19]

The Chariot of Redemption, with its quaternity of riders, is clearly a mandala symbol. In The Solid Mandala, the mandala is a recurring symbol that continually reshapes itself through the vision of the twin, Arthur Brown.

Arthur, the "dill," the dreamer, and the mandala-keeper, is one of White's blessed defectives. His father is addicted to the Greek myths, as is George Goodman; both these failed Georges leave their legacy of mythological influence. Although Arthur appears to be dreaming while George pedantically reads from the legends of Gods, the boy is profoundly moved by what he silently absorbs. He worships his beloved friends, Mrs. Poulter and Dulcie, as Demeter and Athene: "He loved Demeter for her fullness, for her ripe apples, he loved Athene for her understanding" (SM 215). Although both these compassionate women are young enough to be perceived romantically by Arthur, his relationship with both is platonic, not erotic. Nor does he forfeit the love of one for the other: "He could not sacrifice his first, his fruitful darling, whose mourning even streaned with a white light. Nor the burnt flower-pots, the russet apples of his second" (SM 272). Ultimately it is Mrs. Poulter, the symbol of fecundity, who soothes and joins visions with the sinned-against Arthur. Dulcie is so absorbed into her clan that Arthur can be only the outsider watching at the window.

Arthur himself is the blind prophet Tiresias. Tiresias was afflicted with blindness at the age of seven, and it is probable that at this age, or thereabouts, Arthur was judged to be socially unacceptable for his distinctive expressions of self, and subsequently rejected by both his father and

his twin, Waldo. Both prophet and young outcast are privileged to visions that those who are blessed with sight, or reason, cannot share. Tiresias was converted to a woman only to discover that probably "he wasn't all that different" (SM 215). Herring alludes to the "series of androgynous figures" that include Tiresias, the hermaphroditic Adam with his wife in his ribs, and Arthur Brown himself. Waldo is the creature of reason, while Arthur is the creature of feeling. Feeling is traditionally identified as a female characteristic. Arthur derives much solemn pleasure from the bread-baking ceremony, he enacts the tragedy of a cow in labour, and he is accused by Waldo of being a "fat helpless female" (SM 222). Despite his affinity for female pain, Arthur's acute sensitivity does not suggest any sexual propensity. He is spiritually androgynous, but asexual in practice. He demonstrates his optimistic outlook on life when he redeems the cow tragedy by cheerfully explaining: "But it isn't all tragedy. . . . Because she can have other calves, can't she?" (SM 34). Thus Arthur is portrayed as comprehending suffering, but as continually being restored by his faith in being.

Arthur joyfully collects his colourful taws, and his four favourites are his glass mandalas. The knotted marble that he loves best is being saved for Waldo. Waldo himself is bound by knots of frustration, and Arthur is tied to

Waldo by the knot of birth. White delightfully plays with words when Arthur's peers tease "one-ball Brown" (SM 219). Arthur is not at all troubled: "He was different, then, in several ways. But did not mind since he had his marbles" (SM 219). Accused of being a simple-minded eunuch, Arthur's sense of self and love is reflected in his glass mandalas. The apocalyptic red and green of the marble he associates with himself celebrate Arthur's selfhood. His awe before the mystery of being is as profound as Mary Hare's, and he expresses it in terms of his own personal mandala-vision: "To think . . . that the world is another mandala!" (SM 236). The tragedy of being, the pain of the breeding cows and the bleeding Marys, is transcended through the vision of the protective mandala, "a symbol of totality," and of unity (SM 229).

Arthur luxuriates in the perfect enclosure of love and faith bounded by Mrs. Feinstein, her daughter Dulcie, and the merchant, Len Saporta. Arthur graciously, if unconventionally, compliments the devout Mrs. Feinstein by announcing that she looks "like oil on water"(SM 235). She is annointed with the oil of her unwavering faith. Arthur thinks of Saporta as one of the "convinced, the unalterable ones"; his "solid shape" is enclosed in the mandalic Star of David (SM 240).

Arthur's spiritual androgyny is portrayed in a dream that

represents a tree growing from his loins. This dream also depicts the relationships that the man-child shares with his spiritual sisters of mercy. Dulcie's face, imaged in the higher branches, symbolizes the rapport she shares with Arthur. Yet when Arthur is in a state of shock and fragmentation because of his twin's death, Dulcie's understanding and patience are beyond his reach. She is so deeply involved with her family that she becomes an untouchable symbol of completeness. During Arthur's ontological crisis it is Mrs. Poulter who kneels beside him, as anticipated in the dream. Her abundant, smooth skin is as tough as stringybark. This metamorphosis of skin into bark symbolizes inner toughness and the strength of her compassion. is also an aged and leathery Mrs. Poulter who ultimately soothes Arthur. Arthur's dream occurs shortly before his Mandala Dance, and it foreshadows the mother and child reunion of Mrs. Poulter and Arthur.

Arthur is inspired to express his vision through the mandala dance. Jung mentions that in India there is a special name for this dance, the "mandala nrithya."[21] It is danced exclusively by women. Harry Heseltine comments upon the dance ritual in Riders In The Chariot: "Dancing . . . is a special technique for achieving ecstasy or some awful state outside the bounds of normal experience."[22] Arthur has already learned that the geometric shape of the mandala

can be transmuted into a dance. Although he is spiritually inarticulate he is able to mime his vision.

He begins by dancing his own dance which is a prayer for the dying gods and the lonely prisoners of his household. He is forgiving his family for the crimes of silence they committed against him. He dances the anaesthetized moon and the burning sun "which was in a sense his beginning, and should perhaps he his end" (SM 256). In a dictionary of mythology one finds The Twins, who are said to be children of the sun. Arthur's beginning and end would be unified through his birth and death from the sun. He is born blessed; he will die blessed. The unfortunate Waldo is the damned twin who is destined to die in the shadow of darkness. Arthur is illuminated by love; Waldo is blackened by bitterness and spite.

The second movement of Arthur's dance is a declaration of love for Dulcie Feinstein, her husband, and the children yet to be conceived. Because Arthur is bound to them through love, their children are to be his children. Dulcie and Leonard name their first-born son Aaron-Arthur, and his name is the living proof of the faith shared by Arthur and his friends. Arthur's final seal of approval is the Star of David which he weaves into their corner of his mandala.

In Mrs. Poulter's little niche, Arthur dances a fertility rite that reaches a climax when he portrays himself

as her unborn child. When Arthur is convulsed in the agony of Waldo's dance he is involved in an attempted exorcism, rather than a spontaneous celebration. This "awful state" is the demonic inversion of the "ecstasy" he expresses in his first three dances. The debris beneath his stamping feet symbolozes the "dry mud" of Waldo's barren literary endeavors (SM 257). He does not exorcise himself of his brother's spiteful shadow because of the binding cord of birth. Only the death of one will sever the blood-cord. He embraces their "double image," an image that cannot melt into one Joseph L. Henderson summarizes the dilemma of the mythical twins, the children of the sun:

> Though the Twins are said to be the sons of the Sun, they are essentially human and together constitute a single person. Originally united in the mother's womb, they were forced apart at birth. Yet they belong together, and it is necessary--though exceedingly difficult--to reunite them. In these two children we see the two sides of man's nature.[23]

The dilemma of the Brothers Brown in The Solid Mandala is a subtle variation of the Twin Myth. Morley compares Arthur Brown to Dostoyevsky's idiot, the "saintly Myshkin."[24] Waldo Brown also resembles one of Dostoyevsky's creations, the spite-spitting Underground Man. The brothers can be viewed as the spiritual polarities of one man or everyman. Although Arthur is saintly, he is imperfect because he lacks a rational will. This is why he longs for "the shadow" of

his twin which alone can make him complete.

Arthur understands his spiritual vocation as mandala-bearer:" It was himself who was, and would remain, the keeper of mandalas, who must guess their final secret through touch and light" (SM 232). As Dulcie has grasped, Arthur is an instrument of Providence. He longs to offer Waldo the beloved, knotted mandala, and to share his "discovery of the spirit" with his twin who is the "first of his two preoccupations" (SM 271). But he is an instrument of faith only to those who are receptive, and Waldo stubbornly and spitefully rejects all overtures of love. Arthur is hurtfully aware of this. When he visits his stroked twin in the hospital he rather shrewdly disguises his love as a need, knowing Waldo will find this weakness more acceptable. Arthur's spirit is reflected in his own mandala "in which the double spiral knit and unknit so reasonably" (SM 271). This is an example of White's technique of inverting conventional patterns of sanity and madness. Waldo's knotted marble rolls into the gutter and disappears into "filth and darkness" (SM 300). Arthur's mutable marble reflects his reshaping and expanding vision of totality and self. The "double spiral" is the double image of self and twin that cannot be reconciled or severed. Yet the lack of unity does not suggest madness or fragmentation, as the becoming and unbecoming is a reasonable process.

Arthur becomes Mrs. Poulter's childlike Christ. He confesses that in the end he has murdered Waldo, when he himself should have died in the beginning. Arthur is even more sinless than Doll Quigley in The Tree Of Man, who mercifully killed her helpless brother for fear of what would become of him should her death precede his. The maternal Mrs. Poulter and her childlike Arthur are united in the reflection of Arthur's last glass mandala: "She saw their two faces becoming one, at the centre of that glass eye" (SM 306). It is not an end, but a beginning.

All of the blessed outcasts in The Aunt's Story, Riders In The Chariot, and The Solid Mandala transcend their dilemmas through a vision that integrates self with faith. Theodora Goodman unifies her experiences, and reconciles the paradox of being by achieving perfect lucidity within the private realm of madness. The four mystics in Riders In The Chariot confirm their personal visions through their shared confessions, and transcend the suffering of existence aboard the Chariot of Redemption. Arthur Brown is emancipated from the hurtful shadow of his twin, and receives the blessing of the sun, his maker. Although he cannot save his brother, he understands what Morley refers to as "the mystery of failure."[25] He has lost his twin, but he will go on living.

In White's fiction, the burden of being an outcast is

converted into a blessing. Theodora Goodman and Mary Hare have been branded by convention as mad. Their madness, however, is presented as a mystical lucidity. It entitles them to enter into a state of spiritual beatitude in which they thoroughly overcome the curse of suffering. Arthur Brown is White's most fully developed simpleton. What Arthur lacks in intellectual reason he more than compensates for with his profound compassion and intuitive reason. He is depicted as a borderline defective and a borderline genius. His mathematical skill is an innate gift, as is his remarkable insight into the labyrinth of the human psyche. Himmelfarb and Alf Dubbo are outsiders by virtue of their acute sensibilities. Alf is a half-caste who transcends the horror of his existence through the gift of art. Himmelfarb is the intellectual who chooses to reject cerebral preoccupation in favour of matters of the spirit. These men are explicitly convention's scapegoats. They interpret the suffering they have been exposed to as a spiritual sign, and they struggle towards redemption. Throughout White's novels, the outsider plays a dominant role. He is frequently the protagonist embarked upon a spiritual quest. The other-worldly vision of the outsider precipitates this inevitably difficult but ultimately triumphant quest.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. See Northrop Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 121, where Frye, defining anagogic metaphor, speaks of "all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol. . . . It is this conception which Joyce expresses, in terms of subject matter, as 'epiphany,' and Hopkins, in terms of form, as 'inscape.'"

2. Patricia A. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity: Theme and Technique In The Novels Of Patrick White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 77.

3. Although Arthur Brown is led to asylum in a state of beatitude, he is still somewhat numb at having so recently and shockingly lost his twin, who has been both his polarity and his complement.

4. Thelma Herring, "Odyessey Of A Spinster: A Study Of 'The Aunt's Story,'" Southerly, 25, 1 (1965), 10.

5. Alfred Alvarez, "Chariot of Light," New Statesman, 62, (November 3, 1961), p. 656.

6. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, pp. 71-72.

7. Ronald Laing, The Politics of Experience (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), p. xv.

8. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 64.

9. See White, The Aunt's Story, p. 280: "'They say there'll be a war.' It would happen, Theodora saw, to the ants at the roots of the long suave stalks of grass. 'Probably,' Theodora said, 'unless God is kinder to the ants.'"

10. Herring, "Odyssey Of A Spinster," p. 20.

11. Sylvia Gzell, "Themes and Imagery in 'Voss' and 'Riders In The Chariot,' "Australian Literary Studies, 1, (June, 1964), p. 195.

12. One of the main images attached to Theodore Goodman is that of a stick. Laura Trevelyan is as stubborn as a stick, and something of a social stick. Mary Hare's mother writes of her daughter's ambition: "Says she wishes she were a stick!" (RC 163).

13. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 154.

14. "In each generation, we say, there are thirty-six hidden zaddikim--holy men who go secretly about the world, healing, interpreting, doing their good deeds" (RC 163).

15. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 175.

16. See The Mystery Of Unity, pp. 166-167, where Morley speaks of the zeitgeist, "the rational, 'liberal,' worldly

spirit of the age," and comments upon its influence in both Riders In The Chariot and The Solid Mandala.

17. See Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism, p. 45; Frye speaks of the boundary of art where the scapegoat symbol becomes existential.

18. See ibid., p. 121, where Frye discusses the principles of anagogy.

19. M.-L.von Franz, "The Process Of Individuation," in Man And His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung and M.-L.von Franz (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 213.

20. Thelma Herring, "Self and Shadow: The Quest For Totality in 'The Solid Mandala,'" Southerly, 26, 3 (1966), 187.

21. Carl C. Jung, Alchemical Studies, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), Bollingen Series XX, vol. 13, p. 23.

22. Harry Heseltine, "Patrick White's Style," Quadrant, 7, 3 (1963), 69.

23. Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths And Modern Man," in Man And His Symbols, p. 113.

24. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity, p. 93.

25. Ibid., p. 207.

CHAPTER V

The Quest For Transcendence

White's protagonists, the afflicted outsiders, are destined to search for faith and a sense of self beyond the borderline of convention. They are all cursed and blessed with a vision that cripples them, yet guides them towards transcendence. They struggle bitterly against the demands of convention, the torment of spiritual vivisection, and the dragon of doubt. They are triumphant when their final illuminations unite self and faith into an ennobling and permanent image.

White's novels stress the isolation of the outsider and his painful quest. There is a marked distinction in technical subtlety between his first two novels and the subsequent ones. In these two novels the quest motif is sentimentalized through romantic love and political romantiqism respectively. Although the themes in White's novels are all variations and extensions of one another, his later novels tend to enphasize the individuation of each man's personal quest. The first novel, Happy Valley, uses romantic attraction as the prerequisite to personal transcendence; the second novel, The Living And The Dead, is the only novel that involves itself with the theme of political salvation. The

struggle towards transcendence is as crucial as the ultimately successful act of transcendence. It is more powerfully expressed when the outcast pursues his ontological search without the idealization of physical love or politics.

The protagonist in Happy Valley is a doctor who is presented as a failed healer. He progresses from spiritual frostbite to a thorough thawing that allows him to become compassionate. He overcomes his immunity to pain through the realization that callousness makes him as impotent as do despair and weakness. His complete metamorphosis consists of four basic stages: despair, callousness, romantic concern for one individual, and an all-embracing compassion. His serious flirtation with 'non-feeling' is a counterphobic reaction to his over-exposure to the suffering of the human condition. As a doctor he is compelled to witness mankind raging against suffering and the inevitable fate of mortality. Oliver's function in the novel is fascinating, as the reader is given insight into the guilty chaos of the failed healer. Equipped with technique, and a clinical sense of medical ethics, he is nonetheless a failure because of the striking absence of concern and compassion.

In Alys, his gentle mistress, Oliver has discovered the catalyst for his emotional maturation and his spiritual growth. There is one essential difference between the relationship shared by Oliver and his mistress and Oliver and his wife, Hilda. He is progressing beyond the phase of

chilled indifference when he meets Alys. The timing element is crucial. Alys is a symbol or instrument of faith. She is instrumental in Oliver's conversion from borderline nihilism to a belief in humanity. Oliver's defence mechanism of surface hardness has worn thin; he is ripe for rebirth. It is explicit that in Oliver's liason with Alys he is exorcising the bile of his hardened metamorphosis, and is becoming capable of a genuine compassion for mankind.

Alys is also instrumental in the desirable reunion between husband and wife. Northrop Frye comments upon western literature's tradition of linking the moral with the desirable. White has adhered to this pattern through the treatment of events in Happy Valley. It is necessary for Oliver to search for his lost faith outside the realm of his failures. His deferential wife symbolizes the failure of his early and naive metaphysical quest; thus he turns elsewhere. When he develops a firm and mature faith he is able to "do the right thing" by returning to those who are dependent upon him for their survival. When Oliver dutifully returns to his wife he is a changed man and she is a changed woman. Together they will struggle to keep their family sheltered from the desolation that can accompany aloneness.

Patricia Morley's interpretation of the novel's final movement allows for a solution:

> The solution to Alys' and Oliver's liason is not the sentimental one of escape to California . . . but the acceptance of pain and suffering and its transformation and sublimation into love for all men. . . . Oliver Halliday's confident belief, that there is a 'mystery of unity about the world' which underlies its temporal expression in cleavage and pain, reflects White's own conviction.[1]

Oliver has lost, but has gained as well; thus it is possible for him to incorporate both loss and gain into the schematic network of being. His loss is also comparatively easy to bear considering his newfound sense of moral rectitude. He can now luxuriate in the spiritually elite position of the generous moralist who has denied personal love in favour of the righteous choice of responsibility. Unfortunately Alys' progress through pain towards purpose is less successful than Oliver's. At the end of the novel she appears to be floundering in the interrealm of past and present. Her final illumination that there is "no pain that is final" is rather ambiguous (HV 289). If White has intended that Alys' pain should serve to ennoble her I feel that he has failed to suggest this adequately.

The novel's epigraph from Mahatma Gandhi expresses the belief that suffering is the seed of progress. With the aid of Alys, the instrument of faith, Oliver is able to overcome his crisis of callousness, and appears to be on the path towards recovery and progress. Before his suffering has served to ennoble him, however, it has degraded him. Oliver's senses are deadened before they are intensified.

Had he simply ventured from noble innocence to noble experience his quest would have lacked the obstacle that is crucial to surmount in the search for transcendence. Suffering, struggling, and grappling with faith are the essential conditions of the quest. The spiritual bliss shared by Oliver and Alys serves as a startling contrast to the common knot of unfulfillment that plagues all of the other adult characters in the novel. This romantic love releases Oliver's thwarted compassion. He transcends partial and personal compassion by finally becoming capable of a self-sacrificing and genuinely noble concern for humanity. When he is able to strike a necessary balance between despair and indifference he is able to become a healer who is blessed with faith.

Politics plays a dominant role in the shaping of the theme in The Living And The Dead. The proletarian Joe Barnett, is not the central protagonist, but he is the novel's only genuinely living character. He forfeits the pure love he shares with Eden Standish by offering his services and life to the cause of the Spanish Loyalists. His inevitable death, naively sentimentalized, serves as a monument to the strength and courage of his convictions:

> The poor, more often than not, are more detached in their attitude to death, as if a closeness to possible disaster prepares for the inevitable. And death, even as a personal blow, adds a kind of distinction. . . . This was something to be shared, exalted, not shut away with tears in a room. . . . Out of the dung, the dead and distant fantails, as distant as the living Joe,

> Mrs. Barnett went to get her share of pity, to share the dignity of sorrow. (LD 370).

This noble sentiment is not a theme that White chooses to pursue in his later novels. An ironic inversion of the honour of political dedication occurs in The Aunt's Story when the Russian version of communism receives a playful slap in the face:

> Long live the Republic!
> Long live Kerensky!
> No! Down with Kerensky! Long live Lenin!
> Long live Lenin! Kerensky is a windbag! (AS 214).

After this brilliant exchange of bogus party lines the sporadically pensive Alyosha Sergei expounds upon Kerensky's virtues in a tone so serious as to render the situation entirely absurd. This farcical sequence implies that zealous political loyalties may be simply a product of boredom. In The Jardin Exotique, politics is a conversational ball to be tossed about on a rainy day.

In The Living And The Dead the dignity of the working class is strikingly contrasted with the uselessness of the upper class. It is a contrast of purpose and life against impotence and death. The previously apolitical Eden joins the ranks of the living when she is transformed into a neophyte communist. One is to assume that her decision is based upon the righteousness of Joe's political guidance.

The anti-hero, Elyot Standish, is White's least sympathetic protagonist. At the novel's closing he has only

just begun his spiritual quest. He manages to emerge from the dust of his scholarly addiction, and boards a bus for places and purposes unknown. Although he will probably never achieve the dignity of the self-sacrificing Joe, he has begun to rebel against his spiritual impotence. He has risen from the interrealm of the living dead, and has chosen to pursue a personal, albeit undefined, theme. The significance of Elyot's individual quest is undermined by the attention given to the integrity of the communist ethic.

The desirable relationship shared by Eden and her political mentor, Joe, is contrasted with the failed relationship of the estranged brother and sister. Elyot can be viewed as an early version of the sterile man of reason, Waldo Brown. Although Arthur fails to bless Waldo with his vision of love and faith, he pursues the goal of being reunited with his twin until the bitter end. Eden is not concerned with the spiritual salvation of Elyot. She dismisses him as one of the irredeemably dead, and the cord of birth binding brother and sister is irreversibly severed. It seems improbable that Eden will attain the spiritual glory she aspires to considering that she is incapable of expressing compassion for one who is bound to her through blood.

G.A. Wilkes comments upon the dominance of Stan Parker's spiritual struggle in The Tree of Man: "Yet the strength

of The Tree Of Man comes not from Stan's achievement of illumination, . . . so much as his blunderings towards it, his bewilderment and uncertainty, his painful effort to interpret such knowledge as he is given."[2] The novel concerns itself more with the common man's baffling search than with the final gift of understanding. Such is the nature of everyman's existence. This is mankind's clumsy heroism, which, despite the preoccupation with survival, is drawn towards the pursuit of transcendence. Although Stan is a heroic figure, his heroism is not enacted upon a grandly dramatic stage. He is inarticulate, almost spiritually mute, yet he is cursed and blessed with all of the staggering insights of White's more histrionic protagonists.

Stan collects and harbours his moments of minor illuminations, and with them builds a ladder towards his final epiphany. Stan has experienced a minimal physical and verbal contact with Doll Quigley, yet he knows who she is. They are kindred spirits through the personal suffering they have both experienced. Their enigmatic bond transcends that of kinship or mateship. Their intimate "non-relationship" can be likened to the mysterious affinity shared by the transcending riders in Riders In The Chariot: "The purposes of God are made clear to some old women, and nuns, and idiots. At times Stan Parker was quite wooden in his thick bewilderment. The for a moment he would be laid open, as he was by Doll Quigley's glance" (TM 218-219). This

spontaneous realization of Stan's is also White's own point of view. All of his visionaries are distinctively outsiders. Doll Quigley is one of White's outcasts and stick-women. After Stan has met Doll's penetrating and steady gaze, he intuits that she is one of the spiritually elite to whom "the purposes of God are made clear." Judaic theology interprets the suffering of the Jews as one of the signs of their being a chosen people. White's 'chosen' are also those who have become intimately familiar with the experience of pain.

Stan's discovery of his wife's infidelity tosses him into the brutal arena of despair. His suicide attempt is aborted because of his intrinsic inability to "rise to the heights of tragedy and passion" (TM 332). He is not destined to be a tragedian in the drama of life and, because of this, suicide is inaccessible to him. He must endure Amy's betrayal because he is compelled to: even though he cannot discover the purpose for endurance. It is a morally and spiritually outraged Stan whose body revolts at man's utter helplessness against the enemy of suffering, and inability to discover a state beyond the one of merely being: "He spat and farted, because he was full to bursting; he pissed in the street until he was empty, quite empty" (TM 333). Stan has chosen to interpret this vile experience as his savage exorcism of God. His illusory liberation is a spiritual regression that allows him to temporarily resign himself to

the monotony of being without a sustaining vision of faith. He has rejected both suicide and faith, and is dedicated for a time to the chore of survival.

Stan is jolted from this abandonment of the quest for faith when he is subjected to the enactment of the intricate psychological drama, Hamlet. The play is a catalyst that opens old wounds. It mirrors his own confusion concerning the enormity of all that is unknown. The play is an imitation of the drama of life. It evokes in Stan the recollection of his intangible confrontations with the mystery of being. His encounter with Madeleine amid the dream-like flames was no less complex and esoteric than what he sees performed on stage. He is now mesmerized by the shadowy actors as he is a spectator to the finale of multiple death. The latent hero, the tormented Hamlet trapped inside the ordinary man Stan Parker, has been swept full force into the violent drama. Once again he is possessed by the aching need to understand. Stan cannot shake off the intoxicating effects of the play because it is impossible to ignore or forget what one has actually lived through.

The church setting serves as insufficient inspiration for Stan as it offers him the shawl rather than the essence of faith: "And the priest of God, who was taking bread with the tips of his fingers and tasting wine with his fumbling mouth, was also trying desperately to transcend bread and wine" (TM 430). Like the fumbling priest, Stan yearns to experience more than the sips and crumbs of faith.

Stan's pantheistic interpretation of the integration of all phenomena is subject to a divine extension when he is ultimately enlightened: "One and no other figure is the answer to all sums" (TM 497). He recognizes that a gob of spittle is as godly as anything the evangelistic preacher has to offer him, but it becomes startlingly clear that the "One" is both the mystery of and the "answer to all sums." Thus his vision of faith has been wrung from the pain of his baffling quest, and it triumphs over suffering and death.

Part One of The Aunt's Story traces Theodora Goodman's movement from the bones of Meroë to the initiation of her spiritual quest. In accordance with the epigraph from Olive Schreiner, Theordora's tormented soul is removed from her "nearest of mental kin" to the "solitary land of the individual experience."

Theodora leaves Meroë, her Ithaca, to search for her promised land. Her father is her "nearest of mental kin," and when he dies so does the legend of Meroë. Upon her quest Theodora becomes both Odysseus and his son, Telemachus. She transcends the failure of George Goodman's quest, and wins what Thelma Herring describes as "the game for her soul."[3] Theodora, one of White's spiritually androgynous figures, fits Edith Hamilton's description of Telemachus as a "sober discreet young man, steady and prudent and dependable."[4] Holstius serves as Theodora's spiritual mentor in the same

way that Athena serves as Telemachus'. Theodora is very much her father's daughter. Her personal Odyssey has been shaped by George Goodman's romance with ancient mythologies. As she journeys through the realm of experience, other personalities are integrated into her permanent sense of self: "And in the same way that the created lives of Theodora Goodman were interchangeable, the lives into which she had entered . . . these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too" (AS 295).

As the epigraph taken from Henry Miller suggests, Part Two, "The Jardin Exotique," deals with Theodora's fragmentation and maturation. The intoxicating jardin can be interpreted as the Homeric Lotus Land. Odysseus' men have to be dragged from the seductive island and chained to the ships. The inmates of the Hôtel leave the exotic garden only when the European madhouse sets itself on fire. Theodora passes much time in the garden anticipating the gothic and apocalyptic splendours of the state of madness, "in what should be apart, armed twisted dreamless, admitting at most the echoes of sound, the gothic world" (AS 152). She is the 'Aunt Confessor' who shrouds herself in a nunlike mystery, and whose austere bedchamber is stripped to the bare essentials. She is welcoming the process of fragmentation, and is a mystical mirror reflecting all images to all people. Eventually this process is reversed, and the guests are

integrated into the one being of Theodora Goodman. She is suspended, and restlessly awaits the omen indicating that her quest should continue. It appears (none too subtly) as the demonic and apolcalyptic flames that consume the Hôtel: "All the violence of fire was contained in the hotel. It tossed, whether hatefully or joyfully, it tossed restraint to smoke. Theodora ran, breathing the joy or hatred of fire" (AS 256). The flames have destroyed those who are jaded from experience, and liberated those sufficiently innocent to resume their personal quests.

A quotation from Olive Schreiner serves as the epigraph and theme of Part Three: "When your life is most real, to me you are mad." Theodora's sister shudders over her cryptic references to Abyssinia, and Theodora is branded by convention as mad. Theodora does not return to the Ithaca of Meroë, but reaches her promised land in the new world of America. In an abandoned shack Theodora encounters the prophet-spirit Holstius, who may be part of her rampant imagination, but is nonetheless real. Her spiritual mentor informs her that she must accept the "reality of illusion and the illusion of reality" (AS 289).

Theodora has overcome the torment of her soul by accepting that the dividing line between joy and sorrow, illusion and reality, life and death, is a negligible one. Madness and sanity are quintessentially indivisible, and her integration

of experience with self will be judged by society as sheer madness. Having so successfully completed her quest, Theodora is not dependent upon society's judgements or approval. Although appearances suggest that Theodora has been defeated when she is gently dragged to an asylum, White's artistic reality proclaims her the victor.

The quest of the German explorer Voss is twofold: the penetration into the soul of the Australian desert, and the penetration into the desert of his own soul. Voss has envisaged himself as the dark god of the unknown, intent on conquering the wilderness that mirrors his own soul.

Voss is ultimately the dethroned visionary who is sacrificed to the executioner. Although he can be viewed as a tyrant leader (defined by Northrop Frye as "inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is egocentric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers"), he is not converted into a "pharmakos" or scapegoat figure because his self-sacrifice is voluntary, and has served to strengthen none but himself.[5] Voss has exposed himself to the extremity of suffering because he has chosen to reach the summit of transcendence through the depths of experience. He has had illusions of divinity, but has died like a trapped animal. He has run the gauntlet of experience, and through his descent to the newfound state of humility has come closest to

godliness. "For all suffering he screamed": his humbled and compassionate outcry on behalf of universal suffering, is the proof of his transcendence (V 417).

His spiritual mentor teaches him that humility is not an indulgence but a state of grace. Although Laura is instrumental in Voss's attainment of faith, she is confined to civilization, and geographically distanced from his desert kingdom. Their physical love is consummated in a mutually experienced vision, and their mysterious affinity removes them from the category of ordinary lovers. Their bond transcends the sentimental one shared by Oliver and Alys in Happy Valley, and is a variation of the one that all White's mystics share.

Voss forfeits his earlier, grandiose claims by confessing his faith in God. His final illumination allows for his transcendence: "When man is truly humbled, when he had learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end, he may ascend" (V 411). Voss has fallen from the false state of pride, and has discovered that suffering and humility are the seeds of transcendence.

The four riders in Riders In The Chariot are the prophet Ezekiel's living creatures "whose appearance was like burning coals of fire, and was like the appearance of burning lamps."[6] Ezekiel's creatures ascend upon the magic circle of their wheel, and White's riders are first trapped within the spokes

of suffering before they ascend. White's riders glow with the lamp of illumination, and the "burning coals of fire" are the coals of their faith. In the novel's epigraph Ezekiel asks: "Is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease of gratification?" White's tormented riders all reject glib solutions to their individual dilemmas, and choose the burning path towards transcendence.

May Hare maintains her awe before the mystery of being. She does not fall prey to the traps of human cruelty set for her. She is ultimately absorbed into her trustworthy undergrowth. Her pantheistic belief in the godliness of nature allows for the possibility of salvation when she views "her Jew," Himmelfarb, as the Messiah who has been sacrificed for the salvation of unkind mankind. Himmelfarb resists the sterility of atheism, and returns to his religion with a passion for redemption. Alf Dubbo transcends the Dreck of his diseased existence when he paints his visions of faith with his very life-blood. Ruth Godbold overcomes the mediocrity of her life by being the angel of impartial mercy.

These four virtually sinless and outrageously sinned against "living creatures" are spiritually united through their shared vision of redemption and ascension. They surmount the vivisection of experience, and pursue the chariot of faith. They are all embraced into a state of grace.

In The Solid Mandala the thoroughly unidentical twins,

Waldo and Arthur Brown, are each other's alter-egos. Literally they are two men; allegorically they are one man. Alan Lawson reports that the critics who regarded this novel as "an essay in complementaries rather than polarities" had a more favourable opinion of it.[7]

Like Elyot Standish, Waldo is the sterile man of reason and, unlike Elyot, Waldo is unable to transcend the wasteland of his existence. Arthur is the man of feeling whose medium is touch. He intuitively grasps all the knowledge that Waldo so relentlessly pursues but cannot capture. One of the novel's epigraphs, the quote from Patrick Anderson ("yet still I long for my twin in the sun . . ."), expresses one element of Arthur's quest. Arthur has attempted to touch Waldo with the mystical love he has to offer and is continually and brutally rejected. As well as being Arthur's "twin in the sun," Waldo is the dark shadow that blocks Arthur from the sun's healing illumination.

It is implicit that Arthur's release can be wrung only from Waldo's death. He is as spiritually attached to his hostile brother as though they were Siamese twins destined to remain indivisible until the emancipating death of one. It is the hate-consumed Waldo who viciously attacks Arthur, and in helpless confusion and self-defence Arthur kills his would-be assassin: "Waldo was lying still, but still attached to Arthur at the wrist" (SM 285). Arthur must shake off the

cruel grip of Waldo's falsely accusing hand, and flee from the wooden box of a house that has nearly been his tomb.

Arthur runs to the sheltering anonymity of the streets, and loses Waldo's knotted marble. His failed quest, the search for the twin in the sun, is terminated in "filth and darkness," and Arthur must accept that he can and will go on living without the albatross of his twin. Mrs. Poulter, the simple and compassionate mother-figure, understands that Waldo's hatred has finally turned upon its master and destroyed him. Arthur laments that he has lost half of himself. Mrs. Poulter assures him that he has lost "no more than a small quarter" (SM 303). The loss of a part of self through the death of the twin is not presented as a demonic one. Although Arthur has failed to reunite himself with his twin, or image, he is not destroyed. The fusion of reason and feeling within one man is an apocalyptic achievement. When the reason, however, is jaded and malevolent, the feeling and intuitive reason can exist, and perhaps even thrive, independently.

It is Waldo who longed for his brother's death; having been repeatedly subjected to a pure love he could not accept or requite. Arthur's intrinsic innocence is shocked by the startling fact that he himself has been the murderer instead of the murdered. One twin is damned and the other is spared, but the choice is not arbitrary. Arthur, the flaming-haired

avenging angel, inadvertently avenges himself, and with the sun's blessing and his protective mandala vision, is able to vindicate himself of his "crime" and enter into a state of grace.

As Morley observes, in The Vivisector White is "pursuing his favourite theme, the spiritual quest, this time with an artist as the seeker."[8] It is only after artist Hurtle Duffield is stroked by God that he accepts the possibility of transcending his artistic experience. God is his creator and the Divine Artist. Hurtle finally utilizes the affliction of his art as an instrument to achieve a vision of God. In his humbled state he understands that human art is an instrument and not the end. Hurtle is maimed by a stroke that simultaneously serves to cripple and enlighten him. Hurtle's apocalyptic stroke results in "half glimpsed visions. . . . At such moments he tremblingly believed he might eventually suggest . . . the soul itself: for which the most skeptical carcasses of human flesh longed in secret" (TV 519). He is searching for the soul itself, for which even the spiritual corpses of the non-believers "shamefully" yearn.

His talent is God-given, and is experienced as both a divine gift and an affliction. The vision of the artist includes even the demonic condition of Dreck; the pure artist is spared nothing. The unwed mother of Hurtle's adolescent

psychopomp is also a victim of a stroke. She humbly informs Hurtle: "I believe the afflicted to be united in the same purpose, and you of course as an artist and the worst afflicted through your art can see farther than us who are mere human diseased" (TV 563). The suggested unity of purpose is the quest for faith towards which all the spiritually afflicted hobble. When Hurtle finally masters the apocalyptic "never-yet-attainable blue" of indigo, he simultaneously captures the "never-yet-attainable" vision of the Indigod, the artist's personal image of God (TV 566).

Hurtle's ultimate confession of faith is ironically a denial of denial: "My luff o God gif gif I haf believed truly always yurss God" (TV 567). Up until the moment of crippling illumination he has deluded himself by believing that he was the chosen servant of the lord of art. His painfully wrung admission of an enduring faith places the priorities of his credences in their proper perspective, with God heading the list as the Divine Artist, Stroker and Enlightener.

Elizabeth Hunter has experienced an ontological fragmentation during the gothic splendours of a cyclone. Just before her death upon the throne of her toilet, she spiritually returns to the island of her apocalypse. Instead of preparing to "withdraw her will as she had once foreseen," she presents herself to the will of the eye of the storm.

The wild, black swans with their vicious crimson beaks represent the untamed soul of Elizabeth Hunter. During the siege of Brumby Island, Elizabeth has offered bread-crumbs to these fearless, indifferent swans, as a peace offering. It will require more than mere crumbs for her to make peace with her soul. The second stage of her illumination occurs in the undignified setting of the bathroom. Her attitude is business-like, as she summons all of her faltering strength to confront the eye of the storm. Her desperate plea to the wild swans of her soul indicates her state of humility: "Don't oh Don't my dark birds of light let us rather--enfold" (ES 551). She is begging to be at one with her soul: her dark soul that has been illuminated with love. Although she has failed her dead husband, her pride is sufficiently reduced to permit her to call upon him for assistance. She accepts that the purpose of existence is to "survive . . . as a kindness or gift of a jewel" (ES 550). She is one of the afflicted, "the flaw at the centre of this jewel of light," yet her life is the gift of divine mercy.

Theodora Goodman fully comprehends the illusion of appearances, as she is led to the madhouse in a state of benign lucidity. Elizabeth Hunter finally understands the spiritual insignificance of the body itself. When her soul is released from its negligible body the quintessence of the woman is exalted: "Till I am no longer filling the void with

mock substance: myself is this endlessness" (ES 551).

Elizabeth's three female kindred spirits experience the endlessness of their employer after her death. Lotte Lippmann, the ex-cabaret dancer and concentration-camp survivor, has shared with her mistress an extraordinary sense of the ironic. The sensual day-nurse, Flora Manhood, realizes the full potential of her artistic talent when she transforms her decrepit charge into a painted, silver-green fiend. The three of them partake in a warped ritual of entertainment when Lotte performs a dance of serious self-parody, and Elizabeth is the blindly applauding audience. The saintly Sister de Santis is the nurse of the night and of the soul. Upon the death of Elizabeth Hunter, the blood of these three women is released. Flora's menstrual blood liberates her from a false and demonic pregnancy. The symbol of her creative life-force begins to flow, and she greets it ecstatically: "Her lovely blessed BLOOD oh God o Lord" (ES 548). Her attitude is that of one being redeemed by a divine reprieve.

Sister de Santis has agreed to take upon herself the responsibility of a new charge. Her patient is a crippled girl who is starved for love. The girl pricks her nurse with a pin until she bleeds, and this droplet of blood is a symbol of the nurse's flowing compassion. Along with the apocalyptic blood imagery, there is the symbol of purity, the rose. Northrop Frye comments: "In the West the rose has a

traditional priority among apocalyptic flowers."[9] There is but one last rose in Elizabeth's garden. De Santis takes this "first and last rose" to her patient (ES 608). It is significant that Elizabeth's last rose, or rose of death, is to become the child's first rose, or rose of life. Through this solitary rose, death is joined to life. The rose is a symbol of Elizabeth's "endlessness." De Santis is an instrument of mercy and a symbol of timeless compassion.

Lotte, the arch-survivor, is driven to suicide almost immediately after Elizabeth's death. Her final act is a confirmation of love rather than a denial of life: "She was faced with a flush of rose, of increasing crimson. . . . If she smiled or sank, she would drink the rose she was offering to those others pressed always more suffocatingly close around her" (ES 607). The blood from her opened veins is transmuted into an apocalyptic vision of roses. She is finally able to drink of the love she has so unsparingly offered to others. The suicide is her first act of self-love. It terminates the lifetime of cruel self-mockery.

That these women have been inspired to heights of love upon Elizabeth's death is the proof of the endlessness of her legend. She herself has transcended the mockery of her body, has been enfolded into her recently lit soul, and has admitted into her soul the love she has chosen to live without. The illumination that was only partially revealed to her on Brumby

Island finally fills her soul. She transcends the loveless-ness of her life when she realizes that life itself is a gift of love.

All of White's protagonists have pursued the labourious quest for transcendence. Each one has struggled bitterly with his own soul. The only seeker who has not arrived at the desired destination is Elyot Standish in The Living And The Dead. At the novel's closing he is just beginning to rise from his spiritual death.

In White's fiction, a cerebral seizure frequently serves as a medium of enlightenment. The common man Stan Parker, the uncommon man Hurtle Duffield, and the legendary Elizabeth Hunter are all victims of strokes of illumination. A demonic inversion of this spiritually healing stroke seizes Waldo Brown, the antagonistic and damned twin in The Solid Mandala. Even in this humbled state he is stubbornly unwilling to accept the love with which his brother longs to bless him.

The quests are collectively divided into various stages of experience that precede the final illumination. Oliver Halliday must experience a therapeutic personal love before he is able to offer himself as a healer to humanity. Theodora Goodman is exposed to fragmentation before she is able to integrate her experiences into a calm and stable image of self. Stan Parker's illumination makes itself known to him in convulsive fits and starts. He assembles the pieces of his

faith as one would a baffling jigsaw puzzle. His spiritual movement suffers from occasional barren lapses, and although he is White's most "ordinary" protagonist, his vision of faith is as hard won as those of the more extraordinary outsiders. Voss comes closest to godliness only after he has been exposed to the extremity of suffering. When he relinquishes all claims to divinity, then he is nearest to divinity.

As the riders in Ezekiel's vision are indivisible, presenting the likeness of one man, the quest of the four riders can be viewed as one. These outcasts are blessed with the vision of Ezekiel's Chariot of Redemption, and they pursue this opaque vision until it fully reveals itself to them. They are searching to be redeemed of their sins and to witness the salvation of God. Theodora Goodman does not call upon the divine intercession to save her tormented soul. It remains intentionally ambiguous whether her spiritual guide is a zaddik, a divine emanation, or simply the creation of her own imagination. Theodora is fighting for the salvation of her sanity. She finally overcomes the isolation of fragmented being by becoming at one with self. Arthur Brown emerges as a blessed idiot. He must accept the failure of his search for the "twin in the sun," and experience the individuation of self from shadow. The artist in The Vivisector inadvertently stumbles upon his faith in God when he realizes that his creative spirit cannot serve him indefinitely. Elizabeth's quest has been for the admission of love into

her soul.

All of White's protagonists are searching for the meaning or purpose of survival. All of them discover this purpose outside the comfortable realm of convention. All of them transcend their ontological and spiritual dilemmas through their apocalyptic visions of faith. The following quotation from Sir Thomas Browne suggests what I feel to be the essence of the collective spiritual revelations of White's successful faith-seekers:

> For God is like a skillful Geometrician, who when more easily and with one stroke of his Compass, he might describe, or divide a right line, had yet rather do this, though in a circle or longer way, according to the constituted and forelaid principles of his art: yet this rule he doth sometimes pervert, to acquaint the world with his prerogative, lest the arrogance of our reason should question his power, and conclude he could not; and thus I call the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is. . . . Nature is the art of God.[10]

Notes To Chapter V

1. Patricia A. Morley, The Mystery Of Unity: Theme And Technique In The Novels Of Patrick White (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 47.

2. G.A. Wilkes and J.C. Reid, The Literature Of Australia And New Zealand (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970), p. 114.

3. Thelma Herring, "Odyssey Of A Spinster: A Study Of 'The Aunt's Story,'" Southerly, 25, 1 (1965), 14.

4. Edith Hamilton, Mythology: Timeless Tales Of Gods And Heroes (Toronto: The New American Library Of Canada, 1963), p. 205.

5. See Northrop Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 148.

6. Ezekiel 1, 13.

7. Alan Lawson, "Unmerciful Dingoes? The Critical Reception Of Patrick White," Meanjin Quarterly, 32, 4 (December, 1973), 338.

8. Patricia Morley, "Doppelganger's Dilemma: Artist And Man In 'The Vivisector,'" Queen's Quarterly, 78, 3 (1971), 407.

9. Frye, Anatomy Of Criticism, p. 144.

10. Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 22 and 23.

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